Daily Report

Friday, 15 January 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 15 January 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:38 P.M., 15 January 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/

CONTENTS

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

- Bounce Back Loan Scheme: Northern Ireland 7
- Brexit: Civil Servants 7
- Buildings: Cleaning Services and Ventilation 7
- Car Washes: Coronavirus 8
- Clothing and Textiles: Coronavirus 8
- Conditions of Employment 8
- Conditions of Employment: EU Law 9
- Consumer Goods: Safety 9
- Coronavirus: Vaccination 10
- Employment 11
- Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate: Staff 11
- Fires: Batteries 12
- Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus 12
- Hospitality Industry: Government Assistance 13
- Hospitality Industry: Gratuities 13
- Multinational Companies: Staff 14
- Office for Product Safety and Standards 14
- Post Offices: Subsidies 15
- Public Houses: Coronavirus 15
- Retail Trade: Digital Technology 16
- Rolls Royce: Offshoring 16
- Service Industries: Qualifications 17
- Shareholders: Voting Rights 17
- Space Technology 18
- UK Trade with EU: Service Industries 18
- UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: Exports 19
- Wind Power: Seas and Oceans 20

CABINET OFFICE

- Civil Servants: Location 20
- Civil Servants: Political Impartiality 21
- Civil Servants: Recruitment 21
- Coronavirus: Death 21
- Coronavirus: Mortality Rates 22
- Equality: Training 22
- Senior Civil Servants: Private Education 23
### DEFENCE
- Armed Forces: Protective Clothing 23
- Army: Pay 23

### DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT
- Gyms: Coronavirus 24
- Monuments: Protection 24
- Music: Coronavirus 25
- Remote Education: Internet 25
- Sportcheer England 26
- Sports: Coronavirus 26

### EDUCATION
- Adult Education: Coronavirus 27
- Apprentices 29
- Asylum: Education 29
- Bus Services: Schools 30
- Children: Computers 30
- Children: Day Care 34
- Children: Health 35
- Children: Internet 36
- Class Sizes: Coronavirus 38
- Digital Technology: Education 38
- Education: Coronavirus 40
- Education: Exports 43
- Financial Services: Education 43
- GCE A-level: Assessments 44
- Nurseries: Finance 45
- Outdoor Education: Coronavirus 46
- Overseas Students 47
- Pre-school Education 48
- Pre-school Education: Coronavirus 49

### ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS
- Air Pollution: Coronavirus 72
- Animal Products: Imports 73
- Animal Welfare: Coronavirus 73
- Climate Change 74
- Climate Change Convention 76
- Dogs: Electronic Training Aids 77
- Dogs: Imports 77
- Dogs: Smuggling 78
- Environment Protection: Public Consultation 78
- Flood Control: Finance 78
- Hen Harriers 79
- Members: Correspondence 80
- Moorland: Fires 80

### Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus 64
- Students: Fees and Charges 66
- Turing Scheme 67
- Vocational Education: Assessments 69
- Youth Clubs: Coronavirus 71
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health: Young People</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randox Laboratories</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test and Trace Support Payment</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOME OFFICE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture: Seasonal Workers</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Records: EU Countries</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extradition: EU Countries</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fireworks: Antisocial Behaviour</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority: Staff</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate Crime: Females</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Trafficking: Children</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration: Complaints</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members: Correspondence</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police: Recruitment</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Guards: Licensing</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavery</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavery: Confiscation Orders</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavery: Seized Articles</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavery: Victims</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim Support Schemes: Finance</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windrush Generation: Compensation</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House of Commons: Procurement</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Safety Fund</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronavirus: High Rise Flats</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devolution: England</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Abuse: Refuges</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Schemes: Disability</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Zones</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help to Buy Scheme: North East</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness: Coronavirus</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing: Construction</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing: Insulation</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing: Lead</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing: Stoke on Trent</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Finance: Nottingham</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Finance: Staffordshire</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members: Correspondence</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Development Plans</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning: Rural Areas</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Rented Housing: Licensing</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented Housing: Overcrowding</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regeneration: Staffordshire</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping Rough: Coronavirus</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping Rough: Immigrants</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping Rough: West Midlands</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping Rough: Young People</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thakeham Group: Cambridgeshire</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans: Homelessness</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waking Watch Relief Fund</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERNATIONAL TRADE</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Situation: Investment</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle United Football Club: Takeovers</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffordshire: Small Businesses</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement:</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Countries</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSTICE</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juries: Coronavirus</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisons: Coronavirus</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisons: Staff</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSPORT</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aviation and Passenger Ships:</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronavirus</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Transport Police:</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronavirus</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Deals: Sheffield City Region</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric Scooters</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammersmith Bridge: Repairs and Maintenance</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Speed 2 Railway Line</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Controls: Coronavirus</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Vehicles: Testing</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ports</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railway Stations: Taxis</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways: Coronavirus</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways: Dawlish</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways: Midlands and North of England</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways: Passengers</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways: Refunds</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways: Standards</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK Trade with EU: Customs</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TREASURY</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business: Taxation</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash Dispensing</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Directors</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors: Coronavirus</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat Out to Help Out Scheme</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment: Coronavirus</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality Industry: VAT</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Retention Bonus</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant Workers: Income Tax</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents: Coronavirus</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue and Customs: Internet and Telephone Services</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue and Customs: Northern Ireland</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue and Customs: Training</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads: Construction</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment Income Support Scheme</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Northern Ireland</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department for Work and Pensions: Databases</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety Executive: Staff</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Credit: Coronavirus</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Credit: Students</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

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


**ANSWERS**

**BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY**

- **Bounce Back Loan Scheme: Northern Ireland**
  
  Carla Lockhart:
  
  To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much was lent to borrowers in Northern Ireland under the Bounce Back Loan scheme in 2020.

  Paul Scully:
  
  A breakdown on the number of loans provided through the Bounce Back Loan scheme as of 4 January 2021 is in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>VALUE OF LOANS OFFERED (£)</th>
<th>NUMBER OF LOANS OFFERED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>1,166,015,199</td>
<td>37,947</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Brexit: Civil Servants**

  Alison Thewliss:

  To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many (a) civil service and (b) senior civil service positions his Department has created in functions associated with the UK leaving the EU in each year since 2016; and whether his Department plans to create any such positions in 2021.

  Amanda Solloway:

  In 2016, the Department reprioritised an initial 100 staff (6 SCS) to work directly on EU exit preparations with more staff managing the wider implications of EU exit.

  In 2017, a total of 450 staff (27 SCS) were working on EU exit preparations.

  Between 2018-2020, HM Treasury funded ~850 staff (~50 SCS) to support EU exit and transition preparations. The wider number of staff involved in the Department’s preparations has fluctuated, with up to 1200 staff (~70 SCS) working on emerging EU Transition priorities.

  We are in the process of implementing the Spending Review outcome for 2021-22 and have no plans to create new EU exit positions.

- **Buildings: Cleaning Services and Ventilation**

  John Redwood:

  To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to (a) encourage and (b) assist building owners to improve air flow and cleaning in their buildings to mitigate the risk of covid-19 transmission.
Paul Scully:
BEIS has worked closely with HSE and PHE to ensure that guidance for businesses is based on the most up to date understanding of Covid-19. Guidance is kept under constant review and it is updated accordingly. Businesses should carry out Covid-19 risk assessments and follow Covid-19 secure guidance.

Car Washes: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will enable open air car wash businesses which operate safely to remain open during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:
Only automated car washes can operate during the current National lockdown restrictions.

Clothing and Textiles: Coronavirus

Dr Lisa Cameron:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to support the UK's fashion and textile industry to rebuild following the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:
The Government continues to offer a comprehensive support package for businesses including loan schemes, grant funding, tax deferrals, the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, all of which have been designed to be accessible to businesses in most sectors and across the UK.

On 5 January, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a £594 million discretionary fund to support other impacted businesses outside of the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors, which is in addition to £1.1 billion further discretionary grant funding for Local Authorities and Local Restriction Support Grants worth up to £3,000 a month.

Ministers and officials in the Department and across Government continue to regularly engage with the fashion and textiles industry to explore ways in which Government can support long term recovery in the sector.

Conditions of Employment

Kirsten Oswald:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment she has made of the implications of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement for existing EU-derived labour standards.
Paul Scully:
Our high standards have never been dependent on EU membership, and this agreement recognises the importance of these employment standards, whilst retaining flexibility for us to tailor our approach to what works for the UK and maintaining our strong levels of employment protections.

Our ambition is to be the best place in the world to work and grow a business. This agreement provides us with the flexibility to make our own decisions on how to best do this, whilst upholding our high standards.

Conditions of Employment: EU Law

Marion Fellows:  [133018]
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on UK labour standards derived from the EU.

Marion Fellows:  [133019]
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy if he will introduce legislative proposals to ensure workers’ rights and employment standards are maintained after the transition period.

Paul Scully:
As an independent, sovereign nation we are now ideally placed to capitalise on the wealth of opportunities available to us. We want to go further than ever before to uphold workers’ rights, support UK businesses and ultimately boost productivity in the UK.

Our high standards have never been dependent on EU membership, and this agreement recognises the importance of these employment standards, whilst retaining flexibility for us to tailor our approach to what works for the UK and maintaining our strong levels of protection.

Consumer Goods: Safety

Stephen Farry:  [133288]
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 15 December 2020 to Question 126183 on Consumer Goods: Safety, whether the UK plans to provide information to the European Safety Gate portal.

Paul Scully:
Products placed on the market before 1 January 2021 that have been found to present a serious risk to the health and safety of consumers, or that are non-compliant, will be notified to the European Commission as part of the Withdrawal Agreement. Additionally, the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement commits the UK and the EU to use best endeavours to establish arrangements for the exchange of certain information, between the UK’s Product Safety Database and the EU’s Safety Gate RAPEX database, on unsafe products.
The UK in respect of Northern Ireland market surveillance authorities and enforcement authorities will also continue to notify unsafe products to the European Commission via Safety Gate RAPEX in line with the Northern Ireland Protocol, information from which the European Commission will subsequently make available on their Safety Gate website.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to tackle third-party sellers on online marketplaces that are listing recalled products for sale.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) plans to publish its voluntary commitment with online marketplaces; and how the OPSS plans to hold online marketplaces to account if they fail to uphold the additional actions agreed as part of that commitment.

Paul Scully:

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) has recently taken action to ensure that a number of non-compliant products being sold by overseas 3rd party sellers have been removed from sale and are recalled, including toys and electrical appliances.

The OPSS is also working to ensure that major online marketplaces play their part in protecting UK consumers from unsafe goods. As part of this work, OPSS is developing a new voluntary commitment for online marketplaces to agree actions they will take to reduce the risks from unsafe products being sold online and provide robust data on the effectiveness of these actions.

The OPSS is currently conducting a review of the Product Safety framework to ensure it is fit for purpose, protects consumers, and enables businesses to innovate and grow. It will also consider the impact on product safety of new technologies and new business models, including e-commerce.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Taiwo Owatemi:

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of (a) the end of the transition period and (b) covid-19-related border restrictions on the Government's ability to procure covid-19 vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The UK has put in place a number of measures to facilitate trade with the European Union to avoid impact to vaccine supply beyond 1 January 2021.

The UK’s Vaccine Taskforce, alongside the Department of Health and Social Care, have worked with COVID-19 vaccine suppliers to support them with robust
contingency plans. This includes considering the use of alternative supply routes and Government procured freight capacity, in line with current Government advice.

John Spellar: [133636]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the existing weekly capacity for vaccine production is in the UK.

Nadhim Zahawi:
The UK has a strong manufacturing basis in vaccines and life sciences, with a range of sites around the country.

Through the Vaccine Taskforce, the Government has entered commercial arrangements with a number of these sites to manufacture and fill-finish COVID-19 vaccines. The Government has also invested over £230 million in expanding the UK’s vaccine manufacturing base, through several investments, such as the Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre and Cell and Gene Manufacturing and Innovation Centre.

Employment

Alison Thewliss: [133001]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to amend employment law in response to the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Paul Scully:
As an independent, sovereign nation we are now ideally placed to capitalise on the wealth of opportunities available to us.

Commitments made in this trade agreement recognise our existing regulatory high standards. We have committed to maintain our high labour standards, whilst retaining flexibility for us to tailor our approach to what works for the UK. We want to go further than ever before to uphold workers’ rights, support UK businesses and ultimately boost productivity in the UK.

Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate: Staff

Paul Blomfield: [132883]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many staff the Employment Agencies Standards Inspectorate (a) employed in 2019-20 and (b) employs in 2020-21; and how many of those staff were dedicated to working in Scotland in each of those years.

Paul Scully:
The Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate had 28 staff in post on 31st March 2020 and 22 on 31st December 2020. A recruitment campaign is currently being undertaken to fill the vacant positions. Staff are not allocated to a dedicated location and will deal with casework that covers all of Great Britain.
Fires: Batteries

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions has he had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on London Fire Brigade's warning in response to the recent major house fire in London caused by lithium batteries; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of that matter on the Government's commitment to increase use of lithium batteries.

Paul Scully: The Government is committed to ensuring there is an effective products safety system so that only safe products can be sold in the UK. We have some of the most robust product safety requirements in the world. Manufacturers and importers must ensure that products are safe before they are placed on the market. They must monitor the safety of their products in use and take action if a safety issue is identified. Enforcement authorities have powers to take action against manufacturers, importers and distributors of unsafe goods.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards has a memorandum of understanding with the London Fire Brigade and engages regularly with them on issues of product safety.

Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to provide additional support to the hospitality sector affected by covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Paul Scully: Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has worked closely with the hospitality sector to understand the impact of the pandemic on their businesses.

Hospitality businesses have been able to benefit from Government support, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Government-backed loans, Local Restrictions Support Grants, additional funding provided to Local Authorities to support businesses and the Cultural Relief Fund.

On 5 January, when the new National Lockdown began, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a one-off top up grant for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses worth up to £9,000 per property to help businesses through to the spring. A £594 million discretionary fund has also been made available to support other impacted businesses.
**Hospitality Industry: Government Assistance**

**Mike Amesbury:**
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department has made on updating the Covid-19 Temporary Framework for UK Public Authorities to take into account the temporary increase in EU State Aid limits in order to help support the hospitality sector.

**Paul Scully:**
The European Commission approved amendments to the Covid-19 Temporary Framework for UK authorities on 08 December 2020. These included support for uncovered fixed costs, an increase in the budget of the scheme and inclusion of subsidised interest rates for subordinated loans.

The EU State aid rules ceased to apply to the United Kingdom on 31 December 2020, except in the limited circumstances of the Northern Ireland Protocol. The United Kingdom remains bound by its international commitments, including the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) with the EU. In particular, it will be important for relevant subsidies to meet the terms of the Principles set out in Article 3.4 of the TCA. Covid-19 schemes in operation before 1 January 2021 will already be compliant with these Principles.

**Holly Mumby-Croft:**
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to support hospitality businesses in Tier 3 covid-19 lockdown areas.

**Paul Scully:**
We are providing the hospitality sector with a wide package of support. This includes the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Government-backed loans, Local Restrictions Support Grants and additional funding provided to Local Authorities to support businesses.

On 5 January when the new National Lockdown began, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a one-off top up grant for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses worth up to £9,000 per property to help businesses through to the spring. A £594 million discretionary fund has also been made available to support other impacted businesses.

**Hospitality Industry: Gratuities**

**Darren Jones:**
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to bring forward legislative proposals on the regulation of tips given to hospitality workers.

**Paul Scully:**
Some employers in the hospitality sector have recently improved their tipping practices and are now passing 100 per cent of tips to their staff.
When Parliamentary time allows, we will bring forward legislation to create a clear legislative framework for employers which handle tips. This will ensure hospitality workers are properly rewarded for their efforts, and protect the vast majority of hospitality businesses who do the right thing from being undercut by a small minority shirking their responsibilities.

**Multinational Companies: Staff**

**Sir Robert Syms:**
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with multinational companies based in the UK on relocation regulations for employees being relocated into the UK by firms in the EU after the transition period; and if he will make a statement.

**Paul Scully:**
Employees of EU firms who are not UK nationals being relocated into the UK can apply under the intra-company transfer route that our immigration system provides for. Under the UK’s domestic immigration rules, intra-company transferees may be admitted for up to 5 years (and for up to 9 years in the case of high earners) to all successful applications, regardless of where they come from, including from the EU. The UK-EU Trade & Cooperation Agreement commits to 90-day processing times for intra-corporate transfer applications. In addition, both parties have agreed to provisions for accompanying family members of such intra-company transferees.

The provisions for intra-company transferees were informed through detailed conversations with hundreds of stakeholders across UK business sectors, including multinational companies who benefit from the intra-company transfer route.

**Office for Product Safety and Standards**

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the Office for Product Safety and Standards will conclude and publish its review of the Product Safety framework.

**Paul Scully:**
The Government has commenced its review of the UK Product Safety framework to ensure it is fit for purpose, protects consumers, and enables businesses to innovate and grow. The review will focus on regulations that cover the majority of consumer products, including electrical equipment, cosmetics, toys and gas appliances. It will also consider the impact on product safety of new technologies and new business models, including e-commerce.

The review is at an early stage and is gathering evidence on current, emerging and anticipated challenges and opportunities for product safety. In the coming months, we will be engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to understand if and how the UK Product Safety framework could be improved to work better for everyone.
Post Offices: Subsidies

Martyn Day:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the Post Office Subsidy will be allocated.

Paul Scully:
Through the November 2020 Spending Review a total of £227m of funding has been allocated to the Post Office to extend the network subsidy by £50 million and to provide £177 million to invest in the future of the network. This will ensure that post offices in every corner of the country, including our vital rural branches, can keep providing essential services for the people that rely on them – now and in the future.

The subsidy is for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and funds will be dispersed to Post Office during that period. The Government sets a number of criteria on the Post Office, including performance obligations, as detailed within the Entrustment Letter and Framework Document.

Martyn Day:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what criteria will be used in allocating the Post Office Subsidy and if it will be published.

Paul Scully:
Through the November 2020 Spending Review a total of £227m of funding has been allocated to the Post Office to extend the network subsidy by £50 million and to provide £177 million to invest in the future of the network. This will ensure that post offices in every corner of the country, including our vital rural branches, can keep providing essential services for the people that rely on them – now and in the future.

The subsidy is for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and funds will be dispersed to Post Office during that period. Government sets a number of criteria on the Post Office, including performance obligations, as detailed within the Entrustment Letter and Framework Document.

Public Houses: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish guidance for local authorities on the criteria for dispensing the £1,000 grant to wet-led pubs in lieu of Christmas trade in Tier 2 and 3 local covid alert level areas.

Paul Scully:
Guidance for the Christmas Support for ‘wet-led’ Pubs was published on 9th December 2020 for local authorities and businesses. The criteria for qualification and funding is detailed in the guidance. Local authorities are responsible for the distribution of the grant to qualifying businesses.

**Julian Sturdy:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of allowing pubs to sell takeaway alcohol in sealed containers during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

**Paul Scully:**

Hospitality venues are not allowed to sell alcohol for takeaway under the new National Lockdown restrictions, although they are allowed to continue to sell food and non-alcoholic drinks for takeaway.

**Taiwo Owatemi:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether pubs are allowed to sell alcohol in sealed containers for people to take home during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown period.

**Paul Scully:**

Hospitality venues are not allowed to sell alcohol for takeaway under the new National Lockdown restrictions, although they are allowed to continue to sell food and non-alcoholic drinks for takeaway.

### Retail Trade: Digital Technology

**Chi Onwurah:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 23 December to Question 130074 on Retail Trade: Digital Technology, if he will hold discussions with the Competition and Markets Authority on (a) the implications for competition of Amazon's decision to pass the Digital Services Tax onto its retail customers and (b) whether pricing strategies are a matter for businesses in a position of market dominance.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that digital markets are competitive and work for businesses and consumers. In March 2020 we commissioned the Competition and Markets Authority, along with Ofcom and the Information Commissioner’s Office, to advise the Government on how to implement a new pro-competition regime to tackle the market power of dominant digital platforms. The Taskforce published their advice in December 2020 and the Government will respond in due course.

### Rolls Royce: Offshoring

**Jon Trickett:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent jobs at Rolls Royce in Barnoldswick being offshored.
Paul Scully:
Rolls-Royce has made clear that the restructuring and global site review reflects the change in medium-term market conditions which have been impacted by the global COVID19 pandemic. Rolls-Royce has announced proposals to consolidate work into the UK including consolidating all widebody engine Assembly & Test capability in Derby, as well as closing a site in the US and consolidating the advanced manufacturing capabilities into Derby and Washington, Tyne & Wear.

Service Industries: Qualifications

Emily Thornberry:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of provision for immediate mutual recognition of professional qualifications in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the ability for services exporters to operate in the EU.

Paul Scully:
Within the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the UK and EU have agreed a framework under which both parties may agree arrangements on the recognition of professional qualifications (such as mutual recognition agreements) covering the UK and all 27 EU Member States. Once an arrangement is adopted under the TCA, UK professionals will be able to use the terms outlined in the arrangement to secure recognition of their professional qualifications, helping them to provide services within EU Member States.

While frameworks like this are conventional practice in free trade agreements, the Government successfully negotiated improvements to the EU’s original mutual recognition of professional qualification proposals. We have streamlined the process by which regulatory and professional authorities make recommendations to the Partnership Council, and we have opened further possibilities for the types of arrangements which can be adopted by the Council. This could result in more arrangements being agreed at a faster pace.

Over the coming years, professionals will be able to take advantage of any profession-specific EU-wide arrangement agreed under the FTA framework. As of 1 January 2021, UK-qualified professionals who wish to supply services in the EU should seek recognition of their qualifications according to the local laws and regulations of individual Member States.

Shareholders: Voting Rights

Alison Thewliss:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what representations he has received from investors on the effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on UK shareholder’s voting rights in EU registered companies.
Paul Scully:
We have not had any representations from stakeholders on UK shareholder’s voting rights in EU registered companies.

UK investors and business owners should be aware that there may be changes to their ability to own, manage or direct a company registered in the EU from 1 January 2021. UK citizens that own or run business operations in an EU country may need to comply with different requirements (those which currently apply to other businesses from non-EU countries) in the country they are operating in. More information on this can be found on GOV.UK.

Space Technology
Ben Everitt:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the Government's space strategy is.

Amanda Solloway:
We are committed to making the UK a world leader in space and other high-tech industries. The UK’s first comprehensive national space strategy is being developed under the direction of the National Space Council.

UK Trade with EU: Service Industries
Emily Thornberry:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the exceptions from market access included within the annexes of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the (a) ability for UK service exporters to do business in the EU, (b) profitability of UK service exporters and (c) administrative costs UK services exporters face conforming to different regulations across EU member states.

Paul Scully:
The UK’s published approach to negotiations aimed to achieve a transparent schedule of reservations based on the UK and EU’s best offer to date with improved commitments in areas of key interest, and the deal reflects this. The UK and EU have agreed provisions on trade in services and investment in line with our respective Free Trade Agreements with Japan, but with some additional benefits for both sides.

The agreement guarantees that UK investors and service suppliers will be able to access the EU’s markets and will not be subject to discriminatory barriers to trade. It includes gold-standard rules on services and investment liberalisation.

The deal requires that member states clearly set out where they intend to restrict this commitment so that UK businesses have absolute clarity about establishment requirements, and these restrictions are set out in the annexes of reservations to the agreement. The agreement as a whole secures continued market access across a broad range of key sectors, including professional and business services, and significantly exceeds what is available under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules.
Many exceptions are already applied within the Single Market, so do not represent new barriers for UK businesses. New requirements could include having to be EU/EEA national or resident to provide a service, and restrictions vary according to each individual Member State and sector. UK businesses providing services to the EU should check the national regulations of the country in which they do business in to understand how best to operate.

Emily Thornberry:

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the provisions on short-term travel for UK service exporters in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the ability for service providers to do business in the EU.

Paul Scully:

The UK-EU Trade & Co-operation Agreement (TCA) contains provisions on the entry and temporary stay of natural persons for business purposes (Mode IV), similar to the EU’s best precedent reached with Canada and Japan, with some improvements.

We have always been clear that Freedom of Movement between the UK and the EU will end after the Transition Period. This means changes, such as visas and work permits, for some of our service exporters; the Government has been helping UK businesses to get ready for this. However, the TCA we negotiated reflects the importance we know businesses place on cross-border mobility.

The Mode IV commitments we secured provide certainty and clarity for those who travel to another country temporarily to do business. These include reciprocal measures for: short-term business visitors; business visitors for establishment purposes; intra-company transferees; and those providing services under contract, whether as an employee or a self-employed professional.

These commitments guarantee market access to key economic sectors, and ease some burdens on business travellers, such as: removing the need for work permits for some short-term trips, and reducing the number of economic needs tests a country could impose to block access to exporters. They also ensure that the UK and EU Member States have transparent visa application processes, clear signposting on rules for business travellers, and a minimum standard for how business travellers and service providers should be treated when working abroad through non-discrimination clauses.

UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: Exports

Emily Thornberry:

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the absence of a full mutual recognition agreement in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the profitability of UK exporters excluded from the agreement’s sectoral annexes.
Paul Scully:
The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement sets out wide-ranging provisions on Technical Barriers to Trade that will support exporters, including a core chapter and five sectoral annexes. These contain specific provisions which support the profitability of exporters.

Throughout negotiations, agreeing a Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) across as many sectors as possible was a priority for the UK. MRAs remain a useful tool, and we will continue to seek them in negotiations with other partners where this would be beneficial.

The Government has already taken additional steps to reduce disruption to business. As set out in our guidance, to allow businesses time to adjust, relevant CE marked goods that meet EU requirements (where these continue to match UK requirements) can continue to be placed on the GB market until 1 January 2022 in most cases.

Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Chris Elmore:
To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 14 February 2020 to Question 13544, on Wind Power: Seas and Oceans, for what reason the update to the estimates of UK content in offshore wind developments referred to in that Answer has not been published.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:
The methodology used to measure the domestic content of offshore wind projects was set out in 2012. The Offshore Wind Sector Deal, which was announced in March 2019, included new commitments on measuring and reporting UK content, with the sector committing to updating its UK content methodology as well as a longer-term move towards increased transparency. As part of the update, the sector plans to develop a more holistic approach by reporting UK content and UK exports. The methodology is currently undergoing review, and the sector will resume publication of the estimates of UK content once the review is complete.

Cabinet Office

Civil Servants: Location

Sir John Hayes:
To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress he has made on relocating civil servants from London to other parts of the UK.

Julia Lopez:
The Government has committed to ensuring that the administration of Government is less London-centric. Further announcements will be made in due course.
Civil Servants: Political Impartiality

Sir John Hayes: [133646]
To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure civil servants support Government policies irrespective of their own personal and political perspectives.

Chloe Smith:
The Civil Service Code sets out the standards of behaviour expected of civil servants. These are based on the core values which are set out in legislation.

Civil Servants: Recruitment

Jon Trickett: [133675]
To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to increase the number of people from (a) working class and (b) disadvantaged backgrounds (i) applying for and (ii) securing places on the Civil Service Fast Stream programme.

Julia Lopez:
In line with the Government’s approach to equality - which goes beyond the protected characteristics in the Public Sector Equality Duty - the Fast Stream graduate programme has a strong commitment to increasing the representation of all currently under-represented groups, including those from working class and disadvantaged backgrounds.

To increase success rates and broaden the entry pool of those from disadvantaged backgrounds the Fast Stream introduced programmes such as the Early Diversity and the Summer Diversity Internship Programmes. These programmes provide undergraduates from a socially or economically disadvantaged background the opportunity to gain experience of working for the Civil Service the Fast Stream. Undertaking an internship significantly increases the success rate onto the Fast Stream.

To attract an increased number of applications from those with working class and disadvantaged backgrounds, we have a range of specific interventions. These include targeted outreach (including virtual events) to universities with high proportions of socially and economically disadvantaged students, and working with partners (e.g. UpReach and Rare Recruitment) to advertise the Fast Stream as a scheme open to all.

Coronavirus: Death

Sir John Hayes: [133647]
To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people under the age of 60 without pre-existing health conditions have died from covid-19 in the UK.
Sir John Hayes:  
To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the covid-19 mortality rate is for people under the age of 60 with no underlying health conditions; and how that mortality rate compares to that of seasonal flu.

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 PQ133647 and PQ133648 [PQ133647, 133648 - Response.pdf]

Catherine West:  
To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people have died of covid-19 as a proportion of the overall death toll to the start of January 2021 have been people with a known pre-existing condition and would meet the definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010.

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 PQ134040 [PQ134040 - Response.pdf]

Coronavirus: Mortality Rates

Sir John Hayes:  
To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the average age of covid-19 mortality is; and what life expectancy in the UK is.

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 PQ133650 [PQ133650 - Response.pdf]

Equality: Training

Ruth Jones:  
To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to increase funding for unconscious bias training.

Ruth Jones:  
To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much the Government has spent on unconscious bias training in each of the last 10 years.
Julia Lopez:
There is no central budget for unconscious bias training specifically. Instead, departments are able to access a blend of free at point of access online learning, and learning purchased through current contracts. The information requested on spend is therefore not held centrally.

Further to the statement on 15 December, standalone Unconscious Bias training has been removed from Civil Service learning platforms.

Senior Civil Servants: Private Education

Jon Trickett:

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what proportion of current Permanent Secretaries attended private schools.

Julia Lopez:
This information is not held centrally.

DEFENCE

Armed Forces: Protective Clothing

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason there is no respirator provided compatible with a beard, for service personnel who are required to keep their beard as a result of their faith.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to ensure that respirators provided by his Department are compatible with a beard for armed force personal who have a faith requirement to keep their beard.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effect of his Department not providing armed service personnel with a respirator compatible with a beard on (a) recruitment and (b) career choices within the armed forces for people who are required to keep their beard as a result of their faith.

Johnny Mercer:
The information needed to respond to the hon. Member's questions is taking time to collate, and I will write to him shortly.

Army: Pay

Vicky Foxcroft:

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much an army sergeant has been paid on average in each year from 2005 to 2020 in real terms; and if paid on a scale, what the range of that scale was.
Johnny Mercer:
The information needed to respond to the hon. Member's question is taking time to collate, and I will write to her shortly.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Gyms: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq:
To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the scientific evidence that informed the decision to close gyms during the January 2021 covid-19 national lockdown.

Nigel Huddleston:
Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus.

On Monday 4 January the Prime Minister announced a national lockdown and instructed people to stay at home to control the virus, protect the NHS and save lives. The National Restrictions are designed to get the R rate under control through limiting social contact and reducing transmissions. All decisions made by the Government relating to the pandemic and sport have been based on advice and guidance from health and scientific experts.

You can continue to exercise alone, with one other person or with your household or support bubble. This should be limited to once per day, and you should not travel outside your local area. You should maintain social distancing. Indoor and outdoor sports facilities, including gyms, must close. These regulations were voted on by the House on 6 January.

Monuments: Protection

Andrea Jenkyns:
To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Department is taking to protect monuments of historical, artistic and local heritage importance from political protests.

Nigel Huddleston:
Responsibility for the policing of political protests - including those focused on public statues and memorials - rests with the Home Office however, through its responsibility for the listing system, DCMS identifies those statues and memorials deemed to be of special architectural or historic interest, something that can inform the targeting of policing resources. DCMS has also reminded its arms-length bodies that it is Government policy that statues and memorials, however contentious, should be retained and their presence explained in order to help educate people about all aspects of Britain’s past.
Music: Coronavirus

Mr Steve Baker:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if his Department will publish revised guidance to allow amateur singing groups to resume rehearsing and performing in a covid-secure way.

Caroline Dinenage:  
On 4 January the Prime Minister announced that new national restrictions would come into effect the following day in England to help stem the spread of coronavirus and the new variant strain of the virus. Guidance on the national restrictions advise that people should only leave home for a limited number of reasons and that people should travel to work only where it is unreasonable for you to do your job from home. We have updated the Performing Arts Guidance to be clear that during this period all amateur activity including amateur choirs and orchestras, cannot take place.

We are committed to moving to stage 5 of the performing arts roadmap, for both professional and amateur activity, as soon as it is safe to do so. However we have always been clear that the activity permitted would be in line with the latest public health context.

Remote Education: Internet

Mike Hill:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will take steps to encourage network providers to zero rate (a) educational websites and (b) video conferencing systems used by schools, colleges and universities to allow people who use mobile data to access them without charge.

Matt Warman:  
The government is working with industry to identify measures that can help vulnerable families during this difficult time. The majority of the UK’s leading mobile network operators have agreed to provide free data uplifts to disadvantaged families with school-age children. This will support access to education resources including remote education activities direct from their schools.

We are pleased that all four of the main mobile network operators have committed to working with Oak Academy to zero rate the website, and EE is also zero-rating BBC Bitesize.

In addition, last year the government agreed a set of commitments with the UK’s major broadband and mobile operators to support disadvantaged and vulnerable consumers during the Covid-19 period. This included lifting data caps on all fixed broadband packages, and provision of new and generous landline and mobile offers, such as free or low cost mobile data boosts.
Sportcheer England

Fleur Anderson: [134617]
To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to make a decision on the timescale for SportCheer England to be granted approval on its Return to Play guidance document.

Nigel Huddleston:
SportCheer England's Return to Play guidance was approved in October 2020 and they are on the list of approved governing bodies on the GOV.UK team sport guidance page.

However, the virus is spreading rapidly and incidence rates are rising across the country which is why we have taken decisive action to protect the NHS. Under the current national restrictions, which were introduced on Monday 4 January 2021, grassroots sport cannot take place. Outdoor exercise within households, or with one other person is permitted so people can continue to stay active together safely. We will make grassroots sports' return an immediate priority as soon as it is possible to do so.

Sports: Coronavirus

Justin Madders: [134481]
To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect gym closures and restrictions on sports during the covid-19 outbreak on mental and physical wellbeing.

Nigel Huddleston:
Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus.

On Monday 4 January the Prime Minister announced a national lockdown and instructed people to stay at home to control the virus, protect the NHS and save lives. Restrictions are designed to get the R rate under control through limiting social contact and reducing transmissions. These regulations were voted on by the House on 6 January.

You can continue to exercise alone, with one other person or with your household or support bubble. This should be limited to once per day, in a public outdoor place and you should not travel outside your local area. You should maintain social distancing. Indoor and outdoor sports facilities, including gyms, must close.
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the role of adult education in supporting individuals back into work after the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:
As we address the challenges presented by COVID-19 and prepare to seize the opportunities offered up by leaving the European Union, it is vital that we support adults, including those working in sectors directly affected by COVID-19, to attain the skills that will be needed in the economy of the future.

Starting this year, the Government is investing £2.5 billion (£3 billion when including Barnett funding for devolved administrations) in the national skills fund. This is a significant investment and has the potential to deliver new opportunities to generations of adults who may have been previously left behind.

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £375 million for the national skills fund at the Spending Review in November 2020. This includes £95 million funding for a new level 3 adult offer and £43 million for skills bootcamps.

Investment in skills through the national skills fund is vital, ensuring adults have the opportunity to progress into higher wage employment and to support those who need to retrain at different points throughout their lives.

From April 2021, we will be supporting any adult aged 24 and over who wants to achieve their first full Level 3 qualification – equivalent to two A-Levels, or a technical certificate or diploma – to access nearly 400 fully funded courses.

Complementing the Level 3 adult offer, the skills bootcamps offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. Skills bootcamps have the potential to transform the skills landscape for adults and employers.

The Government plans to consult on the national skills fund in spring 2021 to ensure that we develop a fund that helps adults learn valuable skills and prepares them for the economy of the future.

Through our lifelong loan entitlement, we will also make it easier for adults and young people to study more flexibly. This will allow them to space out their studies across their lifetimes, transfer credits between colleges and universities, and enable more part-time study.

We are also continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the adult education budget (AEB) (£1.34 billion in 2020/21). The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to Level 3, to support adults to gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning.
In April we introduced the skills toolkit, an online platform providing free courses to help individuals build the skills that are most sought after by employers. We have recently expanded the platform so that people can now choose from over 70 courses, covering digital, adult numeracy, employability and work readiness skills, which have been identified as the skills employers need the most. These courses will help people stay in work, or take up new jobs and opportunities.

In July last year the Plan for Jobs was announced by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which includes incentives for employers to take on new apprentices, including those over 25, and an additional £17 million to increase the number of Sector-based work academy programme placements in 2020/21.

Kate Osamor:
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support adult education institutions and providers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kate Osamor:
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will ensure that adult education providers who have continued to deliver courses throughout the covid-19 lockdown will not receive reductions in grant funding as a result of lower than forecast student numbers.

Kate Osamor:
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that adult education institutions are adequately resourced to support online learning.

Gillian Keegan:
We continue to support providers through the COVID-19 outbreak, and the testing programme that has been successfully stood up for colleges and secondary schools will continue to be used to support teachers, vulnerable children and children of critical workers and to prepare for wider re-opening.

We will continue to pay grant-funded providers their scheduled monthly profiled payments for 2020/21 academic year. We are currently reviewing the end of year grant funded AEB reconciliation position for 2020 to 2021 in recognition of the difficulties and uncertainties many providers are facing. We will communicate any changes to the published arrangements through our Update publication in the coming weeks.

Where applicable, providers were able to apply to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Post 16 and ESFA provider relief schemes for support.

For colleges in significant financial difficulties, the existing support arrangements remain in place, including short-term emergency funding.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, we have put in place a package of support to help the further education (FE) sector build their capacity to deliver digitally. This includes flexibilities to secure devices and connectivity through the 16-19 bursary funding and
through changes to the adult education budget funding rules for the 2020/21 academic year.

In order to support colleges to respond to current challenge, including developing new ways of working, we adapted the College Collaboration Fund. This will see investment in new high-quality digital curriculum content, including funding for 7 projects that will develop hundreds of hours of new digital content for a wide range of vocational subjects, as well as PSHE and English and Maths.

We are also investing in FE practitioner online teaching skills through funding the Education and Training Foundation to support teachers to develop their online teaching skills, and we recently announced 80 new grants of £1,000 to FE providers across England to provide additional training and support for mentors and coaches specialising in assisting teachers with remote education.

### Apprentices

**Margaret Greenwood:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of apprentices employed by companies in which the director has been ineligible for covid-19-related financial support during the outbreak in (a) England, (b) the North West and (c) Wirral.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We do not have data on the number of apprentices employed by companies in which the director has been ineligible for financial support following the COVID-19 outbreak.

The government has introduced a wide range of support to help businesses of all sizes to deal with the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and to allow employers to furlough employees who have been unable to continue working, including apprentices, through the Job Retention Scheme.

### Asylum: Education

**Dan Jarvis:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to improve access to education for asylum seekers while awaiting the outcome of their applications.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Access to post-16 education for asylum seekers is governed by funding rules in further and higher education.

In further education, asylum seekers aged 19 and over who have lived in the UK for 6 months or longer while awaiting the outcome of their application, and no decision on their claim has been made, are eligible to receive funding through the Adult Education Budget. For asylum seekers aged 16-19, we will fund those who have applied for asylum as well as those who have been granted asylum status by the Home Office.
In higher education (HE), eligibility requirements for student support usually means that a student resident in England should have ‘settled’ status or a recognised connection with the UK and have been a resident of the UK and Islands for the 3 years prior to the first day of the first academic year of the course. However, an exception to the 3 year ordinary residence requirement is made for students with refugee status and humanitarian protection. This means that immediate access to HE student support is available once a person has been granted refugee status or humanitarian protection by the Home Office.

A considerable subsidy has been built into the student loan scheme, which is targeted to those who are likely to remain in England (or at least the UK) indefinitely, so that the general public benefits of their HE will be to the country’s advantage. There are no plans to extend eligibility to HE student finance to asylum seekers awaiting a Home Office decision on their claim as there is no guarantee that they will go on to be granted a relevant status.

Bus Services: Schools

Emma Hardy:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much of the Government funding allocated for additional home to school transport since September 2020 has been provided to coach operators.

Emma Hardy:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish his Department’s assessment of the amount of additional funding allocated for home to school transport since September 2020 that has been provided to coach operators.

Nick Gibb:

Since September 2020, the Department has provided local transport authorities with £98.5 million in grant allocations. Local transport authorities are using this funding to increase transport capacity on dedicated school and college transport during the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes hiring significant numbers of additional vehicles, including coaches. Allocations to local transport authorities are published at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extended-rights-to-free-school-travel--2.

We have not provided any additional home to school transport funding directly to coach operators.

Children: Computers

Liam Byrne:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of school children have access to laptops at home in the West Midlands Combined Authority area.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including securing over one million laptops and
tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. This includes over 700,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to schools, since the start of the outbreak.

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.


Ian Lavery:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children who required a laptop in Wansbeck to carry out online learning have received one.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £300 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including securing over one 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.

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.

As of 18 December 2020, 455 devices had been delivered to Northumberland local authority. Devices have also been allocated to academy trusts in Northumberland which are not included in this figure. Constituencies can be spread over numerous local authorities and, as laptops have been distributed by local authority region or school, the Department does not have the data on the number of devices delivered within the Wansbeck constituency.

More information on the number of laptops delivered has been published here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-progress-data.

Helen Hayes:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that students have the laptops and digital access required to learn remotely during periods of isolation or school closures.

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.

Despite unprecedented global demand, over 560,000 devices have already been delivered in 2020. By the end of this week, the Department will have delivered three quarters of a million devices.
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, such as EE, Three, O2 and Vodafone, 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 will be able to request free mobile data uplifts via the Get Help with Technology service.

In addition, the Department has already provided over 54,000 4G wireless routers, with free data for the academic year, and continue 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. Since April, over 2 million accounts have been set up.

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

Fleur Anderson:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many more laptops and data packages are needed to allow all pupils in Wandsworth to access learning online.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £300 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including securing over one 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, academy trusts, and local authorities in 2020.

As of 18 December 2020, 617 laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools in Wandsworth local authority. Devices have also been delivered to academy trusts in Wandsworth which are not included in these figures. This information is published here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-progress-data](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-progress-data).

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

Where schools need additional devices, to support disadvantaged children, they should contact the Department for Education’s service team at covid.technology@education.gov.uk. They should include the number of children in Years 3 to 11 who require support and an explanation of how they have gathered this evidence.
The Department has partnered with the UK’s leading mobile network operators, such as EE, Three, O2 and Vodafone, 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 will be able to request free mobile data uplifts via the Get Help with Technology service.

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

Angela Rayner:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) primary and (b) secondary school pupils who do not have a laptop or mobile device and cannot access remote learning in (i) Tameside and (ii) Oldham.

Angela Rayner:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many laptops and mobile devices have been distributed by his Department to pupils to enable them to access remote learning in (a) Tameside and (b) Oldham since March 2020.

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 700,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities by 11 January.

The Department has estimated the need for devices and internet connectivity by using data on the number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals, alongside data from Ofcom.

All schools in Tameside and Oldham can order their allocation of laptops and tablets and request connectivity support. As of 12 January, 1,086 devices have been delivered directly to Tameside local authority and 1,329 devices have been delivered directly to Oldham local authority. Devices have also been allocated to academy trusts that include schools in Tameside and Oldham that are not included in this figure.

The Department has partnered with the UK’s leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online as well as delivering 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home. This offer is available to all schools in England.

The Department is grateful to EE, O2, Sky Mobile, Smarty, Tesco Mobile, Three, Virgin Mobile, and Vodafone. We continue to invite a range of mobile network providers to support the offer.
Children: Day Care

Ellie Reeves:
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many early years childcare providers have closed in each of the last five years; and what estimate he has made of the number of such providers that will close in the next 12 months.

Vicky Ford:
This is a matter for Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman. I have asked her to write to the hon. Member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Kim Johnson:
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the sustainability of nursery and childminder provision of funding places on current occupancy; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reverting to funding on the basis of pre-pandemic occupancy rates to support that sector.

Vicky Ford:
During the COVID-19 outbreak, we have provided unprecedented support to the early years sector by continuing to fund the free childcare entitlements, making grants and loans available, ensuring early years providers can access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for their non-government funded income and ensuring that childminders can access the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

While we recognise that childcare attendance has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, we saw attendance rise over the autumn term from 482,000 on 10 September 2020 to 792,000 on 10 December 2020. On 17 December 2020, the government therefore announced a return to funding early years settings on the basis on attendance. Under these arrangements, local authorities should ensure that providers are not penalised for short-term absences of children (for example, sickness, arriving late or leaving early, or a family emergency) through withdrawing funding, but use their discretion where absence is recurring or for extended periods, taking into account the reason for the absence and the impact on the provider.

The national lockdown announced by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, on 4 January 2021 means that the number of children attending childcare will drop, although early years settings remain open for all.

We stay in regular contact with the early years sector and have heard from them already on this subject. We publish regular official statistics on attendance in early years settings here: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak. The next release is due on Tuesday 19 January 2021. We will be closely monitoring both parental take-up of places and the capacity and responses of providers and will keep under constant review whether further action is needed.
Children: Health

Jon Trickett:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of UNICEF ranking the UK 27 out of 38 OECD and EU countries for mental wellbeing, physical health and academic and social skills.

Vicky Ford:

The government has made the attainment, health and wellbeing of children and young people a priority. Many of the challenges set out require a cross-government approach.

School standards in England have improved overall since 2010. 86% of schools are now rated good or outstanding – up from 68% in 2010. Over the last 9 years, the percentage of children meeting expectations in the phonics screening check has gone up from 58% to 82%. We achieved our highest ever score in an international assessment of reading in 2016. There has been a 9-percentage point rise in key stage 2 maths results since new tests were introduced in 2016, and a significant improvement in maths scores for 15 year olds in the latest Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) international test results, driven by a decrease in the number of low attainers. Results from the Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) 2019 international test results show our year 5 and year 9 pupils continue to perform strongly on the international stage - we particularly welcome the significant improvement in attainment for our year 5 pupils since 2015.

We are reforming the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and over 3,000 schools are early adopters this year. We have strengthened the high-level curriculum summaries and early learning goals, including a focus on areas we know are key predictors of later success: communication and language, literacy and mathematics.

The government plans to invest over £7 billion during 2020/21 academic year, to ensure there is a place in education or training for every 16 to 19-year-old who wants one (this includes spending on apprenticeships). Provision is funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, which works with local authorities to ensure that provision meets the needs of young people in their area.

Under Raising the Participation Age (RPA) requirements, all young people in England are now required to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday. In practice most young people continue until the end of the academic year in which they turn 18. More information can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/raising-the-participation-age.

The Department for Education (DfE) works closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. There is a joint programme overseeing the implementation of the Transforming Children and Young People’s Mental Health Provision green paper. This includes the provision of mental health support teams linked to groups of
schools and colleges and part of a wider NHS England investment in children and young people’s mental health, which is transforming how specialist services are provided and make links to other services.

DfE also works closely with DHSC and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) on physical health, contributing to the government’s childhood obesity plan. The healthy schools rating scheme celebrates the positive actions that schools are delivering in terms of healthy living, healthy eating and physical activity, and supports schools in identifying further actions that they can take in this area.

The School sport and activity action plan sets out how we are working to support the Chief Medical Officer’s recommendation that all children and young people should have access to 60 minutes a day of physical activity. We have also introduced a new curriculum covering relationships, sex and health education, which became mandatory from September 2020 and means that all pupils will be taught about ways to be physically and mentally healthy and about healthy relationships with their peers.

Children: Internet

Mr Barry Sheerman:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help ensure that parents and carers of children in receipt of Government funded laptops for remote learning during the covid-19 outbreak have access to support to protect those children from online harms.

Mr Barry Sheerman:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that teachers have access to (a) information and (b) support on (i) identifying and (ii) resolving risks of exposure to online harms in children working remotely during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:  
As part of over £400 million invested to support access to remote education and online social care, over 1.3 million laptops and tablets are being secured for disadvantaged children and young people. This figure includes over 700,000 that have already been delivered since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.

We have been clear throughout the COVID-19 outbreak that schools and colleges must continue to pay regard to the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, both online and offline. Since 1 September 2020, this guidance has included additional information to help schools and colleges keep children safe online. It includes, for the first time, resources on safe remote education, virtual lessons and live streaming and information on online safety for parents and carers. Relevant training and guidance from the EdTech Demonstrator Network are also available for all schools.
In addition, the Department has provided guidance on safeguarding and remote education to support schools and colleges plan lessons safely, including helpful resources for parents and carers on online safety. Relevant guidance can be found here: [https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-and-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-and-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19).

The Department’s guidance for full opening schools also includes signposting to resources to support the delivery of safe remote education, which can be found at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools).


Sarah Owen: [136065]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with representatives of BT on the provision of internet connections for disadvantaged school pupils during school closures due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Sarah Owen: [136066]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason his Department decided to decline BT's offer of subsidised internet packages for disadvantaged school pupils during the covid-19 outbreak.

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.

From June to September 2020, the Department ran a pilot in partnership with BT to provide children and young people with free access to a BT Wi-Fi hotspot. Through the pilot, 10,000 BT codes were sent to local authorities and trusts for them to pass on to families so that they could access a BT Wi-Fi connection until 31 December 2020.

This offer was not extended to schools, local authorities or trusts outside of the pilot because following testing it did not suitably meet children and young people’s needs for a reliable and consistent internet connection to access remote education.

We are grateful to BT for partnering with the Department in order to help disadvantaged children continue to access remote education in the event of local disruptions, and we are grateful for their continued support with our mobile data uplift offer.

We have already provided 4G wireless routers, with free data for the academic year, and continue to provide 4G wireless routers where children need to access remote education.
We have partnered with the UK’s leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online as well as delivering 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home.

We continue to invite a range of mobile network providers to support the offer.

Class Sizes: Coronavirus

Naz Shah:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the recommended maximum classroom size is for (a) primary and (b) secondary schools during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

During this period of national lockdown, schools should only allow vulnerable children and the children of critical workers to attend face-to-face education. Every school will have a different number of children who need to attend. It is important that on site provision is provided for these pupils, there is no limit to the numbers of these pupils who may attend, and schools should not limit attendance of these groups. This is because we are reducing overall social contact across areas and the country rather than individually by each institution.

On 7 January, the Department published further guidance which sets out what all schools will need to do during the COVID-19 outbreak from January 2021. This includes the system of controls which schools must continue adopt to the fullest extent possible to reduce risks in their school and create an inherently safer environment. The guidance is available here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf.

Schools should continue to minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate and by maintaining the distance between individuals. Whilst schools are attended by vulnerable children and the children of critical workers only, where possible schools should keep group sizes small. Any additional space available where there are lower numbers of pupils attending should be used wherever possible to maximise the distance between pupils and between staff and other people.

Digital Technology: Education

Dame Angela Eagle:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason his Department’s digital education platform programme provides funding support for schools to set up (a) G Suite for Education and (b) Office 365 Education but not for other digital education and learning platforms.
Dame Angela Eagle:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will expand its digital education platform programme to include other digital education and learning platforms other than G Suite for Education and Office 365 Education.

Dame Angela Eagle:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what comparative estimate he has made of the cost of using (a) G Suite for Education and Office 365 Education in schools during the covid-19 outbreak and (b) other available digital education and learning platforms.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services. This has included £14.3 million to provide grants to schools to be set up on a digital platform.

Google’s G-Suite for Education and Microsoft’s Office 365 Education platforms are free-to-use for schools and meet their needs by providing the right breadth of tools and technology to support remote education. As of 5 January, 6,900 schools have applied to the Department’s digital platforms programme that forms part of the Get Help With Technology programme. Funding provided by the Department means that schools can access technical support from accredited Google and Microsoft to:

- set up all staff and student user accounts for the platform
- provide handover training and technical advice

The funded support is only provided to schools and colleges that:

- do not have a digital education platform
- have access to Office 365 Education or G Suite for Education, but are not yet set up to assign work and communicate with pupils

Google and Microsoft platforms bring together the school community, pool resources and give pupils the opportunity to work with their peers remotely. They also enable:

- Video and chat communications to deliver live lessons remotely, group meetings and presentations, broadcast assemblies
- Recording of virtual lessons for future re-iteration of key learning
- Secure file and folder storage for teaching and staff planning resources
- Submission of assignments and provision of feedback to pupils to support ongoing assessment for learning
- Teachers and pupils to work together through supervised group calls and via structured groups to support teaching, learning, and planning

The key for school leaders website provides feature comparisons and case studies on how schools are making the most of these platforms, to help schools make the most appropriate choice.
The EdTech Demonstrator network is also in place to offer advice, guidance and training in ways these platforms can be used effectively to strengthen remote education arrangements and reduce teacher workload.

**Education: Coronavirus**

Rachael Maskell:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the transmission rate is of covid-19 for (a) students in (i) higher and (ii) further education, (b) secondary school pupils, (c) primary school pupils and (d) nursery-aged pupils.

Nick Gibb:  
The Department does not hold data on what the transmission rate is of COVID-19 for (a) students in (i) higher and (ii) further education, (b) secondary school pupils, (c) primary school pupils and (d) nursery-aged pupils.

Advice from the Children's Task and Finish group is that children are at very low risk of serious illness from COVID-19, and there is also no current evidence that staff are at higher risk of infection than those working in other sectors:  

The safety and wellbeing of staff, students and pupils in education and childcare settings is always our priority. The Government is doing all it can to minimise the risks to those working and studying in nurseries, schools, colleges, and universities in this unprecedented situation, while mitigating the impact on education.

On 7 January, the Department published guidance to universities and students returning to higher education in the spring term. This guidance sets out how the Department will support universities to enable students to return as safely as possible following the winter break, by staggering this process following the period of national lockdown and to facilitate testing for all. The guidance is available here:  

The Department also published ‘Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak’, which sets out what all schools will need to do during the COVID-19 outbreak from January 2021:  

The Department also published guidance for all early years settings and local authorities in England, which provides information on how the national lockdown restrictions to control the spread of COVID-19 impact early years and childcare settings:  
On 8 January, the Department published guidance on actions for further education colleges during the COVID-19 outbreak:

The Department will continue to keep our plans under review and ensure our position is informed by the latest evidence.

Rachael Maskell:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the covid-19 infection rate is for (a) students in (i) higher and (ii) further education, (b) secondary school pupils, (c) primary school pupils and (d) nursery-aged pupils.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not hold data on COVID-19 infection rates amongst (a) students in (i) higher and (ii) further education, (b) secondary school pupils, (c) primary school pupils and (d) nursery-aged pupils.

The Office for National Statistics publishes figures on infection rates by age group:

Section 5 shows test positivity rates broken down by age. The age categories are:

- “age two years to school Year 6” includes those children in primary school and below
- “school Year 7 to school Year 11” includes those children in secondary school
- “school Year 12 to age 24 years” includes those young adults who may be in further or higher education

Advice from the Children's Task and Finish group is that children are at very low risk of serious illness from COVID-19, and there is also no current evidence that staff are at higher risk of infection than those working in other sectors. This advice is available here:

The safety and wellbeing of staff, students and pupils in schools and nurseries is always our priority. The Government is doing all it can to minimise the risks to those working and studying in our registered childcare settings, schools, colleges, and universities in this unprecedented situation, while mitigating the impact on education.

On 7 January, the Department published guidance to universities and students returning to higher education in the spring term. This guidance sets out how we will support universities to enable students to return as safely as possible following the winter break, by staggering this process following the period of national lockdown and to facilitate testing for all. The guidance is available here:


The Department will continue to keep its plans under review and ensure its position is informed by the latest evidence.

**Rachael Maskell:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish his equality impact assessments on the impact of covid-19 on end of year assessments.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government announced that, from 5 January 2021, schools and colleges have moved to remote provision, except for vulnerable children and children of critical workers. In light of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department will not be asking students to sit GCSE, AS and A level exams this summer as planned.

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.

There will be a rapid consultation on how to fairly award all pupils, including private candidates and students taking vocational qualifications, with a grade that ensures they can progress to the next stage of their lives. A full equalities impact assessment, informed by the results of the consultation, will be published in due course.

Education: Exports

Emma Hardy:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress his Department has made in meeting the Government's International Education Strategy export targets.

Michelle Donelan:

In December 2020, the Department for Education published updated statistics showing that education exports and transnational education activity generated £23.3 billion for the UK economy in 2018, an increase of 8.9% since 2017.

In 2019, the International Education Strategy set out the government’s ambition to increase the value of education exports to £35 billion per year and increase the total number of international students choosing to study in the UK higher education system each year to 600,000 by 2030.

The latest published data on the number of international students choosing to study at a UK higher education institution, which precedes the publication of the International Education Strategy in March 2019, shows that the UK hosted around 490,000 international students in the 2018/19 academic year. Recent UCAS data shows that there has been a 11% increase in acceptances for non-UK full-time undergraduate applicants between 2019 and 2020, though this is dependent on ongoing developments in the context of the global health situation. Currently, it is too early to assess the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the number of international students studying in the UK.

As part of the government’s commitment to review progress of the International Education Strategy, the Department for Education is working with the Department for International Trade to produce an update to the International Education Strategy, to be published early this year, outlining plans to support recovery and growth in the sector towards this education exports ambition, through the outbreak and beyond.


Financial Services: Education

Lee Anderson:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of provision of financial education at a primary education level; if he will make an assessment of the potential contribution of Talk Money Week to improving that provision; and if he will make a statement on the educational value of talking about money with children and young people.
Nick Gibb:
Education on financial matters ensures that pupils are well prepared to manage their money, make sound financial decisions and know where to seek further information, if required. In 2014, for the first time, financial literacy was made statutory within the National Curriculum as part of the citizenship curriculum for 11 to 16 year olds.

The Department also introduced a rigorous mathematics curriculum, which provides pupils with the knowledge and skills to make important financial decisions. The Government has published statutory programmes of study for mathematics and citizenship that outline what pupils should learn about financial education from key stages one to four.

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

The Department trusts schools to use their professional judgement and understanding of their pupils to develop the right teaching approach for their particular school, drawing on the expertise of subject associations and organisations such as Young Money.

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

The Department supports wider initiatives that aim to improve financial confidence and resilience, such as Talk Money Week, led by the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) as a platform for all UK citizens, including at home within families and at school, to talk openly about managing money. The Department does not plan to make its own assessment of the contribution of Talk Money Week to improving the provision of financial education at primary education level but will continue to work closely with MaPS and other stakeholders such as Her Majesty’s Treasury, to consider what can be learned from such initiatives and how to provide further support for the teaching of financial education in schools.

GCE A-level: Assessments
Justin Madders:
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many A-Level Centre Assessed Grade appeals have been successful; and what the reasons given were for the decisions on those appeals.
Justin Madders:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many A-Level Centre Assessed Grades have been overturned on the basis of malpractice or maladministration.

Nick Gibb:

These are matters for the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and I have asked its interim Chief Regulator, Simon Lebus, to write directly to the hon. Member and a copy of his reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Nurseries: Finance

Dan Jarvis:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the effect on the viability of (a) academy trust nurseries and (b) maintained school nurseries of local authorities returning to funding following the child from 1 January 2021.

Vicky Ford:

During the COVID-19 outbreak, we have provided unprecedented support to the early years sector by continuing to fund the free childcare entitlements, making grants and loans available and ensuring early years providers can access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for their non-government funded income, and childminders the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

While we recognise childcare attendance has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, we saw attendance rise over the autumn term from 482,000 on 10 September 2020 to 792,000 on 10 December 2020. On 17 December 2020, the government therefore announced a return to funding early years settings on the basis on attendance.

Under these arrangements, local authorities should ensure that providers are not penalised for short-term absences of children (for example sickness, arriving late or leaving early, or a family emergency) through withdrawing funding but use their discretion where absence is recurring or for extended periods, taking into account the reason for the absence and the impact on the provider.

The national lockdown announced by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, on 4 January 2021 means the number of children attending childcare will drop although early years settings remain open for all.

We stay in regular contact with the early years sector and have heard from them already on this subject. We publish regular official statistics on attendance in early years settings, available here: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak. The next release is due on Tuesday 19 January 2021. We will be closely monitoring both parental take-up of places and the capacity and responses of providers and will keep under constant review whether further action is needed.
Outdoor Education: Coronavirus

Justin Madders: [131320]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his timescale is for announcing plans for the re-opening of the outdoor educational residential centre sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Madders: [131321]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of sector specific support for outdoor educational residential centres in response to the effect of ongoing covid-19 restrictions on those centres.

Nick Gibb:

Following the National Lockdown announced on 4 January 2021 by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, further guidance has been published for schools: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak. Schools are advised against all educational visits at this time. This advice will be reviewed before the end of February 2021.

Officials will continue to work with industry bodies and sector representatives to address the issues arising from the COVID-19 outbreak, and will help them plan for the safe reintroduction of educational visits, including residential educational visits, when it is safe to do so.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government has sought to protect people’s jobs and livelihoods across the UK, support businesses, and public services. The Government has spent over £280 billion to do so.

This includes small business grants, the coronavirus loan guarantee schemes, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), the deferral of VAT and income tax payments, and more. The measures introduced have been designed to be accessible to businesses in most sectors and across the UK.

Further measures have been announced by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer that build on the significant support already available, as well as set out how current support will evolve and adapt. These include the extension of the CJRS until the end of April 2021, the extension of the deadline for applications for the Bounce Back Loan scheme and other loan schemes until 31 March 2021, and increased support for the self-employed through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grants.

Furthermore, businesses in England that are forced to close due to national or local restrictions will be able to claim up to £3,000 per month. Local authorities in England will also receive one-off funding of £1.1 billion to support businesses more broadly over the coming months as a key part of local economies.

The Government will continue to work closely with local authorities, businesses, business representative organisations, and the financial services sector to monitor the implementation of current support and understand whether there is additional need. Businesses can also access tailored advice through the Business Support Helpline (FREEPHONE 0800 998 1098), via the Business Support website at: www.gov.uk/business-support-helpline or through their local Growth Hubs in England.

**Overseas Students**

Emma Hardy:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure the UK remains an attractive destination for education for international students.

Michelle Donelan:

The government remains clear that our world-leading universities, which thrive on being global institutions, are and will always be open to international students.

This has been particularly evident since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, where the government has worked closely with the higher education sector to ensure existing rules and processes are as flexible as possible, so that international students wanting to study at UK universities remotely or in person, where appropriate under the current circumstances, can do so. This includes the ability to engage via distance learning and blended learning for the duration of the 2020/21 academic year, provided that students intend to transition to face-to-face learning as soon as circumstances allow.

The UK was one of the first countries to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak by introducing comprehensive immigration flexibility for international students and staff, and the government has implemented a number of concessions to assist visa holders in the UK who have been impacted by global travel and health restrictions. This has included offering extensions of visas for those whose leave expired and relaxing the rules on visa switching in the UK, as well as confirming that existing international students who have been studying by distance/blended learning will remain eligible to apply for the new graduate route. This will offer a non-extendable period of leave to stay and work in the UK at any skill level for 2 years (3 for doctoral graduates), provided they are in the UK by 6 April 2021 and meet the other requirements of the route. The graduate route represents a significant improvement in our offer to international students and will help ensure our higher education sector remains competitive internationally. In December 2020, the government also confirmed that students commencing a one-year Masters programme in January 2021 will remain eligible for the graduate route even if they are studying remotely, provided they enter the UK before 27 September 2021 and complete the final semester of their studies in the UK.

To further enhance the UK’s reputation as an attractive study destination, the government launched the student route in October 2020. This route streamlines the immigration process for international students, improving student experience; allows
for an extended 6-month application window for prospective students; and allows greater scope for international students to apply for further leave as a student or to switch into other routes from inside the UK (in-country switching). This, coupled with the graduate route, means the UK now has a world-class student visa offer befitting our world-class higher education sector.

The picture is looking more positive now than it did in the summer when the higher education sector projected a large decline in international student numbers. Recent UCAS data shows that there has been a 11% increase in acceptances for non-UK full-time undergraduate applicants between 2019 and 2020, although this is dependent on ongoing developments in context of the global health situation.

We are doing our utmost to continue to attract and support international students as well as the sector during this unprecedented time. We continue to work with the sector, devolved administrations and posts overseas delivering a package of bespoke communications that directly targets international students, making clear our world-leading UK offer. As part of this communications activity, the government approved £1 million for the British Council-led Study UK campaign to help drive international student intake from 16 global markets and further promote the graduate route.

Professor Sir Steve Smith, the UK’s new International Education Champion who was appointed in the summer of 2020, will also assist in opening up export growth opportunities for the whole UK education sector, tackling international challenges such as attracting international students to both our schools and universities and helping to forge lasting global connections. The government has also committed to publish an International Education Strategy update (in early 2021), which will respond to the new context and challenges that are posed across all education settings.

### Pre-school Education

**Wera Hobhouse:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the changes in the (a) numbers and (b) hours of children attending early years settings since February 2019.

**Wera Hobhouse:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the changes in the number of eligible two year olds taking up 15 hours of funded childcare since March 2020.

**Vicky Ford:**

From January 2019 to January 2020, the numbers of children benefiting from funded entitlements at early years settings decreased slightly. However, the percentage of children aged 3 and 4 benefiting from funded entitlements at these settings remained stable, whilst the percentage of eligible 2-year-olds benefiting from funded entitlements increased slightly. Full data is available at: [https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/28af6122-62d8-4901-beb4-e02d9e56f069](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/28af6122-62d8-4901-beb4-e02d9e56f069).
From January 2019 to January 2020, the number of hours of funded childcare used by children in early years settings increased, with a higher percentage of all age groups taking between 12.5 and 15 hours per week, the highest band. Full data is available at: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/411250f5-91ca-4269-8ef5-72891b3f3216.

To understand the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, wave two of the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers and COVID-19 assessed attendance in September/October for open school-based providers, open group-based providers, and open childminders. Attendance during the survey was compared to the expected attendance for a typical autumn term. The survey showed that, on average, fewer children attended than would have been expected to attend across all age groups. The survey is available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/945249/SCEYP_COVID-19_Wave2_Main_Report_171220.pdf. Further information is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/survey-of-childcare-and-early-years-providers-and-coronavirus-covid-19-wave-2.

[1] The figures for four-year-olds do not sum to 100% as 63.5% of four-year-olds are in maintained schools, benefiting from over 15 funded hours of provision per week.

### Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

**Caroline Lucas:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will provide funding to enable private early years nurseries to close to all but vulnerable children and those of key workers during the national lockdown.

**Vicky Ford:**

On 4 January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, announced all early years settings will remain open to all children despite the national lockdown and will continue to allow all children to attend full time or their usual timetable hours. This includes early years registered nurseries and childminders, maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in schools and other pre-reception provision on school sites. Only vulnerable children and children of critical workers should attend on-site reception classes.

Early years settings have been open to all children since 1 June 2020 and current evidence suggests that pre-school children (0 to 5 years of age) are less susceptible to infection and are unlikely to be playing a driving role in transmission.

Early years settings were one of the first sectors to have restrictions lifted last summer, in recognition of the key role they play in society. Childminders and nursery staff across the country have worked hard to keep settings open through the COVID-19 outbreak so that young children can be educated, and parents can work. The earliest years are the most crucial point of child development and attending early education lays the foundation for lifelong learning and supports children’s social and emotional development. We continue to prioritise keeping early years settings open in
full because of the clear benefits to children’s education and wellbeing and to support working parents. Caring for the youngest age group is not something that can be done remotely.

The national lockdown announced by the Prime Minister on 4 January 2021 means the number of children attending childcare will be lower even though early years settings may welcome all children.

Under these arrangements local authorities should ensure that providers are not penalised for short-term absences of children (for example sickness, arriving late or leaving early, or a family emergency) through withdrawing funding but use their discretion where absence is recurring or for extended periods, taking into account the reason for the absence and the impact on the provider.

We stay in regular contact with the early years sector and have heard from them already on this subject. We publish regular official statistics on attendance in early years settings here: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak. This will next be updated on 19 January 2021. We will be closely monitoring both parental take-up of places and the capacity and responses of providers and will keep the need for further action under constant review.

Apsana Begum: [134224]
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what scientific evidence has been provided to the Government on the transmission of covid-19 in early years settings.

Vicky Ford:
Ensuring the safety of children, the workforce and families is our overriding priority.

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

Public Health England (PHE) advice remains that the risk of transmission and infection is low if early years settings follow the system of controls, which reduce risks and create inherently safer environments. The following report, from PHE, shows that, at present, under 5s have the lowest confirmed case rate of all age groups: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports.

Early years settings have been open to all children since 1 June 2020 and there is no evidence that the early years sector has contributed to a rise in COVID-19 cases within the community. Early modelling evidence from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies showed that early years provision had a smaller relative impact on transmission rate when modelled with both primary schools and secondary schools.

Pre-school Education: Finance

Dr Dan Poulter: [130684]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of funding for maintained nursery schools to ensure that these organisations can continue to provide childcare services at full capacity as the UK emerges from the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

Maintained nursery schools are an important part of the early years sector and provide valuable services, especially in disadvantaged areas.

As part of the recent Spending Review, the government has confirmed a continuation of around £60m of supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools (MSN) in the financial year 2021-22. This includes £23 million of supplementary funding that the government confirmed in August will be provided to local authorities for the summer term in 2021.

The department continues to consider what is required to ensure a clear, long-term picture of funding for MNS, and will say more about this soon. This government remains committed to the long-term funding of MNS, and any reform to the way they are funded will be accompanied by appropriate funding protections.

Private Education: Remote Education

Naz Shah: [135969]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether independent schools are eligible to receive support under the scheme to provide laptops to children to support remote learning.

Naz Shah: [135970]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many laptops (a) were allocated from March to December 2020 and (b) he plans to allocate in 2021, to schools in Bradford West constituency.

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 700,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to local authority maintained schools, trusts and local authorities by 11 January. Support through this programme does not cover schools that are not state funded.
The Department has delivered 1,980 laptops and tablets directly to Bradford local authority. We have also delivered devices to academy trusts that include schools in Bradford, which are not included in this figure. Data on the number of laptops delivered by parliamentary constituency is not available. This is because most laptops have been delivered to academy trusts and local authorities, which are responsible for distributing them to schools, usually in multiple constituencies.

**Pupils: Disadvantaged**

Sir John Hayes:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the imposition of covid-19 lockdown restrictions on disadvantaged pupils.

Vicky Ford:

All children have had their education disrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak, but it is likely that disadvantaged and vulnerable groups will have been hardest hit. To address the impacts of COVID-19 disruption, we have launched a £650 million universal catch-up premium, and a £350 million National Tutoring Programme (NTP) for disadvantaged pupils. The NTP went live on 2 November 2020, and schools are now able to access tuition to support disadvantaged pupils that needed the most help to catch up.

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

We know that access to mental health support has been more important than ever during the COVID-19 outbreak. To ensure that staff were equipped to support wellbeing as children and young people returned to schools and colleges, we have made it a central part of our guidance on the return to school. We have supported this with a range of training and materials, including webinars, which have been accessed by thousands of education staff and accelerating training on how to teach about mental health as part of the new Relationships, Sex and Health curriculum, so that all pupils can benefit from this long-term requirement.

To provide further support during the autumn and spring terms, the Department for Education has worked with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), Health Education England, Public Health England, and key voluntary sector organisations, to launch Wellbeing for Education Return. This project, backed by £8 million, will train local experts to provide additional training, advice and resources to schools and colleges, to help support pupil and student wellbeing, resilience, and recovery. It will give staff the confidence to support pupils and students, their parents, carers, and their own colleagues, and know how and where to access appropriate specialist support where needed.

To increase support further in the long term, we remain committed to our joint green paper delivery programme with DHSC and NHS England, including introducing new
mental health support teams linked to schools and colleges, providing training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges, and testing approaches to faster access to NHS specialist support.

## Remote Education

**Caroline Lucas:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with internet providers on provision of free internet data to children without internet access for online learning during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

We are partnering with 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.

We are grateful to Three, EE, Tesco Mobile, Smarty, Sky Mobile, Virgin Mobile, O2 and Vodafone for their collaboration. We continue to invite a range of mobile network providers to support the offer.

The country’s major telecommunications providers are also working to make it easier for families to access selected educational resources by temporarily exempting them from data charges.

We have also provided over 54,000 4G wireless routers, with free data for the academic year, and continue to provide 4G wireless routers where children need to access remote education.

**Damian Hinds:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made from previous periods of remote learning of the level of use by (a) schools, (b) pupils and (c) families of (i) Oak National Academy learning, (ii) third party online virtual learning environments, (iii) schools’ own materials, (iv) broadcast TV, (v) BBC Bitesize and (vi) others.

**Nick Gibb:**

Given the critical importance of ensuring that all children and young people continue to learn during the national lockdown, we have updated the remote education guidance for schools and colleges to clarify and strengthen expectations while on-site attendance is restricted, drawing on our evolving understanding of best practice in remote education.

Schools are expected to provide a set number of hours of remote education for pupils – increased from the government’s previous minimum expectations – that includes time for independent study and also either recorded or live direct teaching. Pupils will be set between three and five hours per day of remote education depending on their age, with daily check-ins on their engagement, and involving the effective use of digital education platforms.
To help schools and colleges meet the remote education expectations set out in guidance, the Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services. A comprehensive package of support is available to help schools meet these expectations which can be accessed through the Get Help with Remote Education page on GOV.UK: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-remote-education.

The Department has made £4.84 million available for Oak both for the summer term of the academic year 2019-20, and then for the 2020-21 academic year, to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects for Reception up to Year 11. Since the start of the autumn term, 2,280,706 users have visited the Oak National Academy platform and 12,998,483 lessons have been viewed (as of 4 January 2021). For schools that do not already have a full remote education curriculum or resources in place or where staffing capacity is challenging, we strongly recommend that they consider using Oak National Academy or other high-quality resource providers. We have also published guidance on accessing and buying remote education resources, available here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-with-accessing-and-buying-resources-for-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 DfE Digital Platforms programme that forms part of the Get Help With Technology programme.

In addition, the BBC has adapted their education support for the spring term 2021 and will be making educational content available on the television. Bitesize Daily primary and secondary will also air every day on BBC Red Button as well as episodes being available on demand on BBC iPlayer. This TV offer is in addition to the BBC’s online offer, which parents, children, and teachers can access when and where they need it.

### Schools: Broadband

**Wes Streeting:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many 4G wireless routers he (a) has delivered since the start of the covid-19 outbreak and (b) plans to deliver, to schools in England.

**Wes Streeting:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many laptops his Department has delivered to schools in each (a) local authority area and (b) parliamentary constituency in England during the covid-19 outbreak.

**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 700,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities by 11 January.

The Department has published the latest data on the number of laptops have been delivered as of 11 January by local authority area and academy trusts here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-progress-data.

Data on the number of laptops delivered by parliamentary constituency is not available. This is because most laptops have been delivered to academy trusts and local authorities, which are responsible for distributing them to schools, usually in multiple constituencies.

We have delivered over 54,000 4G wireless routers, to schools, academy trusts and local authorities. Data on the local authority and parliamentary constituency to which routers have been delivered is not available.

We have also partnered with the UK’s leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online as well as delivering 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home. For this we are grateful to EE, O2, Sky Mobile, Smarty, Tesco Mobile, Three, Virgin Mobile, and Vodafone. We continue to invite a range of mobile network providers to support the offer.

### Schools: Catering

**Alex Norris:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support the school catering industry during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

Until the end of the summer term, schools could continue to make payments to suppliers under the provisions of the Cabinet Office guidance for public bodies in ‘Procurement Policy Note 02/20’ and ‘Procurement Policy Note 04/20’ if they considered it appropriate in order to maintain delivery of critical services. These are available here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0220-supplier-relief-due-to-covid-19 and:


Companies within the catering industry may also be able to claim support under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended to 30 April 2021.

### Schools: Coronavirus

**Tulip Siddiq:**
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the data his Department holds on the effect of school bubble isolation following positive covid-19 cases on local transmission of covid-19.

**Nick Gibb:**
The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has commissioned the COVID-19 Schools Infection Survey (SIS) which aims to investigate the prevalence of current COVID-19 infection and COVID-19 antibodies among pupils and staff in sampled primary and secondary schools in England. In addition, it aims to examine the impact of attendance of pupils and staff, school implementation measures and outbreak investigations. The first round of survey results was published on the 17 December 2020. More information is available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/covid19schoolsinfectionsurveyround1england/november2020.

The ONS has also commissioned the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS) which looks to identify the percentage of the population testing positive for COVID-19 and whether they have symptoms or not. The latest survey results were published on 18 December 2020. More information is available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurveypilot/18december2020#measuring-the-data.

When comparing data across the two surveys, prevalence figures from the SIS are lower than prevalence within equivalent age-matched groups from CIS data. This suggests that many positive cases are staying away from school, in line with COVID-19 safety guidelines. The Department continues to review data, analysis, and advice from several different sources, including the ONS, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, Public Health England, and the Joint Biosecurity Centre, to ensure our policies are guided by the most up to date scientific evidence.

**Sir Alan Campbell:**
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Government has plans to publish additional advice on the return after the 2020 Christmas holidays for middle schools operating within the three-tier school system during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**
From Wednesday 6 January a new national lockdown came into effect and schools should already be following the new rules. Schools, including middle schools, should only allow vulnerable children and the children of critical workers to attend face to face education. All other pupils will learn remotely.
We know that receiving face to face education is best for children’s mental health and for their educational achievement, and we will review the restrictions on schools to ensure that children and young people return to face to face education as soon as the pressures are easing on the NHS. Limiting attendance at this time is about reducing the number of contacts that people have with other households given the rapidly rising numbers of cases across the country and the intense pressure on the NHS.

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

Caroline Lucas:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will set out guidance on what schools should do in the event that they have more vulnerable and critical worker children than their covid-19-secure risk assessments allow for; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

During this period of national lockdown, schools should only allow vulnerable children and the children of critical workers to attend face-to-face education. Limiting attendance does not suggest that schools and colleges have become less safe; limiting attendance is about supporting the reduction of the overall number of social contacts in our communities. 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 to reduce all our social contacts wherever possible.

Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 and EU transition response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors. Children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school if required. Schools should speak to parents and carers to identify who needs to go to school, and parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can. Schools are expected to allow and strongly encourage vulnerable children and young people to attend during this period. Parents and carers of vulnerable children and young people are strongly encouraged to take up the place.

We know that 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. Schools should not limit attendance of these groups. This is because we are reducing overall social contact across areas and the country rather than individually by each institution.

For those who continue to go into schools, our priority is the safety and wellbeing of staff and pupils.

Schools will be familiar with much of this guidance, including the system of controls, which they have been implementing since the start of the autumn term.

The Department will continue to keep its plans under review and ensure our position is informed by the latest evidence.

**Rachael Maskell:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many volunteers have signed up to support the delivery of Lateral Flow Device tests in schools; and how those volunteers will be vetted to ensure the school site is safe.

**Nick Gibb:**

We are not collecting the data on the numbers of volunteers each school is recruiting. We have provided comprehensive guidance to schools on how asymptomatic testing should be operationalised. School and college leaders are in the best position to secure the necessary resource for testing, which is from within their own school and local communities.

Schools and colleges are responsible for ensuring that volunteer and test staff have passed the necessary assessments before testing begins, which are set out in the published NHS Test and Trace training guidance for schools and colleges. It is the responsibility of the schools or college to ensure all staff and volunteers on their site meet the appropriate safeguarding requirements, including Disclosure and Barring Service, in accordance with the existing Department for Education guidance.

**Rachael Maskell:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what training and support has been put in place for (a) school staff and (b) volunteers to provide Lateral Flow Device testing.

**Nick Gibb:**

Together with the Department for Health and Social Care and NHS Test and Trace, we have provided, and continue to provide, extensive support to help with testing. We have:

- Published guidance materials and ‘how to’ handbooks
- Run webinars
- Provided an online training package
- Established a dedicated DfE Helpline
- Provided leadership support to manage a test site alongside delivering education with guidance on logistics, strategic planning and the practicalities of delivering mass testing
- Clinical support, for children and young people whose physical and health needs prevent them from administering their own test, and where parents existing school staff cannot assist

All schools have access to commercial routes for hiring temporary, non-clinical workers, via a range of existing frameworks.
1,500 military personnel have been committed to supporting schools and colleges and deployments have already begun where these have been requested.

Schools will also receive financial support. A total of £78 million has been made available to meet the costs of testing and payments will be made to schools retrospectively.

Jamie Stone:
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether (a) primary and (b) secondary schools provide his Department with regular updates on covid-19 cases within their education facility.

Nick Gibb:
Primary and secondary schools are required to supply daily COVID-19 attendance data to the Department for both pupils and staff. This information is collected on electronic forms and submitted to the Department through an online portal.

Schools provide the numbers of pupils unable to attend face to face education or undertake remote learning according to the categories below:

- Suspected cases of COVID-19
- Confirmed cases of COVID-19
- Pupils who have been asked to remain at home due to potential contact with a case of COVID-19 within their setting
- Pupils who have been asked to remain at home due to potential contact with a case of COVID-19 outside of their setting, including self isolation.

Sarah Owen:
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the ability of schools to provide the covid-19 testing required to keep staff and students safe; and what additional funding he will provide to schools to support that testing.

Nick Gibb:
The delivery model for asymptomatic testing in schools is structured around schools’ ability to deliver the necessary tasks and roles required to deliver the tests in a safe environment for staff, pupils and volunteers. New technology that allows for rapid testing means that schools can now introduce our programme of asymptomatic testing in secondary schools and colleges. This is weekly testing for the workforce and daily testing for staff or students who are identified as close contacts of a positive case from within the education setting. Daily testing of contacts will mean that they do not need to isolate and can stay in face-to-face education.

A total of £78 million has been made available to meet the costs of testing.

Kate Osborne:
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking with headteachers to gather information on covid-19 in their local area and take steps to create a safer environment for children in schools.
Nick Gibb:
Schools supply daily attendance updates relating to COVID-19 to the Department through the schools’ online portal.

The Department also has well established Regional Education and Children’s Teams (REACTs) in place. Their purpose is to help coordinate how information and intelligence about local needs and circumstances is captured during the COVID-19 outbreak.

REACTs are in regular contact with local authorities (Directors of Children’s Services or their representatives) in England to discuss local plans and to offer support. Similarly, the same teams are in regular contact with a range of academy trusts. Through these conversations, REACTs discuss providing practical support to those local authority areas that require it. This includes a range of actions, from answering questions to action planning, and offering and negotiating resources to support local authorities.

On 7 January, the Department published further guidance which sets out what all schools will need to do during the COVID-19 outbreak from January 2021:

Schools will be familiar with much of this guidance, including the system of controls, which they have been implementing since the start of the autumn term.

The Department will continue to keep its plans under review and ensure our position is informed by the latest evidence.

Fleur Anderson:
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether teachers and school staff will receive priority for covid-19 vaccination to protect staff, reduce disruption and increase the chances of exams being able to go ahead in the summer.

Marco Longhi:
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps with Public Health England to ensure all school staff are vaccinated as soon as possible to enable schools to be reopened.

Nick Gibb:
Receiving face-to-face education is best for children’s mental health and for their educational achievement. The Department 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.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the UK should use and provide advice on who should be offered them.

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.

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

**Steve McCabe:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to issue additional guidance for schools on what constitutes a key or critical worker entitling a child to a school place.

**Rosie Cooper:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment the Government has made of the adequacy of guidance provided to schools on the attendance of children of keyworkers.

**Rosie Cooper:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that clear guidance is available to schools experiencing high demand for places for key worker children during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

**Nick Gibb:**

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

On 7 January, the Department published guidance that sets out what all schools will need to do during the national lockdown:


Guidance is also available on the children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings:


Children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school if required. Schools should speak to parents and carers to identify who needs to go to school. If parents and carers who are critical workers can work from home and look after their children at the same time then they should do so.

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 numbers of these pupils who may attend, and schools should not limit attendance of these groups. This is because we are reducing overall social contact across areas and the country rather than individually by each institution.
The Department will continue to review the restrictions on schools and will ensure that children and young people return to face-to-face education as soon as possible.

**Schools: Risk Management**

**Christian Wakeford:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of schools that have joined the Risk Protection Arrangement by (a) multi-academy trust and (b) local authority-maintained school and (c) financial year since 2014-15.

**Christian Wakeford:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the loss ratio for the Risk Protection Arrangement in each financial year since 2014-15.

**Christian Wakeford:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the financial effect on the Exchequer of long-tail liability risks from the Risk Protection Arrangement.

**Christian Wakeford:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the total cost of covid-19 related travel cancellation claims for schools which are covered by the Risk Protection Arrangement.

**Nick Gibb:**

Table 1, attached, shows the number of academies either part of multi academy trusts or themselves single academy trusts and Local Authority Maintained Schools (LAMS) that have joined the risk protection arrangement (RPA) by financial year, accounting for opt-outs. Please note that RPA for LAMS was only made available to them to join from 1 April 2020.

Table 2 in the attachment shows the loss ratio (claims made plus adjustment expenses divided by total membership fee) for the RPA in each financial year since 2014-15. The current incomplete financial year has not been provided.


The total cost to date of COVID-19 related travel cancellation claims made by RPA members is £45,207,903.11 which equates to 5,658 of claims.

**Attachments:**

1. 134286_134287_134288_134289_table_RPA_membership_and_loss_ratio.pdf
Schools: Standards

Kate Osborne:
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will cancel the publication of school performance tables in the 2020-21 academic year.

Nick Gibb:

Secondary Education: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many secondary schools were zoning children in year group bubbles; how effective that approach has been; how many entire year group bubbles have been isolated since the introduction of that approach; and how many have seen outbreaks within the bubbles.

Nick Gibb:
Since the start of the autumn term, schools have implemented a range of protective measures to minimise the risk of transmission. The measures set out in the Department’s guidance have been endorsed by Public Health England. The Department published further guidance on 7 January which sets out what all schools need to do during the COVID-19 outbreak from January 2021: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf.

Having assessed their risk, schools must work through the system of controls in our guidance, adopting measures to the fullest extent possible in a way that addresses the risk identified in their assessment, works for their school and allows them to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils. These decisions are made by head teachers who are best placed to decide the most appropriate measures for the circumstances in their own schools.

The measures include minimising contact between individuals and maintaining social distancing wherever possible. The overarching principle to apply is reducing the number of contacts between pupils and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate in ‘bubbles’ and through maintaining the distance between individuals. The Department does not require schools to provide data on how their individual establishments decide to group their pupils or on positive cases per group of pupils. The Department routinely publishes attendance data: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak.
Schools must take swift action when they become aware that someone who has attended has tested positive for COVID-19, having developed symptoms and taken a PCR test outside of school. Secondary schools participating in the rapid asymptomatic testing programme should follow the mass asymptomatic testing guidance to ensure contacts of the positive case are tested:

Any secondary schools not participating in the rapid asymptomatic testing programme must follow the advice in our restricting attendance during the national lockdown guidance:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf. They can contact the dedicated advice service for support, who will work with schools to guide them through the actions they need to take. Schools must send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 10 days from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive.

If schools have two or more confirmed cases within 10 days, or an overall rise in sickness absence where COVID-19 is suspected, they may have an outbreak and must continue to work with their local health protection team who will be able to advise if additional action is required. In some cases, health protection teams may recommend that a larger number of other pupils self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure, perhaps the whole site or year group. If schools are implementing the controls in our guidance, whole school closure based on cases within the school will not generally be necessary and should not be considered except on the advice of health protection teams.

Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Kim Johnson:  [134243]
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to provide (a) medical grade PPE, (b) frequent testing and (c) priority vaccination to teaching assistants and SEND support staff who work with vulnerable children who find it difficult to maintain social distancing.

Barbara Keeley:  [134387]
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support he is giving to special schools to ensure that children with Education, Health and Care Plans are able to attend school safely.

Duncan Baker:  [134610]
To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made for staff at complex needs schools to be considered for vaccination alongside their pupils who are on the priority list; and what support is being offered to teachers and teaching assistants in those schools as they have close contact with their pupils who are at high risk and vulnerable to covid-19.
Alexander Stafford:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that staff at SEN schools who are providing intimate personal care for their pupils are prioritised for covid-19 vaccination.

Vicky Ford:

During national lockdown restrictions, special schools and special post-16 settings should continue to welcome and encourage pupils to attend full-time (or as per their usual timetable) where parents and carers wishes for their child to be able to attend (or for post-16s, where the young person wishes to attend). This is because we know that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and their families, can be disproportionately impacted by being out of education. The Department for Education (DfE) has published new guidance on the period during the national lockdown, which can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak#history.

It is important that staff in these schools continue to be supported. The rapid asymptomatic testing programme will include testing staff, vulnerable pupils and students, and children of key workers, including those within special schools and special post-16 settings. Further announcements on the roll out of testing to staff in primary schools will follow in due course, to help support the reopening of education settings.

As outlined in the department’s published guidance, additional use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for COVID-19 related purposes is only needed in a small number of cases, such as if a pupil or student becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms and a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained, or when undertaking aerosol generating procedures. If a pupil or student already has routine intimate care needs that involve the use of PPE, the same PPE should continue to be used. Public Health England have advised that the current guidance on the system of controls, including the use of PPE and face coverings, should continue to be followed.

The PPE portal can be used by residential special settings to access COVID-19 PPE. These providers will have received an email invitation to register with the portal. Depending on local arrangements, special schools and special post-16 settings may be able to access PPE for their COVID-19 needs via their local authority or local resilience forum.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are independent experts advising the government on which vaccine(s) the UK should use and provide advice on who should be offered them. JCVI advises that the first priorities for the COVID-19 vaccination should be the prevention of mortality and the maintenance of the health and social care systems, and as the risk of mortality from COVID-19 increases with age, prioritisation is primarily based on age. This prioritisation captures almost all preventable deaths from COVID-19. In the next phase of the vaccine rollout, JCVI have asked that the Department of Health and Social Care consider
occupational vaccination in collaboration with other government departments. The DfE will input into this cross-governmental exercise.

### Students: Fees and Charges

**Taiwo Owatemi:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will review the equity of the level of university tuition fees as a result of students no longer being able to access important in-person resources under lockdown.

**Claire Hanna:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reducing tuition fees for the 2020-21 year to compensate students for the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on their university studies and experience.

**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 at the moment 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 is taking very seriously the potential impacts of COVID-19 on teaching and learning and is regularly engaging with all registered providers. It 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 requiring 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.

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 Office for Students 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/.

### Turing Scheme

**Taiwo Owatemi:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what comparative assessment he has made of the cost to the public purse of the Erasmus scheme and proposed Turing Scheme.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The UK is already a significant net contributor to Erasmus+. The government estimates that the UK’s notional contribution to the current (2014-2020) programme over its seven-year duration will be around €1.8 billion, whilst the UK expected to receive around €1 billion in receipts over the course of the programme.

The budget for the next programme is nearly doubling from €14 billion to €26 billion. In order to participate in Erasmus+, the EU proposed new terms of participation for the UK which included a participation fee in addition to a GDP-based contribution. The only terms on offer to the UK for Erasmus+ participation would mean that we would likely make a gross contribution in the region of £600 million per annum and pay in around £2 billion more than we would get out over the course of the next programme. We obviously respect the right of the EU to set the terms for participation in its programmes but, in this case, we did not believe those terms represented value for money for the UK taxpayer.

Therefore, as an independent and sovereign country, it is also right that we will proceed with the introduction of a new international educational exchange scheme that has a genuinely global reach. The government remains committed to international education exchanges and that is why we have committed to funding the Turing scheme.

The Turing scheme will be backed by over £100 million for the academic year. This includes the costs of administering the scheme, and I am pleased to confirm that the new scheme will be administered by the same consortium of British Council and
Ecosystems, which have been delivering Erasmus+ in the UK for a number of years, drawing on their experience of working with education providers across the UK, and ensuring continuity. This will fund similar levels of student outbound mobilities as under Erasmus and provide funding for around 35,000 students in universities, colleges and schools to go on study and work placements overseas, starting in September 2021.

The Turing scheme will also go further than Erasmus+ by including countries across the world, while delivering greater value for money to taxpayers.

**Owen Thompson:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect on higher education of the Turing Scheme not providing funding for incoming foreign students.

**Owen Thompson:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether cost efficiency is the primary factor driving decision-making on the design of the Turing Scheme.

**Michelle Donelan:**

In deciding to launch the Turing scheme as an alternative to Erasmus+, the Government carefully considered the benefits of Erasmus+ and a domestic alternative scheme including cost and our ambitions for a global scheme that supports social mobility. On cost, Erasmus+ participation would have entailed a net cost in the region of £2 billion more than we received from the programme in funding over the seven-year period and an annual gross contribution of £600 million. As such we do not consider Erasmus+ participation to be value-for-money and in the interests of the UK taxpayer.

The design of the Turing scheme will be driven by our ambition for a truly global UK-wide scheme that promotes social mobility and provides excellent value for money for the taxpayer. These principles underpin the decision-making on the design of the scheme, including the decision not to fund inward mobility.

The Government has carefully considered whether to fund inward mobility as part of the scheme design, including through discussions with the sector, and is confident that students will continue to want to study in the UK. The UK is a world-leading destination for study and research, with four universities in the world’s top 10 and 18 in the top 100. The UK is currently second only to the USA as a destination for international HE students with approximately 486,000 students from abroad and has been one of the most popular destinations within Erasmus+.

It is clear that we have considerable appeal as a destination and partner in international mobilities and exchanges. We will harness this to deliver an international education exchange programme that has a genuinely global reach, establishing new relationships with academic institutions across Europe and the rest of the world.
In terms of direct income to higher education providers, we expect tuition fees to be waived for Turing scheme participants consistent with the arrangements for Erasmus+.

More generally, the International Education Strategy update, will respond to the COVID-19 context, challenges, and opportunities setting out how the Government will support the whole of the UK’s education sector in the recovery of its international activity in pursuit of the original IES ambitions to increase the value of our education exports to £35 billion per year, and to increase the number of international higher education students hosted in the UK to 600,000 per year, both by 2030.

- **Vocational Education: Assessments**

  **Sir Desmond Swayne:**

  To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to issue guidance to colleges and schools which have cancelled BTEC exams on how they are to assess candidate's grades.

  **Gillian Keegan:**

  On 5 January we announced that schools and colleges can continue with the vocational and technical exams that are scheduled to take place in January, where they judge it right to do so.

  In the event that this is not possible, we will put in place arrangements to ensure they are not disadvantaged. The department will continue to work with Ofqual, awarding organisations and relevant stakeholders to discuss the next steps and provide more detail on the way forward, including ensuring other students have a way to progress with as little disruption as possible.

  **Rebecca Long Bailey:**

  To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of (a) proceeding with the January 2021 timetable for public vocational exams and assessments following the national lockdown announced on 4 January and (b) the disruption caused by the covid-19 outbreak in recent months on the health and safety of (i) students, (ii) staff and (iii) their families.

  **Gillian Keegan:**

  Students have worked hard and prepared for these exams and assessments, so it is right that schools and colleges have the option to run them. Some students need to complete a practical assessment to obtain a licence to practice and enter the workplace and it is right that they should have the opportunity to do so, so that they are not prevented from progressing onto the next stage of their lives.

  Unlike GCSE and A level exams that were due to take place this summer, these students’ learning for their January exams has not yet been disrupted by the new public health measures we have announced to help limit the transmission of COVID-19.
The Department has provided advice to schools and colleges on extensive protective measures to make exams as safe as possible and that is why we are continuing to allow schools and colleges to deliver the January assessments, if they judge it right to do so. This advice is part of existing guidance on safely implementing the phased return to face-to-face education. Guidance can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950735/January_2021_FE_operational_guidance_FINAL.pdf.

No student will be disadvantaged if they cannot take their exam or assessment, or if they decide they do not want to. We will develop our approach to ensure students receive a fair grade, in consultation with Ofqual, awarding organisations and the sector.

Helen Hayes:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department will publish a plan to support students taking BTECs and other technical and vocational exams in January 2021.

Gillian Keegan:

On 5 January we announced that schools and colleges can continue with the vocational and technical exams that are scheduled to take place in January, where they judge it right to do so. Some students need to complete a practical assessment to obtain a licence to practice and enter the workplace and it is right that they should have the opportunity to do so, so that they are not prevented from progressing onto the next stage of their lives.

The Department has published guidance on restricting attendance during the national lockdown, which includes detailed advice on minimising COVID-19 risks when delivering exams and assessments in January 2021. This publication builds on existing guidance on safely implementing the phased return to face-to-face education for schools and further education colleges.

No student will be disadvantaged if they cannot take their exam or assessment, or if they decide they do not want to. We will develop our approach to ensure students receive a fair grade, in consultation with Ofqual, awarding organisations and the sector.


Mick Whitley:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to provide (a) resources and (b) advice to (i) schools and (ii) further education providers that are due to hold vocational examinations in January 2021 to help ensure the safety of students and staff.
Gillian Keegan:
The NHS and the department have published the Schools and Colleges handbook, offering guidance on how to conduct rapid testing of staff and students:

To support this, a total of £78 million has been made available for schools and colleges, which will be paid retrospectively. The amount of funding available will depend on the school’s or college’s size, as this will affect the number of additional staff or additional staff hours required to conduct testing.

We will publish a replacement workforce planning tool that will illustrate the levels of funding available. For colleges with significant financial difficulties, support arrangements (including short-term emergency funding), are in place.


The department has published guidance on restricting attendance during the national lockdown, which includes detailed advice on minimising COVID-19 risks when delivering exams and assessments in January 2021:

### Youth Clubs: Coronavirus

Jonathan Gullis:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help enable youth clubs to re-open to support vulnerable young people during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

Ensuring continued access to support services and education for vulnerable children and young people remains a priority for the government. As such we have ensured that essential youth services, such as one-to-one youth work and support groups, are able to continue for the duration of the national lockdown, and that vulnerable children can continue to access childcare and other out-of-school activities (including wraparound care) during the national lockdown.

We will shortly be updating our guidance for providers of after-school and holiday clubs and other out-of-school settings on the measures providers should put in place if they continue to offer face-to-face provision for the eligible children during the national lockdown, to ensure they are operating as safely as possible. This 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-

We are acutely aware of the impact that the COVID-19 outbreak has had on young people and the vital role our youth services play. That is why more than £60 million of the unprecedented £750 million package for the voluntary and charity sector has been directed towards organisations supporting children and young people. More recently, a £16.5 million ‘Youth Covid-19 Support Fund’ has been announced, which will protect the immediate future of grassroots and national youth organisations across the country. A link to the article can be accessed here: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-165-million-youth-covid-19-support-fund. This is on top of £200 million government investment in early intervention and prevention support initiatives to support children and young people at risk of exploitation and involvement in serious violence, through the ‘Youth Endowment Fund’.

In addition, the ‘Youth Investment Fund’ remains a manifesto commitment for transformative levelling up across the country over the course of the parliament. In the recently announced Spending Review, £30 million of this was committed as capital investment for the 2021/22 financial year. This will provide a transformational investment in new and refurbished safe spaces for young people, so they can access support youth workers, and positive activities out of school, including sport and culture.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Air Pollution: Coronavirus

Ruth Jones: [133171]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the effect of air quality on the severity of covid-19 symptoms.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra continues to work with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) regarding the relationship between air quality and health, recently considering the specific relationship between Covid-19 deaths and air quality. I met with Jo Churchill, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at DHSC, to discuss this important issue on 13 November 2020. We will continue working closely on this issue, as our understanding of the role air quality has to play in the Covid-19 pandemic continues to evolve, taking into account the many other factors influencing health inequalities.

Officials and appointed experts from Defra, Public Health England and the Office for National Statistics delivered a project to describe this relationship. The results and methodology were shared with the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies...
(SAGE), and a summary of the findings were published in August 2020 at the following URL:


The methodology used in this analysis project was also published at the following URL:

https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/methodologies/coronavirus-covid19relatedmortalityratesandtheeffectsofairpollutioninengland

Animal Products: Imports

Henry Smith: [132859]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to introduce an import ban on lion trophy items to the UK in advance of the Government's plans to bring forward legislative proposals on enhanced animal welfare legislation in 2021.

Victoria Prentis:
The Government made a manifesto commitment to ban the import of hunting trophies from endangered animals, and held a consultation on the issue between 2 November 2019 and 25 February 2020.

The COVID-19 outbreak set the timetable back, as many of our officials formed part of the response to the pandemic. However, we are continuing to work on this important area and will publish a response as soon as we can on GOV.UK. The outcome of the consultation and the call for evidence will inform our next steps.

Animal Welfare: Coronavirus

Luke Pollard: [134117]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the animal welfare sector's capacity to deliver essential services.

Luke Pollard: [134118]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to establish a financial assistance package for animal welfare organisations.

Luke Pollard: [134119]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government has commissioned any research on levels of animal cruelty during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:
The animal welfare sector does excellent work, often on a voluntary basis, protecting animals against cruelty and ensuring that unwanted and abandoned animals in the
UK are offered the opportunity of a forever home. I am acutely aware that the coronavirus pandemic, and specifically the measures put in place to control the spread of the virus, continue to affect individuals, businesses and charities caring for animals.

The sector has kept us regularly updated of the developing situation, sharing their surveys particularly with respect to the rescue and rehoming of companion animals, and sharing information on cruelty investigations. Information recently provided by the RSPCA indicates a drop in the number of allegations of cruelty and poor welfare.

It has been encouraging to see the sector working collaboratively to safeguard the welfare of animals in their care in the face of financial hardship and uncertainty. The sector continues to keep us informed of the status of the emergency grants schemes they have established to support numerous smaller organisations. These include ADCH's Coronavirus Emergency Fund and the Covid-19 Equine Rescues Emergency Fund established by the Pet Plan Charitable Trust (PPCT) together with World Horse Welfare and the National Equine Welfare Council.

In addition, we have maintained a regular dialogue with the pet industry, local authorities and the veterinary sector who have all been affected. The Government is helping businesses and charities cope in these strained times whilst remaining completely focussed on managing and eradicating the virus. Organisations can apply for the full range of COVID-19 support measures that the government has made available to businesses and charities. Details can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support

The Charity Commission has also issued comprehensive guidance on running a charity during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Details can be found at:


This includes advice for Trustees on managing financial difficulties with respect to use of reserves, restricted funds and provisions to help businesses continue operating and avoid insolvency during this period of economic uncertainty.

In addition to this, we have worked closely with the animal welfare sector through the Canine and Feline Sector Group and National Equine Welfare Council to agree and update guidance to animal rescue and rehoming organisations, and other animal charities and businesses. This has enabled them to undertake core operations as far as possible, whilst maintaining compliance with the social distancing rules and need for hygiene precautions to help prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Defra remains committed to continued engagement with the sector to understand the longer-term impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, monitor the animal welfare implications of this and offer appropriate advice.

**Climate Change**

Ruth Jones: [134135]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle climate change.
Rebecca Pow:
The UK is committed to taking ambitious, far-reaching action to tackle climate change and meet net zero; this legally binding target requires the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. Defra is playing its part in contributing to this.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy leads across Government on climate change mitigation and net zero and Defra is the Government lead for climate change adaptation. Defra is responsible for efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the following sectors: agriculture, waste, land-use and fluorinated gases (F-gases). It also has responsibility for promoting forestry in order to capture carbon.

The ambitious 25 Year Environment Plan (25 YEP) committed to leave the environment in a better state than we found it. Mitigating and adapting to climate change is one of the ten goals in the 25 YEP. Actions include:

- The Clean Growth Strategy and 25 YEP set out a range of specific commitments to reduce emissions from agriculture. Defra is also looking at going further; considering ways to reduce agricultural emissions controlled directly within the farm boundary and looking at a broad range of measures including improvements in on-farm efficiency.

- Our manifesto set a high ambition for trees, to increase planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025, aligning with the Committee on Climate Change’s recommendation to increase planting to reach net zero. In last year’s budget we announced £640 million of funding for tree planting and peatland restoration to support these ambitions.

- Peatland restoration is a key component of the Government’s Nature for Climate Fund that will lead to the restoration of 35,000 ha of peatland over the next five years.

- We are delivering on our 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy, including plans to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill and the GHG emissions associated with the breakdown of biodegradable waste.

- We have committed to an 85% cut in the use of the main type of F-gas by 2036. We have continued to cut F-gas consumption in the UK at a faster pace than required under our international commitments, reducing levels by over 37% since 2015.

However, adapting to the inevitable changes in our climate is also vital. Whilst we continue to reduce our contribution to climate change, we are also taking robust action to improve the resilience of our people, economy and environment, this includes:

- The second National Adaptation Programme (NAP). This was published in 2018 and sets out how we will address priority climate risks, as identified in the 2017 Climate Change Risk Assessment.
• Adaptation is rightly integrated throughout the policies and programmes of government. The NAP includes actions in a broad range of areas, including the natural environment, infrastructure, people and the built environment, business and industry, and local government.

• We engage with key national stakeholders on climate resilience, supporting organisations reporting under the Climate Change Act's Adaptation Reporting Power. Over 90 organisations have committed to report by the end of 2021 on actions they are taking to strengthen preparedness for climate risks.

• In November 2018 we published, with the Met Office, a new set of UK Climate Projections 2018 (UKCP18), which include global and regional scenarios. In September 2019 local projections were launched, which provide locally relevant climate change information on a similar resolution to that of weather forecast models (2.2km). The Government will make use of UKCP18 to inform its planning and decision-making, and the Projections will also help businesses and individuals to take action to improve resilience.

Climate Change Convention

Ruth Jones:

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the Government’s preparations for the COP26 meeting.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK is committed to taking ambitious, far-reaching action to tackle climate change. We are therefore delighted to be hosting COP26 in Glasgow, in partnership with Italy. Delivering success at COP26 is a top international priority for the UK.

Nature, including nature-based solutions to climate change, will be a key focus of COP26. This is in recognition of the fact that climate change and biodiversity loss are interlinked and mutually reinforcing problems that must be addressed together. My department also supports the climate adaptation campaign for COP26 as domestic policy owner.

In this vein, Defra is working extremely closely with colleagues across the whole of Government to put the ambitious COP26 ‘Nature campaign’ into action. This of course includes close collaboration between myself and my right hon. Friend, COP President Designate Alok Sharma, including a recent fruitful discussion on COP26 priorities in November.

We will continue this strong collaboration over the coming months as we prepare for COP26.
Dogs: Electronic Training Aids

Sir John Hayes:
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reasons his officials commissioned research on dog electronic collars from an academic who had previously urged his Department to ban such collars.

Sir John Hayes:
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the reliability of the academic analysis his Department commissioned on electronic dog collars.

Victoria Prentis:
The Government is satisfied that the processes for tendering and consideration of bids, relating to the research on electronic dog collars in 2007, were conducted in accordance with the rules on government procurement exercises. The Government is also satisfied that the resultant peer-reviewed Defra-commissioned research carried out between 2007 and 2010 (AW1402 and AW1402a) was robust and showed that the devices compromise the welfare of some dogs. Data from the research was published separately in two different reputable scientific journals, which required additional independent peer review exercises involving scrutiny from experts in the same field prior to publication. This gives the Government further confidence that the results can be considered robust.

Dogs: Imports

Carla Lockhart:
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what resources his Department provides to help check and validate the welfare and legitimacy of puppies being transported between Great Britain and the Northern Ireland.

Victoria Prentis:
Pet travel is a devolved matter. Pet checking and welfare in transport regulations are undertaken and enforced by the relevant UK administration.

In Great Britain, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) works collaboratively with Border Force and other operational partners at ports, airports and inland, sharing intelligence to enforce the pet travel regulations which apply, disrupt illegal imports and seize non-compliant animals. Any animals found to be non-compliant with the pet travel regulations which apply may be refused entry or detained until compliant.

When animals are transported for a commercial purpose, their transportation must comply fully with legal requirements aimed at protecting their welfare. APHA takes an intelligence-led approach at the GB border towards tackling the illegal trade in dogs. As part of this activity APHA identifies and acts to safeguard the welfare of animals where transport is non-compliant with legal requirements.
Dogs: Smuggling

Carla Lockhart:  [133300]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Department is taking with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to tackle the smuggling of puppies between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Victoria Prentis:  
Defra takes the illegal importation of pets seriously. We will continue to work closely with Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to tackle this abhorrent trade which causes suffering to animals and puts the health of pets and people in the UK at risk.

Now that the transition period has ended, we have the opportunity to manage our own rules applying to pet travel movements into Great Britain.

The Government is in the process of refining proposals for our manifesto commitment to tackling puppy smuggling and will be publishing further detail in due course.

Environment Protection: Public Consultation

Ruth Jones:  [133190]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish the draft policy statement on environmental principles for public consultation.

Rebecca Pow:  
We plan to publish a draft version of the Environmental Principles Policy Statement for consultation in early 2021. We expect this consultation to last 12 weeks.

Flood Control: Finance

Daniel Kawczynski: [132830]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether flood defence funding is a priority for his Department in 2021.

Rebecca Pow:  
The first quarter of 2021 will see the completion of the Government’s six-year, £2.6 billion capital investment programme to better protect 300,000 homes in England from flooding, which commenced in 2015.

Starting in April 2021, the Government will invest a record £5.2 billion in a new six-year capital investment programme. This programme will deliver around 2,000 flood schemes, across every region of England, and will better protect 336,000 properties from flooding. This new investment is the most comprehensive ever and is in addition to support to help households and business get back on their feet more quickly after flooding.

Alongside these key capital programmes, a further up to £170 million will be invested to accelerate work on shovel-ready flood defence schemes that will begin construction in 2020/21 or 2021/22. Twenty-two areas across England will benefit
from this immediate boost to jobs supporting the local economy as communities recover from the impact of coronavirus. This includes an allocation of up to £30 million for the Severn Valley Flood Risk Management Scheme, which is conditional on a partnership contribution being secured prior to commencement of delivery.

In addition, a further £200 million will be provided for local innovative resilience projects which reduce flood risk, this Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme will run for six years from 2021. The funding will help twenty-five local areas to take forward wider innovative actions that improve their resilience to flooding and coastal erosion.

**Hen Harriers**

**Sir John Hayes:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many hen harrier nests there were on (a) RSPB and (b) non-RSPB reserves in each of the last eight years; how many of those nests failed to have any chicks fledge; and what the causes of each of those nest failures were.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Over the last eight years there have been four hen harrier nests on RSPB reserves (all Geltsdale).

Based on information held by Natural England, the nest in 2015 may have failed due to the disappearance of the breeding male. In 2016 there was one successful nest, and in 2020 two nesting attempts failed, likely due to the disappearance of the breeding male.

On non-RSPB reserves, based on information held by Natural England, there were:

- Two nesting attempts in 2013, one likely failed due to female disappearance or desertion and the other was found to have abnormal eggs.
- Four successful nests in 2014.
- Six successful nests in 2015 and five failed nesting attempts. There were a number of reasons for the failed nests. One was thought to be predated, three may have failed due to the disappearance of the breeding males, and one unknown.
- Two successful nests in 2016.
- Three successful nests in 2017 and four failed nesting attempts. Three nests were thought to be predated, and one likely failed due to poor weather conditions.
- Nine successful nests in 2018 and five failed nesting attempts. Three were thought to be predated, and two were deserted.
- Twelve successful nests in 2019, and three failed nesting attempts. These nests likely failed due to poor weather conditions.
- Nineteen successful nests in 2020, and three failed nesting attempts. Two of these nests were abandoned and one likely failed due to predation.
Members: Correspondence

John Penrose: [132832]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to reply to the letters of 4 May 2020, 19 May 2020 and 10 of June 2020 and telephone calls of 1 August 2020 and 7 November 2020 from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on pet theft, raised on behalf of his constituent Gail Kalinowski.

John Penrose: [132833]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to reply to the letters of 16 March 2020, 2 May 2020 and 10 June 2020 and telephone calls of 13 August 2020 and 7 November 2020 from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on the removal of payments to farmers in advance of the Environmental Land Management scheme being introduced, raised on behalf of his constituent Mrs Mary V Mead.

John Penrose: [132839]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to reply to the letters of 8 August 2020 and 28 October 2020 and telephone calls of 1 December 2020 and 10 December 2020 on the illegal killing of hen harriers and other birds of prey, raised on behalf of his constituent Geoffrey Pudney.

Victoria Prentis:
The Rt Hon the Lord Goldsmith replied to the letter of 4 May from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on behalf of his constituent, Gail Kalinowski, by email on 2 July. Defra reference MC2020/12686/ES.

I replied to the letter of 16 March from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on behalf of his constituent, Mary V Mead, by email on 24 November. Defra reference MC2020/24831/GW.

The Secretary of State replied to the letter of 8 August from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on behalf of his constituent, Geoffrey Pudney, by email on 6 October. Defra reference MC2020/20475/MK.

I have arranged for copies of the replies to be sent to the hon. Member and have also asked Defra officials to investigate the cause of the replies not being received by the hon. Member when originally sent.

Moorland: Fires

Sir John Hayes: [133640]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential effect of reducing the number of controlled winter burns on moorlands on levels of summer wildfires.

Rebecca Pow:
The Government is acutely aware of the wildfire risk presented by dry conditions on moorland. Natural England has published a wildfire evidence review into the causes,
severity and management practices to mitigate wildfire risk. Officials are considering this along with evidence collected through stakeholder engagement to inform policy development in this area. Some of the clearest evidence points to improving the resilience of our peatlands to wildfire by ensuring they are wet and in a natural state. Managed burning results in an increase in vegetation types, such as heather, which have a higher fuel load compared with natural blanket bog vegetation.

We recognise that there will sometimes be exceptional circumstances where controlled burning may be the only practicable technique available to mitigate the risk of wildfire, as part of efforts to protect and restore peatland.

### Nature Conservation

**Andrew Rosindell:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress has been made on the UN’s Leaders Pledge for Nature of September 2020.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Since September, the UK has worked with other signatories to the LPN to garner further support to it. At the launch of the LPN in September 2020, 71 heads of state and the EU signed up to the pledge. Since then, a further 11 heads of state and 71 supporters have now signed up. The UK is committed to working with our fellow signatories to garner further support and drive forwards implementation of the ten Pledge actions, and officials meet regularly to discuss plans. The UK worked closely with France to help showcase the LPN at the One Planet Summit, on 11 January 2020, to ensure momentum on it is maintained.

### Nature Conservation: Disease Control

**Ruth Jones:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has of the effect of global nature conservation on the outbreak of pandemics.

**Rebecca Pow:**

My department has not made an independent assessment of the effect of global nature conservation on the outbreak of pandemics. However, as an issue of global concern, we work closely with our international partners to better understand and address the environmental drivers of pandemics and the spread of zoonotic diseases, including by reversing global biodiversity loss, tackling both unsustainable and illegal wildlife trade, and improving standards in food production and food safety around the world.

The UK played a leading role in the 2019 Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment Report on biodiversity and ecosystem services which highlighted the link between the destruction of biodiversity and habitats as a factor potentially exacerbating the emergence of infectious diseases in wildlife, domestic animals and people. IPBES
subsequently, in October 2020, published a report of an expert workshop on pandemics and biodiversity which further contributes to our evidence base. The UK also enabled the production of the Global Biodiversity Assessment 5, published in September 2020, which reflected on the emergence of Covid-19. We will continue to assess those findings and the findings of other international assessments, to inform our response and to enable a green recovery from the pandemic.

We will continue to actively consider the complex links between infectious diseases and the destruction of natural habitats, adopting a One Health approach to ensure the interdependencies between human, animal, plant and environmental health are given appropriate focus and supporting swift policy interventions where these are shown to be effective in mitigating risk.

IBES Pandemic and Biodiversity report: [https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/2020-12/IPBES%20Workshop%20on%20Biodiversity%20and%20Pandemics%20Report_0.pdf](https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/2020-12/IPBES%20Workshop%20on%20Biodiversity%20and%20Pandemics%20Report_0.pdf)

### Nature Conservation: International Cooperation

**Ruth Jones:**
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Development and Commonwealth Affairs on taking diplomatic steps to create a legally binding international extinction loss and nature preservation target.

**Rebecca Pow:**
Biodiversity loss is a global problem that needs a global solution.

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is the main international forum devoted to the conservation and sustainable use of the world’s biodiversity. At CBD COP15, to be held in 2021, the 196 Parties to the Convention are set to adopt a post-2020 global biodiversity framework which will set global targets to combat biodiversity loss.

The UK is committed to playing a leading role in developing an ambitious post-2020 global framework. Our key objective is to agree a framework that spurs the global action needed by supporting ambitious and practical targets, including on species extinction and protected areas, and strengthened coherent implementation mechanisms which are commensurate with the scale of the challenge.

Biodiversity loss cannot be addressed in isolation and is part of a bigger set of interlinked challenges including climate change and development. As such, the new framework must be fit for all, not just environment ministries. We are working across government, including with FCDO, in the lead up to CBD COP15 to ensure these synergies, and the opportunities we have to address them, are best capitalised on. This approach is supported by our ongoing work with FCDO through relevant programmes such as the Darwin Initiative and on joined-up diplomatic outreach on UK nature priorities.
Additionally, we are working with FCDO to leverage transformative action through the Leaders’ Pledge for Nature, which the UK co-created and has been signed by over 80 countries. This Pledge includes a commitment to develop an ambitious post-2020 framework, including targets to halt human-induced species extinction and increase protected areas.

Office for Environmental Protection

Ruth Jones:

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to publish a summary of the business case for the Office for Environmental Protection.

Rebecca Pow:
Yes, Defra intends to publish a summary of the business case for the Office for Environmental Protection following Royal Assent of the Environment Bill.

Office for Environmental Protection: Staff

Ruth Jones:

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the day one operating capability for the Office for Environmental Protection will be least 50 full-time equivalent staff.

Rebecca Pow:
We are working with the newly appointed OEP chair-designate Dame Glenys Stacey who now has oversight of this work. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we cannot confirm precisely the amount of staff the OEP will have from the day that it is established, but we are working to have up to 50 full-time equivalents in post in time for vesting. We are currently completing work to determine these initial key posts for the OEP to fulfil its duties as set out in the Environment Bill. We will ensure that the OEP will have all of its statutory powers and duties within three months following Royal Assent.

Peat

Ruth Jones:

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish the England Peat Strategy.

Rebecca Pow:
In the 25 Year Environment Plan, we committed to publishing an England Peat Strategy to create and deliver a new ambitious framework for peat restoration in England. It will set out a holistic plan for the management, protection and restoration of our upland and lowland peatlands so that they deliver benefits for climate and nature. We expect to publish the strategy in early 2021.
Ruth Jones: [133189]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with stakeholders on the development of the England Peat Strategy.

Rebecca Pow:
The Government has worked closely with stakeholders in the development of the England Peat Strategy over the past two years. In the Summer, we launched a targeted online questionnaire requesting responses to our policy discussion document. We also held a series of roundtable discussions across a broad range of stakeholders. The feedback received through these exercises is being incorporated into the Strategy.

We announced the imminent launch of the Lowland Agricultural Peat Task Force in December, which will bring together stakeholders across the agricultural and environmental sector, to deliver recommendations for a more sustainable future for lowland peatlands under agricultural management.

Pollution Control: Local Government

Helen Hayes: [134001]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and (b) local government leaders on supporting local authorities to tackle air pollution.

Rebecca Pow:
Air pollution poses the biggest environmental threat to public health and improving air quality remains a top priority for the Government. In delivering against our ambitious air quality commitments, we regularly hold discussions with Ministers and officials across Government departments, including the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Joint Air Quality Unit has close, ongoing engagement with those local authorities implementing plans to tackle exceedances of NO₂ limits. I meet with leaders of these authorities and other local representatives when necessary to help progress these plans.

Potatoes: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon: [132915]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the supply of unwashed potatoes from mainland Great Britain to Northern Ireland.
**Victoria Prentis:**
We have worked hard to ensure the supply of potatoes from GB to Northern Ireland, and the EU has recently voted in favour of lifting the plant health prohibition on ware potatoes for import to the EU and NI from GB.

For movements of ware potatoes to NI there will be a three-month grace period from certification through to 1 April 2021 for authorised traders such as supermarkets and their trusted suppliers from 1 January 2021. Authorised traders moving ware potatoes from GB to NI will not require official certification, such as phytosanitary certificates or marketing standards certification and will be able to move potatoes, including unwashed potatoes, under the scheme. For goods not moving under the grace period scheme there will be a requirement for a phytosanitary certificate to confirm compliance with EU requirements, which include that ware potatoes must be imported with less than 1% of soil in the consignment.

There is also the Movement Assistance Scheme (MAS), which was announced on 16 December and has been introduced to support and assist traders moving agri-food and similar goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland now that the transition period has ended and will be in place for a maximum of two years. The Movement Assistance Scheme provides traders with assistance with understanding the new regulations for moving goods from GB to NI as well as reimbursing some of the direct certification costs that would be incurred by traders for agri-food commodities (including potatoes) under the new requirements.

**River Severn: Flood Control**

**Daniel Kawczynski:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to promote public engagement when implementing flood defences along the River Severn.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Environment Agency (EA) has published information on schemes along the River Severn via the following links:

- Severn Valley Water Management Scheme [https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/west-midlands/svwms/](https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/west-midlands/svwms/)

The EA is having early discussions with community representatives. It is also working with partners to develop plans for engaging communities, businesses, landowners and members of the public for each of the potential schemes along the River Severn. The EA plans to engage with businesses, landowners and members of the public and will use a variety of methods in line with Government’s Covid-19 guidelines. Details will be publicised at the appropriate time and will include information on how members of the public can inform decisions on the potential schemes.
Information about each of the projects, which are part of the River Severn Partnership will also be shared on their website here: [http://www.riversevernpartnership.org.uk](http://www.riversevernpartnership.org.uk)

**Soya Beans: Imports**

**Liz Saville Roberts:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent estimates she has made of how much and what proportion of soy imported into the UK has been produced on illegally deforested land for the most recent period in which that information is available.

**Rebecca Pow:**

In 2019, the UK imported soya and soybean products equivalent to 3.5 million tonnes of soybeans. When combined with the volume of embedded soya imported into the UK, for example in animals fed on soya, the total consumption is equivalent to the import of around 4.2 million tonnes of soybean.

In 2018, the Government convened the UK Roundtable on Sustainable Soya for industry actors to work together towards the common goal of legal and sustainable soya. Since the Roundtable’s inception, the UK has doubled the proportion of soya imports which are certified as sustainable in a two-year period, from 15% in 2017 to 32% (1.12 million tonnes) in 2019. If we also include soya sourced from areas that are considered at low risk of tropical deforestation, such as North America, and soya covered by the Amazon Soy Moratorium contract, we calculate that 62% of soya (2.17 million tonnes) consumed in the UK is either covered by a deforestation and conversion free standard or comes from an area where there is a low risk of deforestation linked to production.

The Government recognises that voluntary commitments by businesses have not been sufficient to tackle deforestation and is committed to ensuring there is no place for illegally produced commodities on our supermarket shelves. That is why we have introduced a world-leading due diligence law through the Environment Bill. The law will prohibit larger businesses from using commodities produced on land occupied or used illegally and make it mandatory for businesses to conduct due diligence on their supply chains. Once operational, it will help to eradicate illegal deforestation from our supply chains.

**Tree Planting**

**Ruth Jones:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of progress on meeting the target of 11 million trees planted in England by 2022.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Forestry Commission produces Official Statistics on new planting of woodland. The previous government set a target to plant 11 million trees with central government support in England in the period from 2017 to 2022, and the latest
interim report shows that 5,036 hectares of land, equating to about 8,286,000 trees, were newly planted in the 3.5 years from April 2017 to September 2020, on track to achieve that target. The statistics are available here: Government supported new planting of trees in England: Interim update for the half year April to September 2020

The current government has committed to increase tree planting to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025, across the whole UK. This is in line with the rate recommended by the Climate Change Committee and reflects the role trees can play in combating climate change.

Tree Planting: Urban Areas

Helen Hayes:

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to increase rates of tree-planting and urban greening in metropolitan areas.

Rebecca Pow:

We are committed to increasing tree planting and will set out policies to achieve this in the England Tree Strategy, including planting and protecting trees in and around urban areas, which are vital to creating healthy places to live. We are already delivering on this through:

- £80m of charity-led projects funded through the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, the first round of which supported a wide range of projects to protect, restore and connect people with nature, including a national street tree sponsorship scheme and tree planting around the NHS estate.
- £10m Urban Tree Challenge Fund, supporting planting of up to 134,000 trees, including 20,000 street trees.
- £12.1m investment in England’s ten Community Forests to create high quality, accessible woodlands around towns and cities.
- £2.5m to pilot innovative means to grow trees outside woods, in partnership with Local Authorities.

This complements wider support for urban greening through:

- Creation of a Nature Recovery Network, connecting wildlife-rich places across our towns, cities and countryside.
- Development of a National Framework of Green Infrastructure Standards to help local authorities, developers and communities to improve greening provision.

UK Trade with EU: Animals and Food

Emily Thornberry:

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, what assessment he has made of the
effect of the frequency of sanitary and phytosanitary checks on the profitability of UK food, drink and live animal exporters.

Victoria Prentis:
The UK has secured its top priorities on sanitary and phytosanitary measures: autonomy for our domestic regime, protection of our biosecurity and proportionate risk-based controls. The agreement allows the UK and the EU to cooperate on avoiding unnecessary sanitary and phytosanitary barriers to trade in agri-food goods, including potential reductions in the frequency of import checks, where justified.

The EU and UK being geographically close, and close as trading partners, have a number of common pathogen risks, a similar health status and biosecurity aims. We should focus resources on checks that support us both to address any risks. We will seek to reduce checks safely through the regular dialogue both sides have committed to in the agreement. Over time, this will help to reduce any burden on businesses.

Taken alongside other elements of the TCA such as zero tariffs and zero quota, this represents a good outcome for the UK's agri-food industry. We have also agreed to exchange information and expertise on animal welfare, particularly relating to transportation and slaughter of food-producing animals, and other issues.

Waste Disposal: Organised Crime

Ruth Jones:
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the UK's ability to tackle organised waste crime.

Ruth Jones:
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the UK's ability to tackle organised waste crime.

Rebecca Pow:
The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement delivers a comprehensive package of capabilities that will ensure we can work with counterparts across the EU to tackle serious crime. The Agreement ensures streamlined co-operation on law enforcement to continue to ensure we continue to effectively tackle serious organised crime, including serious crime associated with the illegitimate waste industry.

Waste crime damages the environment, is a blight on local communities and the government is committed to tackling this criminal activity. Our primary objective is to protect human health and the environment. Permits and licences will still apply and the waste industry is expected to meet the high standards of protection for people and the environment and work to sound waste management practices.

The Resources and Waste Strategy sets out an ambitious package of reforms to modernise the way waste is regulated, clamping down on illegal operators and improving performance across the sector. Some of these commitments are being
taken forward in the Environment Bill, including measures to further strengthen regulator powers when dealing with criminal operators.

Water Industry (Schemes for Adoption of Private Sewers) Regulations 2011

Richard Fuller:  [132840]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 29 October 2020 to Question 106951 on Water Industry (Schemes for Adoption of Private Sewers) Regulations 2011, what (a) plans he has and (b) his timeframe is for completing that review.

Rebecca Pow:
Further to my Answer of 29 October 2020 to PQ 106951, I have now reviewed the case for implementing section 42 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

Section 42 implementation would cover the automatic adoption by sewerage companies of new, not existing, sewerage assets, constructed from the date of implementation.

This year, my Department will start the work necessary to implement section 42. Part of that work will include a consultation on our implementation approach as well as determining the timing for implementation.

Regarding existing sewerage assets, such as private waste-water pumps referenced in PQ 106951, the consultation will seek views on making separate regulations, similar to the Water Industry (Schemes for Adoption of Private Sewers) Regulations 2011, concerning the adoption of those assets by sewerage companies.

Wines: Imports

Marsha De Cordova:  [133156]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the requirements for wine import certificates on the UK’s position as an international wine hub.

Marsha De Cordova:  [133157]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on UK fine wine trade as a result of rolling over VI-1 import forms to half of all UK wine imports.

Marsha De Cordova:  [133158]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the intended purpose is of the VI-1 import certificate.

Marsha De Cordova:  [133159]
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to remove the requirement for VI-1 forms on EU wine imported into Great Britain after 30 June 2021.
Victoria Prentis:
Wine imports to the EU have been subject to the requirement to provide a VI1 certificate for many years. The basis for their introduction was to provide a level of assurance that the wine being imported met the standards required to be marketed in the EU. Over time the VI1 requirement has been relaxed in some cases to allow simplified forms of the certificate to be used, where for instance the exporting country and the EU have reached trade agreements covering the production of wine.

The Withdrawal Act 2018 retained the requirement for third country wines to be accompanied by a VI1 certificate as a means of maintaining that level of assurance. We have not conducted an analysis of the potential impact of the introduction of VI1 measures on the UK's standing as an international wine hub or the effect it will have on our fine wine trade. However, considering that VI1 provisions already exist for wine imports from other origins such as Australia, USA and Chile, and these wines remain extremely competitive in our and the EU’s marketplaces, we believe the new requirement to be appropriate and affordable. In addition, were we not to apply equal provisions to wine from the EU our policies would risk contravening WTO most favoured nation obligations.

Nevertheless, we do recognise that the rules underpinning detailed VI1 requirements were contained in legislation that had to be made late in the transition period, and that did not provide time for the EU industry to adjust. We have therefore provided an easement until 1 July 2021 in the Food and Drink (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 that will allow scope for EU wine to continue to be imported to GB using commercial documentation, as it did when the UK was subject to EU rules.

Although the easement will still apply to all EU wine imports, the new UK / EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement has established a highly simplified, self-certified VI1 certificate to cover the movement of wine products made in the UK or the EU and moving to the other territory. This will not apply to bulk imports of wine from other origins that are traded between the UK and the EU which will have to continue to meet the basic VI1 requirements. We have therefore introduced streamlined measures to issue VI1 certificates to the trade and ensure that re-exports of bulk wine from other origins bottled in the UK will continue to operate with minimal effect.

As I and colleagues in Government have said on many occasions, leaving the EU gives us the ability to look critically at the laws we have inherited from the EU to ensure they remain fit for purpose. We will consider in due course whether there is a case to revisit the requirement for VI1 certification.

Wood-burning Stoves: Air Pollution
Ruth Jones:
To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of domestic wood burners on levels of particle pollution.
Rebecca Pow:
National Statistics regarding emissions of air pollutants in the UK are published annually at the following URL: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/emissions-of-air-pollutants

The latest statistics estimated 38 per cent of primary emissions of PM$_{2.5}$ in the UK came from domestic wood burning sources in 2018. There is an increasing trend in emissions from this source over time. Defra also publishes national statistics on air quality as measured by the national network of air quality monitoring stations; the latest statistics report gives domestic solid fuel burning as a reason for the greatest concentrations of PM$_{2.5}$ recorded in the evenings and at weekends. The URL for these statistics is: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/air-quality-statistics

Defra recently published final reports from research to understand burning in UK homes and gardens, which expands the evidence base on solid fuel appliances and how households operate them. The research is published at the following URL: http://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=20159&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=AQ1017

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

British Overseas Territories: Coronavirus

Imran Ahmad Khan: [134256]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many people resident in the British Overseas Territories have received a covid-19 vaccine to date.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government has been supporting the Overseas Territories throughout the pandemic and began deliveries of COVID-19 vaccines to the Overseas Territories on 5 January. Deliveries so far have included Gibraltar, St Helena and some of the Caribbean Territories who are the first to start vaccinating priority groups. The operation to deliver vaccines is led by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office with support from the Department of Health and Social Care and the Vaccines Taskforce. This is a complex operation, which will take some weeks to complete, but will ensure that vulnerable people in the Overseas Territories will be protected.

China: Falun Gong

Owen Thompson: [136006]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Chinese Government on the persecution of followers and practitioners of Falun Gong.
Nigel Adams:
We remain deeply concerned about the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and others on the grounds of their religion or belief in China. The freedom to practise, change or share one's faith or belief without discrimination or violent opposition is a human right that all people should enjoy. We regularly raise our concerns about the human rights situation with the Chinese authorities, and will continue to do so.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Health Professions
Sarah Champion: [133866]
To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the training of healthcare professionals in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

James Duddridge:
Our bilateral health programme, "Access to Healthcare in the DRC", 2019-2021, provides training to a range of health workers, from lab technicians to administrative personnel and birth attendants. In the first six months of this programme, over 180,000 births were attended by a skilled health worker. I [James Duddridge MP] visited the programme in November 2020. UK funding has also supported training to healthcare workers to identify, respond and treat Ebola cases during the Eastern DRC outbreak as well as, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, training on infection prevention and control measures.

Through our previous health programme, "Access to Primary Healthcare" - 2013-2019, we trained over 170 midwives, 1700 nurses on health and nutrition, more than 1200 health workers on the treatment of severe acute malnutrition and approximately 1300 workers on essential and emergency obstetric and neonatal care.

Developing Countries: Poverty
Ruth Jones: [134145]
To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure poverty eradication remains the primary focus of UK Official Development Assistance.

James Cleverly:
Our new strategic framework will ensure we can deliver UK aid better, even if our budget is smaller, by combining aid with diplomacy and focusing our efforts where the UK can make the most difference to poverty reduction and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

It is also helps to ensure that every penny delivers value for money by bringing together the best of Britain's international effort in a more integrated, influential and coherent manner.
Diplomatic Service

Jon Trickett:

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to increase representation within the Diplomatic Service of people from (a) minority ethnic groups and (b) working class backgrounds.

Nigel Adams:

- With regard to race and ethnicity, the FCDO became a signatory to the Business in the Community (BITC) Race at Work Charter on day one of our merger, which will help guide our efforts to reflect the diversity of the UK population we serve. We launched the FCDO Summit Programme, a new leadership programme designed to support and develop talented Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff, which will help remove perceived and actual barriers to progression. Latest published diversity data, in 2019-20 Annual Report for the FCO (comprising the Diplomatic Service), shows that as of 31 March 2020 17% of UK-based staff identify as BAME, compared with 13% of the UK’s economically active population, and that of the 68 Fast Stream entrants recruited, 23.5% identified as BAME.

- With regard to socio-economic background, 100% of outreach work (undertaken by the FCDO’s legacy departments, FCO and DFID, pre-Covid-19), was targeted at non-selective state schools with above average levels of Free School Meals/low levels of attainment. Further details of measures to promote socio-economic diversity are captured in the Social Mobility Foundation (SMF) Index for 2020, which ranked legacy FCO (comprising the Diplomatic Service) 37 out of the 119 participating employers, compared with 73 out of 106 participating employers in 2018.

Diplomatic Service: Disability

Jon Trickett:

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to increase representation within the Diplomatic Service of people with a disability.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO is a Disability Confident Leader (DCL) - reflecting the DCL status of both legacy departments, FCO and DFID. This is reflected in the organisation’s recruitment policies. For both external and internal appointments, an interview is guaranteed to anyone with a disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the role outlined in the relevant job specification.

For the FCO (which comprises the Diplomatic Service), the most recent Annual Report provides information on: - the representation of UK Based employees with disabilities at 31 March 2020 (11% total; 7% in the Senior Management Structure) - how the FCO continued to increase the diversity of the workforce through targeted apprenticeship schemes, internships programmes and promoting the FCO as a great place to work at outreach events. - disability policy and support in the organisation.
The FCDO's Disability Update: Progress against DFID's strategy for Disability Inclusive Development (November 2020) also has a section on 'living our values'. This details information that was happening across both legacy departments (FCO and DFID) and how we plan to build on this in our approach to attracting and recruiting employees with disabilities and making the most of their potential while working for FCDO.

- **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

  **Ruth Jones:**

  To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequate scrutiny of his Department by (a) external bodies and (b) Parliament.

  **Nigel Adams:**

  The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs is maintaining full accountability to parliamentary and select committee scrutiny. He has also reported to parliament on 16 December on the Review of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) and will continue to respond effectively to, and learn from, ICAI's reviews, as well as those of other external bodies.

- **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Reorganisation**

  **Ruth Jones:**

  To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with trade union representatives of (a) former staff of the Department for International Development and (b) his departmental staff on harmonising staff terms and conditions.

  **Nigel Adams:**

  DFID and FCO senior officials informed their respective Trade Union representatives as soon as the creation of the FCDO was announced. Since then, there have been regular meetings between FCDO senior officials and the recognised FCDO Trade Unions (FDA, PCS & Prospect). These discussions have not involved the Secretary of State directly. We are working closely with the trade unions on the future design of FCDO terms and conditions and will formally consult as required on any specific areas of policy as work progresses.

- **Indonesia: Clergy**

  **Alex Sobel:**

  To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Indonesian Government on the killings of (a) Zhage Sil and (b) other clergy in that country.

  **Nigel Adams:**

  We are aware of the death of Zhage Sil in Papua in December and support the steps that the Indonesian government has taken to investigate the incident. We recognise
there are significant challenges in the region, including human rights concerns, sporadic violence and the security situation in some areas. We have not raised this specific case with the Indonesian Government, but the Foreign Secretary discussed Papua with Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi on 14 October 2020. The UK fully respects the territorial integrity of Indonesia, including the provinces of Papua and West Papua. We regularly press the Indonesian authorities to address all legitimate human rights concerns, including on Freedom of Religion and Belief (FORB).

- **Iran: Capital Punishment**

  **Imran Ahmad Khan:**

  To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Iranian counterpart on the executions of people in that country for crimes committed when under the age of 18.

  **James Cleverly:**

  The UK Government is firmly opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances and in every country, including Iran, especially in cases that do not meet the minimum standards defined by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This includes the execution of minors. We have repeatedly made clear to Iran, both in public and in private, our opposition to the use of the death penalty and will continue to do so.

- **Israel: Embassies**

  **Sarah Champion:**

  To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department plans to keep the British Embassy in Tel Aviv.

  **James Cleverly:**

  The British Embassy to Israel is based in Tel Aviv and we have no plans to move it.

- **Jerusalem: Planning**

  **Sarah Champion:**

  To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that the recent announcement of potential new settlement building in east Jerusalem does not adversely effect prospects of peace between Israel and the Palestinian people.

  **James Cleverly:**

  We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including settlement expansion within the West Bank. As the UK made clear on 16 October, in a joint statement alongside France, Germany, Italy and Spain, we are deeply concerned by the decision taken by the Israeli authorities to advance more than 4,900 settlement building units in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. I also expressed concern about settlement advancement in Givat
Hamatos on 18 November and Har Homa on 25 November. The UK regularly raises settlement expansion with the Israeli authorities. The UK’s position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. Settlement expansion is also a counterproductive move in light of the positive developments of normalisation agreements reached between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco. We urge Israel to halt settlement expansion.

### Sri Lanka: Coronavirus

**Ruth Jones:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Sri Lankan Government about the effect of that Government’s compulsory cremation policy for all covid-19 deaths on the Muslim population in that country.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK Government is concerned about the Government of Sri Lanka’s continued decision to mandate cremations for all those affected by Covid-19, and recognises the particular impact this is having on Sri Lankan Muslims and other faith communities. The Minister of State for South Asia and the Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, has raised concerns about this directly with the Sri Lankan High Commissioner, most recently in December. The Minister raised the importance of minority rights in a call with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena in November. The UK’s High Commissioner to Sri Lanka has also raised concerns about mandatory cremations several times with the Sri Lankan Government, most recently on 8 January.

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

### Syria: Elections

**Ian Murray:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the United Nations on the supervision of Syrian presidential elections in 2021.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK continues to raise the issue of Syrian presidential elections with the UN, including at the Security Council and with Special Envoy Geir Pedersen. We also continue to call on those with influence on the regime to ensure they will not hold elections that will damage and delay progress towards a political resolution to the conflict. UN Security Council Resolution 2254 is clear that all Syrians, including the diaspora, must be able to participate in free and fair elections and that a new
constitution must be agreed before free and fair elections can take place. Elections that do not meet these requirements would deny millions of Syrians the opportunity to take part in deciding the future of Syria and impede the political process.

### Western Sahara: Armed Conflict

**Alex Sobel:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last reviewed the legal status of the conflict in Western Sahara.

**James Cleverly:**

As the Foreign Secretary stated on 11 December 2020, the UK's position remains unchanged. We continue to regard the status of Western Sahara as undetermined, and support UN-led efforts to achieve a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

### Western Sahara: Human Rights

**Alex Sobel:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to stop breaches of international humanitarian law in Western Sahara.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK fully supports the UN's efforts to secure a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the conflict that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. We are closely monitoring the situation in Western Sahara and call on the parties to return to the ceasefire agreement and UN-led political process.

### Western Sahara: Visits Abroad

**Alex Sobel:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when departmental staff last visited Western Sahara.

**James Cleverly:**

We are closely monitoring the situation in Western Sahara. We have regular discussions with the parties and remain in close contact with MINURSO, the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. UK officials visit Western Sahara periodically. A visit planned for 2020 was postponed due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, as was the case elsewhere.

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### Coronavirus: Enfield

**Bambos Charalambous:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's press release of 9 November entitled, More rapid COVID-19 tests to be
rolled out across England, when Enfield Council will receive the 10,000 covid-19 testing kits.

**Bambos Charalambous:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's press release of 9 November entitled, More rapid COVID-19 tests to be rolled out across England, whether Enfield Council will receive additional resources to support the administration of the 10,000 covid-19 testing kits it is due to receive.

**Helen Whately:**

[ Holding answer 8 December 2020]: Lateral flow tests will be sent out by NHS Test and Trace to local public health leaders to enable local teams to direct and deliver testing based on their local knowledge. NHS Test and Trace is supporting local authorities to deliver this testing by providing access to online training, clinical, operational and service design guidance and communication and engagement support. On 16 December it was confirmed that Enfield will be participating in community testing.

We recognise the need for enhanced support for areas with particularly high prevalence of the virus. The Government is supporting local authorities in England in tier 3 and 4 areas, those in tier 2 who are at significant risk of entering tier 3, to deliver a six-week community testing programme.

### Coronavirus: Greater London

**Helen Hayes:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 tests were carried out in (a) Lambeth and (b) Southwark in each of the last five weeks.

**Helen Whately:**

[ Holding answer 25 September 2020]: Weekly data for pillar 2 COVID-19 testing is available at the following link:


### Coronavirus: Hospitals

**Justin Madders:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cases of hospital acquired covid-19 there in each month of 2020.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

This information is not held in the format requested.

Given the incubation period of the virus and local differences in application of testing protocols, it is not possible to definitively determine the number of people who contracted the virus while in hospital in England to date.
Coronavirus: Laboratories

Daniel Zeichner:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether costs incurred by local authorities for private laboratory fees for (a) covid-19 tests (b) courier fees and (c) swabbing fees will be reimbursed by the Government.

Helen Whately:  
NHS Test and Trace was established to provide testing and contact tracing in England. It does not hold responsibility for all testing conducted in England. Where local authorities or other Government bodies have procured private testing services outside of the Department or NHS Test and Trace, these costs will not be reimbursed unless they were contractually agreed prior to undertaking.

Coronavirus: Leeds Arts University

Hilary Benn:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons Leeds Arts University has not been included on the list for rapid covid-19 testing ahead of the Christmas 2020 holiday period.

Helen Whately:  
[Holding answer 1 December 2020]: We have worked with 152 universities in England, which covers three quarters of the student population, to offer the majority of asymptomatic COVID-19 tests before they returned home for the Christmas break. Almost all universities who expressed an interest in mass testing continued through the programme to order test kits and set up asymptomatic testing sites. However, due to the unprecedented scale of the operation, not every university was able to take part in the December phase of the project. Students at Leeds Arts University were given access to the testing service at Leeds Beckett University.

Coronavirus: Licensed Premises

Nick Fletcher:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason pubs cannot serve takeaway alcohol outside of their premises during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:  
[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: Throughout the pandemic, the Government has listened carefully to the views of the scientific community, the information from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and its sub-groups when taking decisions on the best way to tackle the pandemic. Allowing people to take alcohol purchases away from hospitality venues increases the risk that people will consume the alcohol nearby or congregate in public spaces. We have seen evidence where local authorities have taken enforcement action against pubs, therefore we are mitigating against this risk.
The Government has these restrictions constantly under review.

**Coronavirus: Quarantine**

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding has been allocated to the Isolation Assurance Service from 1 June 2020 to 31 December 2020.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cost to the public purse is of the contract between the Isolation Assurance Service and Sitel to monitor people entering the UK who are required to quarantine during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the duration is of the contract between the Isolation Assurance Service and Sitel in place to monitor quarantine compliance during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been successfully contacted by Sitel by (a) telephone and (b) SMS since that company acquired the contract to monitor compliance with quarantine rules.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

[ Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Isolation Assurance Service (IAS) is undertaken through an existing Public Health England contract which has been formally updated and is on a rolling agreement with two-weeks' notice. Sitel is the only company working on the IAS.

The IAS activity includes up to three calls and a text per eligible United Kingdom arrivals sampled. Between 9 June and 7 September 2020, 149,579 total calls and texts and 66,773 successful contacts were made to eligible arrivals via phone or SMS.

The spend on setting up and running the IAS to end of September 2020 was £664,000.

**Coronavirus: Screening**

**Mr Marcus Fysh:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of positive tests for covid-19 infection as recorded by (a) different health and social care organisations and (b) the Office for National Statistics are confirmed by subsequent positive tests before being reported as positive tests.

**Helen Whately:**

We do not publish the information requested. However, all organisations performing tests are aware that they should follow the industry best practice for pathology testing and ensure they meet all the legal and regulatory obligations required for testing for

Rachel Reeves:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure that covid-19 testing site workers are adequately supported to self-isolate in the event that they are required to.

Helen Whately:

[ Holding answer 9 November 2020]: Test sites have clear guidance for treating suspected COVID-19 cases to ensure individuals are self-isolating whenever it is necessary to do so. Our commercial partners have their own measures in place to support staff members who are ill or otherwise unable to work. In addition, eligible test site workers who have to self-isolate can apply for the NHS Test and Trace support payment.

Stella Creasy:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2020 to Question 89689 on Coronavirus: Screening, what the performance standards are that Randox is expected to meet under the terms of its contract for covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

[ Holding answer 5 October 2020]: Performance and quality assurance standards and processes are included in the Government contracts with Randox. These are constantly monitored against to ensure that the supplier is meeting expectations. Due to the commercially sensitive nature of these agreements, the Department cannot provide specific details.

Coronavirus: Travel Restrictions

Sarah Olney:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the potential merits of exempting travel for medical procedures from the international travel restrictions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[ Holding answer 14 January 2021]: The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care works closely with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and other Cabinet colleagues on how best to protect the public from COVID-19.

The current lockdown restricts travel including international travel, however there is an exemption for travel for medical reasons.

An individual who had travelled abroad for medical reasons would, on arrival in England, be required to self-isolate for ten days. If eligible they may choose to pay for
a private COVID-19 test under the Test to Release scheme after five days. If the result is negative, they would then be able to stop self-isolating.

Individuals arriving to attend pre-arranged treatment, when receiving that treatment in the United Kingdom, are exempt from the requirement to self-isolate whilst they are attending a place to receive that healthcare or travelling directly between that place and the place where they are self-isolating.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to place under 65 year olds with comorbidities and vulnerable diseases high on the priority list when a covid-19 vaccine is rolled out.

Clive Lewis:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to provide the covid-19 vaccination to (a) school staff and (b) other key workers.

Sarah Owen:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of whether foster carers should be prioritised to receive the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

Therefore, in line with the recommendations of the JCVI, the vaccine will be initially rolled out to the priority groups including care home residents and staff, people over 80 years old and health and care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and all individuals aged 16-64 years old with underlying health conditions. Phase 2 of the rollout may include further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services.

Jon Trickett:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether outsourced hospital workers will receive the same level of priority for covid-19 vaccinations as NHS workers.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

The JCVI considers frontline health and social care workers who provide care to vulnerable people a high priority for vaccination. The definition of frontline healthcare staff includes those involved in direct patient care. This includes staff who have frequent face-to-face clinical contact with patients and who are directly involved in patient care in either secondary or primary care/community settings.

Rosie Duffield:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) physiotherapists and (b) other healthcare staff providing patient-facing NHS services, but employed by independent providers, will have access to covid-19 vaccination in the same priority cohort as NHS employees.

Rosie Duffield:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) physiotherapists and (b) other healthcare staff providing patient-facing services in charitable hospices will have access to covid-19 vaccination in the same priority cohort as NHS employees.

Rosie Duffield:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether self-employed physiotherapists providing patient-facing services in care homes will have access to the covid-19 vaccination in the same priority cohort as NHS employees.

Rosie Duffield:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether self-employed physiotherapists providing patient-facing services in the community will have access to the covid-19 vaccination in the same priority cohort as NHS employees.

Rosie Duffield:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether self-employed physiotherapists providing patient-facing services under contract to GPs will have access to the covid-19 vaccination in the same priority cohort as NHS employees.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

Therefore, in line with the recommendations of the JCVI, the vaccine will be initially rolled out to priority groups, including frontline health and social care workers who are at increased personal risk of exposure to infection with COVID-19 and of transmitting that infection to susceptible and vulnerable patients in health and social care settings.
The COVID-19 chapter in the *Green Book: Immunisation against infectious disease* sets out further information defining those groups of health and social care workers that should be offered the COVID-19 vaccine. This includes physiotherapists and other healthcare staff providing direct patient care in independent, voluntary and non-standard healthcare settings. The COVID-19 chapter in the green book is available at:


Apsana Begum:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason black, Asian and minority groups who are at greater risk of covid-19 have not been included in the composition and order of priority of groups for covid-19 vaccinations.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

The JCVI notes that while there is clear evidence that certain black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups have higher rates of infection, and higher rates of serious disease, morbidity and mortality, there is no strong evidence that ethnicity by itself or genetics is the sole explanation for observed differences in rates of severe illness and deaths.

Sir Desmond Swayne:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will implement scheme for fast-track access to covid-19 vaccination for personnel who are critical to UK exports overseas.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 10 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

Therefore, in line with the recommendations of the JCVI, the vaccine is being rolled out to the priority groups including care home residents and staff, people over 80 years old and health and care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and all individuals aged 16-64 years old with underlying health conditions.
Following vaccinations across the priority groups, Phase 2 of deployment, may include the targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services.

Ruth Cadbury: [126059]
To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that unpaid carers can access the covid-19 vaccine.

Preet Kaur Gill: [126097]
To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of prioritising for covid-19 vaccination unpaid carers who care for a person who is too frail to receive the vaccine themselves.

Nadhim Zahawi:
The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that the vaccine should be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people over 80 years old and health and social care workers.

We recognise the vital role unpaid carers play in caring for vulnerable individuals. The JCVI recommends that carers who are in receipt of Carer’s Allowance or are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer contracted COVID-19, should be included in Priority group 6 alongside people with underlying health conditions.

Sir Mark Hendrick: [128077]
To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle misinformation on the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:
The Government is committed to ensuring that people have access to accurate information about COVID-19 vaccines. The Department is leading extensive communications activity to reassure the public, providing advice for anyone who has questions about the vaccination process.

The Government’s Counter Disinformation Unit looks for trends on social media platforms to respond to misleading content rapidly. This can be a range of actions from labelling, to ‘downranking’, to removal where there is significant risk of harm, in line with the platform’s terms and conditions.

We have developed the SHARE checklist which aims to educate and empower those who see, inadvertently share and are affected by false and misleading information.

Facebook, Twitter and Google agreed to the principle that no company should profit from or promote COVID-19 anti-vaccine misinformation and disinformation and to respond to flagged content more swiftly.
The major platforms have updated their terms of service and taken positive steps to reduce the spread of harmful and misleading narratives and to promote Government and National Health Service messaging, including around anti vaccination content.

The Government’s response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation includes details of new laws to deal with harmful content and behaviour online, such as misinformation and disinformation that could cause significant physical or psychological harm to an individual.

Seema Malhotra:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to work with scientists to communicate the safety and effectiveness of the covid-19 vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Government Public Health England (PHE), the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), and the National Health Service (NHS) work together to deliver immunisation programmes in the United Kingdom. The Government is advised on the safety, efficacy and strategy for the vaccines by independent scientists, including those from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and the Commission on Human Medicines’ Expert Advisory Group.

The Department, alongside the NHS and PHE, provides advice and information to the public to support those getting the vaccine and to anyone who might have questions about the vaccination process.

Ethnic Groups: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to make targeted public health guidance and information about covid-19 vaccines available for Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department has been working closely with Public Health England (PHE) and NHS England and NHS Improvement to provide authoritative information to the public on COVID-19 vaccination.

PHE is preparing translated versions of the core vaccine programme leaflets. We will be producing alternative formats that will include the following languages - Arabic, Albanian, Chinese, Bengali, French, Farsi, Kurdish, Hindi, Polish, Panjabi, Nepalese, Romanian, Turkish, Tagalog, Spanish, Somali, Ukrainian and Urdu. Simple text, video and audio versions are also being developed to support messaging to black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. These will be published in due course.
Exercise Cygnus

Tim Farron:[91960]
To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the full findings of Exercise Cygnus.

Jo Churchill:
[ Holding answer 18 November 2020]: The document ‘Exercise Cygnus Report: Tier One Command Post Exercise Pandemic Influenza 18 to 20 October 2016’, published on 20 October 2020, is the complete report of the exercise setting out all the lessons identified.

Hospital Beds

Julian Sturdy:[130708]
To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of high dependency hospital beds to reduce waiting lists for minor operations for people who have additional medical issues that require a high dependency bed.

Edward Argar:
As part of their response to the current pandemic, providers have increased critical care surge beds. However, this has not been to specifically help reduce waiting lists. The use of these beds will be dependent upon the prevailing priorities for treatment.

Each provider will carry out a risk assessment to determine whether a patient requires a period of time within critical care post procedure and ensure that a bed is available if required.

Hyperactivity

Alex Sobel:[109615]
To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to support people with ADHD during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:
NHS England and NHS Improvement wrote to healthcare leaders on 31 July 2020 setting out the actions required for phase three of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes re-stating targets for clinical commissioning groups to increase investment in services, including those for neurodivergent people such as people who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. It also asks systems to maintain the growth in the number of children and young people accessing care, ensure all services are restored and advertised, and proactively review all patients in community health services, including asking general practitioners to ensure these patients are identified on their registers.
Alex Sobel: [109616]
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 (a) service provision, (b) support services and (c) waiting times for treatment for adults with suspected or confirmed ADHD.

Ms Nadine Dorries:
No such assessment has been made. There is currently limited data available at national level on the provision of services for people with Attention Hyperactivity Deficit Disorder (ADHD). There is also no established national data collection regarding waiting times for adults with suspected or confirmed ADHD. NHS Digital are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement to look at how the collection and reporting of data on ADHD at national level can be improved.

Influenza: Vaccination
Sarah Owen: [91930]
To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to maintain the temporary expansion of the eligibility for flu vaccinations to the over 50 year olds.

Sarah Owen: [91932]
To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what advice his Department received from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on the expansion of eligibility for flu vaccination to people aged over 50.

Jo Churchill: [Holding answer 11 November 2020]
The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) considered the expansion of the flu vaccination programme at a meeting on 6 July 2020. The JCVI was supportive of extending vaccination to all adults aged between 50 and 64 years of age, starting at the oldest age groups as a temporary measure for the 2020/21 influenza season.

The minute of the JCVI’s Extraordinary Meeting on COVID-19 Immunisation prioritisation held 6 July 2020 is available at the following link:
https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation#minutes

A decision was made this year to extend the seasonal flu programme to people aged 50 and over in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, and concerns about the co-circulation of flu and COVID-19. A decision has not yet been made in relation to the inclusion of people aged 50 and over in future years.
Mental Health: Young People

Alex Sobel:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to minimise the potential risk of (a) suicide and (b) mental health issues among young people as a result of the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department of Health and Social Care continues to work closely with the Department for Education, NHS England and NHS Improvement, Public Health England (PHE) and a wide range of stakeholders to support all people’s mental wellbeing and mental health. We are working with them to ensure that children and young people and their parents or carers know what support is available.

To support children and young people’s mental wellbeing, we launched in September our £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme. It has supported education staff to respond to the emotional and mental health pressures some children and young people may be feeling as a result of COVID-19.

Randox Laboratories

Helen Hayes:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 3 November 2020 to Question 52660 on Coronavirus: Screening, if he will contact participants in negotiations with Randox to seek their consent to publish their names.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: The Department has no plans to contact participants in negotiations with Randox as their contracts contain a confidentiality clause.

Test and Trace Support Payment

Jonathan Reynolds:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have received the Test and Trace Support Payment since its introduction.

Helen Whately:

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

Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Paul Blomfield: [132877]
To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many operations have been led by the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority into agricultural locations under the Seasonal Workers' Pilot scheme in each month from April 2019 to December 2020.

Paul Blomfield: [132880]
To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many operations were (a) carried out and (b) led by the Gangmasters' Licensing Authority into locations covered by the Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Scheme in each year from 2006 to 2013.

Kevin Foster:
The responsibility for inspecting locations under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme and the Seasonal Worker's Pilot sits with UK Visas and Immigration.

The Gangmasters Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) accompanied UK Visas and Immigration on their inspections to provide them with information, advice and guidance.

Criminal Records: EU Countries

Stuart C McDonald: [133894]
To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the cost of transitioning to replacement systems for (a) Eurojust, (b) Schengen Information System II and (c) accessing Europol databases.

Stuart C McDonald: [133896]
To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the cost of implementing new procedures to replace access to the European Arrest Warrant.

Kit Malthouse:
The Home Office worked closely with operational partners to ensure they were appropriately funded for the end of the Transition Period. As a result, operational partners were appropriately staffed and resourced to implement the new law enforcement and criminal justice arrangements within the UK-EU Trade Co-operation Agreement. Following the recent Spending Review process, the Home Office continues to work with operational partners to ensure they have appropriate funding into the next financial year.

More widely, as part of the Spending Review process £363m has been provided in 2021/22 primarily to recruit 1,100 Border Force officers to deliver transit customs arrangements and to continue supporting law enforcement cooperation with EU Member States.
Extradition: EU Countries

Joanna Cherry:  
To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many EU Member States have refused a request from the UK to extradite a suspect under the surrender arrangements of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation agreement to date.

Kit Malthouse:  
The Home Office does not hold the information requested.

The National Crime Agency handles requests made through the European Arrest Warrant as well as those made under the new surrender arrangements.

Statistics on the European Arrest Warrant have been published by the National Crime Agency for each year of its operation. These figures are published at: https://nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/who-we-are/publications

Fireworks: Antisocial Behaviour

Alexander Stafford:  
To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of trends in the level of anti-social behaviour in 2020 in relation to the misuse of fireworks in (a) Rother Valley constituency and (b) England and Wales.

Victoria Atkins:  
The Government remains committed to promoting the safe and considerate use of fireworks through an effective legislative framework and through non-legislative measures. We launched a public awareness campaign this October with the aim of educating people on how to buy, use, store and dispose of fireworks safely and considerately, and to ensure retailers know and understand their responsibilities when selling fireworks.

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides the police, local authorities and other local agencies with a range of tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to such anti-social behaviour.

No data is held on the level of anti-social behaviour in relation to the misuse of fireworks.

Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority: Staff

Paul Blomfield:  
To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (a) employed in 2019-20 and (b) employs in 2020-21; and how many of those staff were dedicated to working in Scotland in each of those years.
Victoria Atkins:
The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority employed 144 staff in total in 2019-20. Two of these were based in Scotland. In 2020-21, GLAA employed 137 people in total.

One member of staff is based in Scotland. Further staff are available from other enforcement and compliance teams to support work in Scotland through the GLAA’s tasking and co-ordination process.

Hate Crime: Females

Helen Hayes:

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to tackle (a) misogyny and (b) violence against women and girls.

Victoria Atkins:

As part of the Hate Crime Action Plan Refresh in October 2018, we asked the Law Commission to conduct a review into the coverage and approach of hate crime legislation, including consideration of whether other protective characteristics, such as gender and age, should be included. We will respond to the review when it is complete.

Addressing Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) remains a key priority of this Government. We will be publishing a new Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy in the Spring which will help to better target perpetrators and support victims of these crimes. To inform the new strategy, we launched a Call for Evidence on 10 December, inviting responses from the public, organisations that provide support to victims and survivors, frontline professionals, and academics.

You can contribute to our Call for Evidence here - [Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Call for Evidence - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Human Trafficking: Children

Peter Kyle:

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average number of days taken was to make conclusive grounds decisions in National Referral Mechanism cases relating to children, in each of the last five years.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office publishes statistics on referrals into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) on a quarterly basis, as well as a yearly summary.

Published statistics include the average time taken by the Single Competent Authority (SCA) to make Conclusive Grounds decisions. There is no target to make a Conclusive Grounds decision within a specific timeframe but the decision should be made as soon as possible after the 45-day Recovery and Reflection period has ended, and only when sufficient information has been made available on the case.
The average time for a Conclusive Grounds decision to be made was 344 days for the third quarter of 2020.

Between now and March 2021, over 350 new staff will join the Home Office to work in the SCA. The vast majority of these staff will be decision-makers, with the remainder of the new staff working in case preparation, workflow management, technical specialist and management roles.

Recruiting in these numbers will give us the capacity to make significantly more Conclusive Grounds decisions than we are currently able to do with existing resource, and therefore we expect to bring down decision-making timescales for victims.


### Immigration: Complaints

**Tim Farron:**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether an Independent Complaints Examiner for the Borders, Immigration and Citizenship complaints procedure has been appointed.

**Kevin Foster:**

In line with Wendy Williams’ recommendation, the Home Office has commissioned the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) to undertake an independent review of the Home Office complaints system and provide advice on improvements.

The Home Office is also looking at the roles of Independent Complaints Examiners in other government departments. We will provide an update on next steps in due course.

### Members: Correspondence

**John Spellar:**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Warley of 12 November 2020 on the operation of Sarah’s Law.

**Victoria Atkins:**

A response was provided by the Minister for Safeguarding on 18 December 2020.
Police: Recruitment

Marco Longhi: [130859]
To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what incentives her Department has put in place to help increase the diversity of local police officers in (a) Dudley North constituency and (b) the UK.

Kit Malthouse:
This Government’s commitment to recruit an additional 20,000 officers provides a once in generation opportunity to improve diversity and this Government has been clear that all forces should be striving to become representative of the communities served. Through the Police Uplift Programme, we are supporting all forces, including West Midlands Police, with a variety of attraction and recruitment strategies, whilst delivering a national campaign that’s been designed to reach the widest and most diverse audience possible.

Some forces have made significant improvements in the rate of Black, Asian and minority ethnic joiners through successful positive action measures. Information is available on police.uk that shows the ethnicity and gender representation for each police force compared to local force area populations. This allows the public to hold forces to account.

The Government has also supported innovative schemes, such as Police Now, which are making the police workforce more diverse than ever before; showing that we can attract the brightest and best into policing, whilst introducing new perspectives from some of the country’s most challenging neighbourhoods.

Security Guards: Licensing

Paul Girvan: [131399]
To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to temporarily waive the fee for Security Industry Authority applications to support people working in the security sector.

Victoria Atkins:
The Security Industry Authority (SIA) is a fee funded Executive Non-Departmental Public Body, established under the Private Security Industry Act (PSIA) 2001 as the regulator of the private security industry.

The fees are fixed in accordance with the Private Security Industry Act 2001, which sets out that the SIA should set its application fees at a level suitable to cover costs incurred to deliver its activities. There are currently no plans to temporarily waive the fee for SIA’s licence applications.
Slavery

Peter Kyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to page 7 of her Department's 2020 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery, what progress has been made on establishing a robust estimate of the prevalence of modern slavery in the UK.

Victoria Atkins: The hidden nature of modern slavery makes producing an accurate measure of its scale difficult. In March 2020 the Office for National Statistics noted that there is no definitive source of data or suitable method available to accurately quantify the number of potential victims of modern slavery in the UK:
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/modernslaveryintheuk/march2020

The Government is, however, committed to improving its understanding of the nature and scale of this complex crime. In July 2019, the Government announced a £10 million investment to create a new Policy and Evidence Centre for Modern Slavery and Human Rights to transform our understanding of modern slavery. The Home Office will continue working with the Centre and other partners to strengthen the evidence base underpinning our policy and operational response to modern slavery.

Dr Matthew Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what is the compliance rate of eligible businesses in publishing annual statements of Transparency in Supply Chain Provisions under the Modern Slavery Act in each of the last five years.

Dr Matthew Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many eligible businesses have advised her Department that they have taken no steps to confirm the existence of slavery or trafficking in their supply chains as required under the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Victoria Atkins: Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 established the UK as the first country in the world to require businesses to report annually on steps taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains. Organisations which have taken no steps must state this clearly in their statement, which must be published in a prominent place on their website. Currently, organisations are not required to submit their modern slavery statement directly to the Home Office.

To assess compliance rates, the Home Office contracted the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC) from September 2019 to January 2020 to undertake an audit of compliance on the Home Office’s behalf. The audit findings on levels of compliance were published on 17 September 2020 in the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner’s annual report (available here:}
To improve the quality and detail of reporting and accelerate action to prevent modern slavery, the Government recently announced an ambitious package of changes to strengthen and future-proof section 54, including requiring organisations to report against specific topics and creating a Government modern slavery statement registry to make all statements available in one place. The new registry, which is due to launch this year, will improve the transparency, accessibility and comparability of statements published under the Act, empowering investors, consumers and civil society to scrutinise progress and enabling Government to continually monitor compliance.

These measures, including requiring organisations to publish their statement on the Government modern slavery registry, require primary legislation and will be introduced when parliamentary time allows.

### Slavery: Confiscation Orders

Peter Kyle:

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the total value is of confiscation orders and forfeitures issued for modern slavery offences from March to December 2020.

Victoria Atkins:

The most recently published Asset Recovery Statistical Bulletin, which sets out data on the recovery of criminal assets extracted from the Joint Asset Recovery Database, is available here:


Annex A of this bulletin shows the value of confiscation and forfeitures connected to modern slavery offences for financial years 2014/15 to 2019/20.

### Slavery: Seized Articles

Dr Matthew Offord:

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what is the financial value of assets seized in each of the last five years under the Modern Slavery Act.

Victoria Atkins:

The full breakdown of statistical data reflecting the above financial value of assets recovered between 2015 and 2020 is reported in the Asset Recovery Statistical Bulletin in Annex A in Table 4.
**Slavery: Victims**

**Peter Kyle:**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of victims of modern slavery who were not identified as such by first responders since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Government is committed to the safety and security of victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the support they need, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hidden nature of modern slavery makes providing an accurate measure of its scale difficult. From 1 April to 30 September 2020, 4,715 potential victims of modern slavery were referred into the National Referral Mechanism.

Given that victims of modern slavery may be especially isolated as a result of the lockdown measures required to combat the pandemic, the Government published additional guidance on GOV.UK (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-modern-slavery/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-modern-slavery/) for First Responder Organisations and frontline staff with information about how to spot the potential signs of modern slavery and refer suspected cases to appropriate services.

We also recognise victims are coming into contact with different services during the pandemic and we have worked to raise awareness of the indicators of modern slavery in these areas to ensure victims continue to be identified and supported.

**Victim Support Schemes: Finance**

**Peter Kyle:**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding from the Violence Reduction Unit programme has been allocated to organisations supporting victims.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Under the Violence Reduction Programme, the Government has allocated £35m to support Violence Reduction Units in 20/21. Violence Reduction Units then work on a multi-agency basis to determine how best to apply this funding in implementing a ‘whole system’ or ‘public health’ approach to tackling serious violence, which may include funding various organisations.

The Home Office does not hold victim/offender classification information relating to organisations funded by Violence Reduction Units.

As noted in the Government’s April 2018 Serious Violence Strategy, there is evidence of considerable overlap between victims and offenders and serious violence. As part of their implementation of a ‘whole system’ approach, Violence Reduction Units seek
to implement those interventions that are most effective in preventing violence from happening in the first place.

**Windrush Generation: Compensation**

*Catherine West:*

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many interim or preliminary payments have been made to Windrush Compensation Scheme applicants since changes to the scheme were announced on 14 December 2020.

*Priti Patel:*


Our priority remains to process claims as quickly as possible and the recently updated Windrush Compensation factsheet [https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/12/14/windrush-compensation-scheme-factsheet-december-2020/](https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/12/14/windrush-compensation-scheme-factsheet-december-2020/) sets out the timetable for when individuals will be contacted.

**HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION**

**House of Commons: Procurement**

*John Spellar:*

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, for what reason the Commons authorities are buying German rather than British wash basin taps.

*Pete Wishart:*

The Public Contract Regulations 2015 are UK law and in general they prohibit contracting authorities from specifying the country of manufacture or origin when purchasing goods. This has not changed now that the Brexit transition period has ended.

The wash basin taps in question were supplied through British companies including Dart Valley Systems. This particular supplier has a Swiss parent company (Franke) which operates globally.
Housing, Communities and Local Government

Building Safety Fund

Fleur Anderson:

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many applicants have applied to the Building Safety Fund for the remediation of unsafe non-ACM cladding systems since the inception of that Fund; how many of those applicants have had their claims (a) accepted and (b) rejected; and how much funding remains to be allocated from that Fund.

Christopher Pincher:


We are committed to publishing all appropriate information in the Building Safety Programme’s data release when ready.

Coronavirus: High Rise Flats

Thangam Debbonaire:

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether any additional funding will be made available to help local authorities make high-rise buildings covid-safe during the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

We have continued to support councils throughout the pandemic, demonstrated by the fact we have provided over £4.6 billion in un-ringfenced funding to councils across four tranches throughout the financial year. This is un-ringfenced funding intended to ensure that local areas can prioritise based on their own understanding of local pressures. In total, we have committed over £7.2 billion for local authorities even before the extension of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund for those authorities under the highest level of restriction - potentially worth over £200 million a month - announced as part of the Covid-19 Winter Plan. Alongside this, we have provided a range of guidance to support people and mitigate the risk of transmission, including residents living in blocks/b buildings with shared spaces. I refer the Hon. member to the answer to Question UIN 122933 on 8 December 2020.

Devolution: England

Jonathan Gullis:

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to increase devolution in England.
Luke Hall:
We want to devolve and decentralise to give more power to local communities, providing an opportunity for all places to level up. We intend to bring forward the English Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper in due course, detailing how the UK Government will partner with places across the UK to build a sustainable economic recovery, including our vision for expanding devolution across England.

On 17 December 2020 the Order for the West Yorkshire devolution deal was laid in Parliament. Subject to parliamentary approval, the newly elected Mayor will have control over an annual £38 million investment fund as well as new powers over transport, education and housing and planning.

Domestic Abuse: Refuges
Ruth Jones:
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent steps he has taken to ensure that domestic abuse victims can access safe refuges.

Kelly Tolhurst:
We know that refuges provide critical safe accommodation for victims and their children. To ensure these services remain open, operating and able to support more victims, between June and September 2020 we provided £10 million direct to safe accommodation charities as emergency Covid-19 funding. We have since extended the flexibility to spend the funds to cover the Winter period. We have also provided guidance for organisations to operate safely, made free PPE available to refuges and, made it clear that victims and their children, under the current national restrictions, can leave home to escape domestic abuse and access safety. We are pressing ahead with a new legal duty on local authorities to provide support for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation in the Domestic Abuse Bill.

Employment Schemes: Disability
Marion Fellows:
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to support employment projects for disabled people through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Helen Hayes:
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to support employment projects for disabled people through the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:
The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities.
A portion of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will support investment in people and skills, in communities and places and in local businesses, all tailored to local needs.

A second portion of the Fund will be targeted differently to people most in need, through bespoke employment and skills programmes. This will support improved employment outcomes for those in and out of work in specific groups of people who face labour market barriers.

**Free Zones**

**Bridget Phillipson:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will place in the Library the (a) current round of bid submissions for possible sites for Freeports, (b) criteria used to assess each of the free text fields in the submitted bids and (c) weightings used for each of those criteria in respect of every text field.

**Luke Hall:**

We are committed to following a robust and transparent process for assessing Freeport bids, as published in the Freeports Bidding Prospectus. Those bids will be assessed using the criteria, weightings, and mark scheme outlined in that Prospectus. We will not publish Freeport bids whilst they are being assessed as part of a live competition; we need to have regard to any commercially sensitive information within them.

**Help to Buy Scheme: North East**

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason the maximum loan under the Help to Buy: Equity Loan Scheme is lower in the North East than other areas of the UK.

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to increase the house value threshold for prospective first-time buyers in the North East under the Help to Buy: Equity Loan Scheme.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Help to Buy: Equity Loan scheme offers loans of up to 20 per cent of the full purchase price of a new build homes in order to help tackle deposit constraints. This is consistent across the country, apart from in London where customers can make use of loans of up to 40 per cent in order to reflect the higher cost of housing.

The new first-time buyer Help to Buy scheme, which commences from 1 April, will introduce regional property price caps which set the maximum purchase price in each region. The regional caps were announced at Budget 2018 and are aligned to the first-time buyer market. They are all set at 1.5 times the forecast regional average first-time buyer price, in line with the Office of Budget Responsibility’s house price inflation forecast for 2021/22, up to a maximum of £600,000 in London.
The caps were designed to support the purchase of properties that are more consistent with the wider first-time buyer market. This in turn helps optimise the resources available to enable purchasers to achieve the dream of home ownership. We have recently reviewed the caps and continue to be satisfied they allow good availability of first-time buyer type properties in each region.

There will of course be local hotspots within each region that are more expensive. However, the approach is aimed at striking the right balance between better targeting the scheme so it can assist more first time buyers, whilst accounting for a degree of price variation within regions without the additional complexity that may arise from more localised caps. Therefore, there are no plans to revise the caps.

Homelessness: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas: [134405]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on the prioritisation of (a) homeless outreach and assessment workers, (b) homeless hostel (i) workers and (ii) residents for covid-19 vaccination; and if he will make a statement.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Many of those people sleeping rough will be a priority for the COVID-19 vaccine due to underlying health conditions and we continue to work with the Department for Health and Social Care, Public Health England, and NHS England on this important issue.

We have asked all local authorities to redouble their efforts to make sure rough sleepers are safely accommodated and are asking that this opportunity is actively used to make sure that all rough sleepers are registered with a GP where they are not already, and are factored into local area vaccination plans, in line with Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) prioritisation.

The JCVI advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be for the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems. Frontline social care workers directly working with people clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 are on a priority list for vaccination. Local authorities are encouraged to look at those working in homeless settings for whether they meet this criteria, referring to NHS guidance on the vaccine deployment in social care workers.

We continue to work closely with the homelessness sector, local authorities and health and care partners, to ensure the needs of those experiencing homelessness can be met.
Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade

Mr Marcus Fysh: [133031]
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reforming funding for local government to help physical retail and hospitality businesses and high streets.

Luke Hall:
The Chancellor has announced a review of business rates. The Government is currently considering responses to the review’s call for evidence and has committed to publish a response in Spring 2021. Businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors have benefitted from rates reliefs worth approximately £10 billion in the current financial year.

Housing: Construction

Simon Jupp: [122926]
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what his most recent estimate is of the number of housing units with planning permission; and for how many of those work (a) has started on site, (b) is due to start on site and (c) is not yet planned to start.

Christopher Pincher:
The latest quarterly National Statistics on planning applications* show that over the past three years 1.14 million housing units were granted planning permission. Planning permissions are typically valid for 3 years before expiry if construction has not commenced. As part of the Government’s ongoing development of the official statistics on housing and planning we are looking at ways to provide more information on the progress of sites with planning permission.

* Source: Table 5

Dr Luke Evans: [133239]
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring new build accessible property developers to ensure that their new dwellings meet category three needs.

Christopher Pincher:
Government recently consulted on various options to raise the accessibility of new homes, including proposals related to category three homes for wheelchair users. We are currently considering responses and will be publishing a Government response.
Housing: Insulation

Andrew Rosindell:

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that insurers continue to offer reasonable premiums to residential leaseholders in buildings with unsafe non-ACM cladding systems.

Andrew Rosindell:

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that insurers continue to offer insurance to residential leaseholders in buildings with unsafe cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department is aware that obtaining affordable building insurance for some multi storey, multi occupied buildings can be challenging. The Department is working with industry and leaseholders on any potential resolutions, and meets with groups involved regularly to discuss the issue.

Housing: Lead

Luke Pollard:

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to raise awareness the matter of lead poisoning in the home as a result of historic lead paint.

Christopher Pincher:

To raise awareness of this important issue, the government publishes advice on lead paint in older homes which can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-on-lead-paint-in-older-homes. In addition, the Health and Safety Executive has specific advice and guidance for employers, which is at https://www.hse.gov.uk/lead/index.htm.

In order to facilitate the effective enforcement of housing standards generally and in the private rented sector in particular, including hazards associated with lead and lead paint, we have begun a comprehensive overhaul of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The HHSRS is a health-based, risk assessment framework used by local authorities for the evaluation of conditions in residential properties and the review will make the system easier to understand for landlords and tenants and correct the disconnect with other legislative standards.

Luke Pollard:

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to reform house survey requirements to include information on lead presence in the property prior to purchase.

Christopher Pincher:

We believe buyers should have all the information necessary to make informed decisions before purchasing their home. Whilst not compulsory, we would always
recommend buyers to commission thorough surveys early in the process. Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors building surveys and condition reports already identify whether contamination or environmental dangers exist in the home, which may indicate the presence of lead.

### Housing: Stoke on Trent

**Jonathan Gullis:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to promote housebuilding in Stoke-on-Trent.

**Christopher Pincher:**

I refer the Hon Member to the answer given to PQ 129146 on 21 December 2020.

On a National level, further funding to support housebuilding via the National House Building Fund (NHBF) will be confirmed at the next multi-year Spending Review, delivering on the Government’s commitment to provide £10 billion to unlock homes through provision of infrastructure.

As announced in December 2020, we are also planning to launch a new £100 million Brownfield Land Release fund this month to support brownfield development, estates regeneration, development on public sector land and self and custom-build serviced plots in coming forward. This will be open to councils across England, apart from those Mayoral Combined Authority areas that recently benefited from our £400 million brownfield fund. Stoke on Trent City Council are welcome to bid for this funding and we invite councils to use the time between now and the prospectus launch to start to consider and prepare their bids.

### Local Government Finance: Nottingham

**Lee Anderson:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has plans to issue Nottingham City Council with a Section 114 notice; and if he will make a statement.

**Luke Hall:**

Under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, there is statutory duty placed on the chief finance officer of local authorities to issue a Section 114 if they judge that the Council is unable to set or maintain a balanced budget. This decision rests at the local level and it is for the Council to make. Government has no role to play in the issuing of a Section 114 notice. All councils have a legal duty to balance their budgets and it is right that Nottingham Council takes the decisions it considers necessary to manage its own finances.

**Lee Anderson:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the financial situation of Nottingham City Council; and if he will make a statement.
Luke Hall:
At the Spending Review, the Government announced that local authorities are expected to receive over £3 billion of additional support for COVID-19 in 2021-22, taking the total support committed to councils in England to tackle the impacts of COVID-19 to over £10 billion. Of the £7.2 billion that has already been provided, Nottingham City Council has received over £34.3 million so far, and under our proposals will receive at least a further £11.7 million in un-ringfenced funding next year.

Following issues raised in a Public Interest Report published in August, a rapid non-statutory review was conducted into Nottingham City Council. The review examined the serious governance and risk management issues associated with the Council’s private energy company, Robin Hood Energy. In response to the findings of the review, on 17 December 2020 the Secretary of State announced new measures to address the serious failures at the Council, including the appointment of an Improvement and Assurance Board and a requirement for the Council to put forward a 3-year recovery plan.

The department will continue to work with the council to understand the range of financial issues they are experiencing, including any request for additional financial support from Government.

Local Government Finance: Staffordshire

Jonathan Gullis: [133275]
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support the Government is providing to (a) Stoke-on-Trent City Council, (b) Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and (c) Staffordshire County Council to mitigate a reduction of income due to covid-19.

Christopher Pincher:
The Government is providing significant support to local councils to assist with income reductions as a result of COVID-19. We have already made £528 million of payments under this year’s Sales, Fees and Charges Scheme, from which Stoke-on-Trent City Council (£3.5 million), Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council (£0.55 million) and Staffordshire County Council (£0.94 million) have all benefited, and we have now extended the scheme into the first three months of 2021-22.

To further support local councils with income losses, we are allowing councils to phase repayment of local tax collection fund deficits arising in 2020-21 over three years; we are committing to meet 75 per cent of councils’ irrecoverable losses in council tax and business rates income for 2020-21, worth an estimated £800 million; and we are providing authorities with £670 million of new grant funding to support council tax income, by enabling councils to continue reducing bills in 2021-22 for households least able to pay.
We will continue to monitor the effect of COVID-19 on local councils and would ask that any local authority that is faced with an unmanageable pressure or is concerned about their future financial position should approach MHCLG for a discussion.

Members: Correspondence

Mr John Baron:

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 8 October 2020 from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay and chase up correspondence of 5 November 2020 and 25 November 2020 on constituent with reference JB29095.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[ Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The answer to the correspondence is not straightforward and we are working with other departments across Whitehall to see if there is an avenue of help that might be available to assist the honourable member’s constituent.

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Sir John Hayes:

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of how the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in central London will help tackle anti-Semitism elsewhere in the country.

Luke Hall:

In light of Holocaust denial, revisionism, the rise of antisemitism and indifference, it is more important than ever to ensure that the story of what happened during the Holocaust resonates with ordinary people and raises questions about Britain’s role at the time. The Memorial and Learning Centre will act as a national hub for commemoration and education, partnering with established organisations in the sector, so that it complements, signposts and amplifies existing educational resources.

Sir John Hayes:

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using an alternative, larger site than Victoria Tower Gardens for the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

Luke Hall:

Victoria Tower Gardens is the right site for the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre. The Memorial will stand as a reminder of the horrors of the past and will encourage reflection on their implications for British government and society, both at the time and subsequently. Full details of the proposed Memorial and Learning Centre, including the assessment of other sites, were provided at the recent public inquiry.
Neighbourhood Development Plans

Richard Fuller: [132846]
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to extend beyond 2022 the grant funding available to parish councils to formulate neighbourhood plans.

Christopher Pincher:
The ‘Planning for the Future’ consultation published in August 2020 set out that Government is committed to retaining neighbourhood planning and wants to encourage the continued use of neighbourhood plans, and to help spread their use further, particularly in towns and cities.

Our current £34.5 million neighbourhood planning support programme runs until 2022 and we will confirm future funding arrangements at a later date.

Planning

Gavin Robinson: [134446]
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of including the reuse of existing buildings in the Planning for the Future reforms.

Christopher Pincher:
The Planning White Paper consultation closed on 29 October 2020, and we are currently considering the responses. My Department is undertaking further detailed policy development on individual elements of the proposals. Policy developed as part of these reforms will apply to England only.

The existing National Planning Policy Framework expects local authorities to prioritise brownfield land, which includes land containing existing buildings, for development wherever possible. Local authorities are best placed to assess the potential of individual sites, and each authority is required to publish a register of its developable brownfield suitable for new homes.

Planning: Rural Areas

Richard Fuller: [132841]
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Planning for the Future White Paper published in August 2020, whether his Department has costed the effect of being located in a protected zone on rural businesses and communities.

Richard Fuller: [132842]
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Planning for the Future White Paper published in August 2020, whether his Department has produced an impact assessment for rural businesses and communities that are located in a protected zone.
Christopher Pincher:
The Planning White Paper consultation closed on 29 October 2020, and we are considering the responses. My department is undertaking further policy development on the individual elements of the proposals. No decisions have been made on the details at this stage, and economic effects will be appropriately analysed before decisions are made and policy or legislation introduced.

Richard Fuller:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Planning for the Future White Paper published in August 2020, what procedure he proposes will be used to define whether open countryside is classified as protected under the new zoning arrangements.

Christopher Pincher:  
The Government is clear about the importance of retaining our valued open countryside and greenfield land. The National Planning Policy Framework expects local authorities to recognise the character and beauty of the countryside and the benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services, including woodland and our best and most versatile farmland. Under the consultation proposals in Planning for the Future, it would still be for each local authority, in consultation with the community, to use the local plan process to plan for and ensure the protection of any countryside. The Government will publish a response to the consultation, including next steps.

Private Rented Housing: Licensing

Mr Richard Holden:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the selective licensing scheme was introduced; and under what legislation that scheme was introduced.

Mr Richard Holden:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many local authorities have selective licensing schemes covering more than 20 per cent of (a) their area or (b) the number of private rented homes in their area; which local authorities they are; and when those licences were granted.

Mr Richard Holden:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the economic effect of rents on tenants in private sector accommodation in a selective licensing scheme area.

Christopher Pincher:  
Selective licensing was introduced under Part 3 of the Housing Act 2004 which came into force in 2006. Since 2015, new or renewed schemes which cover more than 20 per cent of a local authority’s private rented stock or geographical area require approval from the Secretary of State.
Eleven schemes in ten local authorities have been approved. These are:
Burnley, Peterborough, Hyndburn, Newham, Blackpool, Brent, Nottingham
Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Burnley, and Barking and Dagenham.

The Independent Review of the Use and Effectiveness of Selective Licensing
commissioned by the Department considered the effects of select licensing. The
review is available here:

Regeneration: Staffordshire

Jonathan Gullis:

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what
plans he has to support the regeneration of high streets in (a) Burslem, (b) Tunstall and
(c) Kidsgrove.

Luke Hall:

This Government is committed to driving the regeneration of towns and High Streets
across the country and particularly so in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The £3.6 billion Towns Fund aims to deliver long-term economic and productivity
growth to towns and high streets. In September 2019, we announced the initial 101
towns Government would work with to agree Town Deals. Kidsgrove is one of the
towns invited to submit a Town Investment Plan. This was received at the end of
October 2020 and is now being assessed.

The Government is launching a new Levelling Up Fund (LUF) worth £4 billion for
England. This new cross-departmental Fund will invest in a broad range of high value
local projects, including upgrading town centres and community infrastructure. It will
invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities
and will support economic recovery.

The Spending Review has made available up to £600 million for the LUF in 2021-22,
and further funding will be spread over subsequent years up to 2023-24. We intend to
publish a prospectus for the Fund and launch the first round of competitions later this
year.

The Spending Review also announced that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help
to level up and create opportunity across the UK for people and places. It will support
people and communities, creating new opportunities and spurring regeneration and
innovation.

Earlier this year we announced the £900 million “Getting Building Fund” to deliver
local employment, skills, and infrastructure priorities, £23.7 million of which was
allocated to Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Project.
The Government-backed Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone is making a big impact, enabling redundant and long-neglected brownfield sites to be re-developed, including Chatterley Valley East, Highgate / Ravensdale, and Tunstall Arrow, in Tunstall.

We have provided £10 million of Housing Infrastructure Fund Marginal Viability Funding to transform nine long-standing vacant sites in the Burslem and Middleport areas, helping to breathe new life in the town.

In addition, the High Streets Task Force has launched a range of online resources to provide support to places across the country, which can be found here: https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/products-and-services/support-for-all-high-streets/

### Rented Housing: Overcrowding

**Jon Trickett:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the finding of the Covid-19 Marmot Review that overcrowding in the rented sector is at its highest rate since this information was first collected in the 1990s.

**Christopher Pincher:**

For people living in overcrowded accommodation this pandemic has been difficult. We have provided guidance to support those living in rented homes, including advice on minimising the spread of infection for those in overcrowded or shared accommodation. We continue to review a range of evidence including from Sir Michael's review. Before the pandemic we clarified minimum room sizes in houses in multiple occupation, making it illegal to let out a bedroom of under 6.51 square metres to one person, and we empowered all tenants through the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act to take their landlord to court on the grounds that their home is not fit to live in. Our review of the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System will make it simpler and quicker for local authorities to assess health and safety standards in rented homes. In the social sector our national home swap scheme, HomeSwap Direct, is making it easier for under-occupying households and overcrowded households to help each other.

### Sleeping Rough: Coronavirus

**Jon Trickett:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to house rough sleepers in parts of the UK placed into Tier 3 covid-19 restrictions.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Given the new variant of COVID-19, and the new national lockdown, we are redoubling our efforts to ensure that people who sleep rough are kept as safe as possible and that we do everything we can to protect the NHS. This is backed by a
further £10 million to protect rough sleepers and ensure their wider health needs are addressed.

We have asked all local authorities to ensure that even more rough sleepers are safely accommodated, and will be asking that this opportunity is actively used to make sure that all rough sleepers are registered with a GP where they are not already and are factored into local area vaccination plans, in line with JCVI prioritisation for COVID-19 vaccinations. This will help ensure that the wider health needs of people who sleep rough are addressed, supporting them now and for the future.

This Government is committed to ending rough sleeping and we have taken huge steps working with local authorities and their partners to protect rough sleepers during the pandemic. This work has not stopped, and through Everyone In, by November we had supported around 33,000 people with nearly 10,000 in emergency accommodation and over 23,000 already moved on into longer-term accommodation.

**Sleeping Rough: Immigrants**

Caroline Lucas:

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect of plans for rough sleeping to become grounds for refusal or cancellation of permission to be in the UK on engagement of vulnerable individuals with local authority services to provide (a) accommodation and subsistence support and (b) support to prevent transmission of covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government has made clear that the new rough sleeping rule will apply on a discretionary basis where a person refuses offers of support and is engaged in persistent anti-social behaviour. The provision will be used only where individuals refuse to engage with the range of support mechanisms available.

The ongoing ‘Everyone In’ campaign is helping to protect thousands of lives during the pandemic. By November, we had supported around 33,000 people, with nearly 10,000 in emergency accommodation and over 23,000 already moved into longer-term accommodation.

We continue to support rough sleepers during the pandemic. In November, we rolled out the ‘Protect Programme’ - the next step in the ongoing targeted support to protect some of the most vulnerable people in our communities from COVID-19. All councils were asked to update their rough sleeping plans and to carry out a rapid assessment of need for everyone they accommodate and to consider interventions for those new to rough sleeping.

In addition, on 8 January, we announced extra support to help protect rough sleepers from the effects of COVID-19. Backed by an additional £10 million in funding, all councils in England have been asked to redouble their efforts to help accommodate those currently sleeping rough, wherever possible, and ensure they are registered with a GP. In due course, this will assist with the roll out of vaccinations, in line with
the priority groups outlined by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Councillors will also be asked to reach out again to those who have previously refused help, given rising infection rates and the colder winter months.

**Sleeping Rough: West Midlands**

**Sajid Javid:**
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to tackle rough sleeping in (a) Worcestershire and (b) the West Midlands.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**
This Government is committed to ending rough sleeping. This is why we are spending over £700 million to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping this year alone.

As part of this, we have allocated significant funding to Worcestershire and the West Midlands. Worcestershire is receiving over £672,000 from the Rough Sleeping Initiative, which supports the establishment or enhancement of coordinated local services for rough sleepers or those at risk of sleeping rough. Local authorities across the West Midlands have been allocated £6.49 million in total from the Rough Sleeping Initiative this year.

Building on the success of the ongoing Everyone In programme, the Next Steps Accommodation programme makes available the financial resources needed to support local authorities and their partners to prevent as many of those as possible accommodated during the pandemic from returning to the streets. In total, local authorities across the West Midlands will receive £4.78 million to pay for immediate support to help prevent people from returning to the streets in 2020/21. Worcester and Wychavon have been allocated over £445,000 as part of this funding. We are also providing £5.95 million in capital funding and £2.65 million in revenue funding, to deliver longer term move-on accommodation and support for rough sleepers across the West Midlands.

Our expert rough sleeping and homelessness advisers continue to work closely with all local authorities in the West Midlands, to support and monitor their work to tackle rough sleeping.

**Sleeping Rough: Young People**

**Neil Coyle:**
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to ensure that local authorities can adequately support the increasing number of young people who are sleeping rough in winter 2020-21.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**
This Government is committed to ending rough sleeping. We have taken huge steps working with local authorities and their partners to protect rough sleepers during the pandemic and through the winter.
The Protect programme, in particular, is backed by £15 million and will help areas that need additional support most during the restrictions and throughout winter. It builds on the success of ‘Everyone In’, which is ongoing and has so far helped to protect thousands of lives during the pandemic. By September it had supported over 29,000 people; with over 10,000 in emergency accommodation and nearly 19,000 moved on into settled accommodation.

We have also announced additional support over the winter period including the £10 million Cold Weather Fund and £2 million Transformation Fund.

All councils have been asked to update their rough sleeping plans and to carry out a rapid assessment of need for everyone they accommodate and to consider time limited interventions for those new to rough sleeping.

We have bespoke support for local authorities through our Homelessness Advice and Support Team, which includes dedicated youth homelessness advisors that have a commitment to work with local authorities to promote positive joint working across housing authorities and children’s services, offering training, advice and support to all local authorities.

**Thakeham Group: Cambridgeshire**

**Anthony Browne:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in relation to the property developer Thakeham’s proposal for a new town in South West Cambridgeshire, whether (a) Ministers or (b) officials in his Department have held a (i) meeting or (ii) discussions with the developer; whether his Department has engaged with Thakeham’s proposal for a new town in South West Cambridgeshire; and whether the responsibility for a planning decision on Thakeham’s proposal for a new town in South West Cambridgeshire would rest solely on South Cambridgeshire District Council.

**Christopher Pincher:**

There have been no Ministerial discussions and no involvement related to this proposal at any stage and Ministers have not had any contact with the developer. Following the announcement of the proposed new town, one MHCLG official has since attended a meeting between the developer and Homes England as an observer. There has been no engagement between the Department and the developer. Should an application for planning permission come forward it will be dealt with in the usual way.

**Veterans: Homelessness**

**Taiwo Owatemi:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to calculate accurately the number of ex-service personnel nationally who are (a) homeless and (b) sleeping rough.
Kelly Tolhurst:
Our veterans have played a vital role in keeping our country safe and we owe them a duty to ensure they are provided with all the support they need.

In 2018, my Department introduced the Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC), a new data collection tool to improve the information we collect from local authorities on homelessness.

The figures for people that served in the armed forces identified as statutory homeless from 2018 onwards can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness

The Homelessness Reduction Act requires certain public authorities to refer members of the regular forces in England they consider to be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days to a local housing authority, with the individual's consent. A person who is vulnerable as a result of having been a member of Her Majesty’s regular armed forces has a priority need for accommodation.

Waking Watch Relief Fund

Hilary Benn:
To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Waking Watch Relief Fund will meet the cost of fire alarm systems that have already been installed on some buildings with unsafe cladding.

Christopher Pincher:
The Waking Watch Relief Fund does not cover retrospective costs where waking watch services are no longer in place because alarms have been installed prior to 17 December 2020. The purpose of the Fund is to incentivise the purchase of alarm systems in buildings where there is currently a waking watch in place and there is no common alarm system.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Economic Situation: Investment

Jonathan Gullis:
To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department has taken to promote investment into the UK economy.

Graham Stuart:
The UK is a leading destination for foreign investment; second in the world for inward Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) stocks with $2.1 trillion, behind the USA in 2019.

In 2019/20, the Department for International Trade provided support for 1,449 FDI projects, creating almost 45,000 new jobs and safeguarding a further 8,000. In November 2020 the Prime Minister announced a new Office for Investment within the Department, but under the sponsorship of 10 Downing Street, to support strategic
investment. We are also prioritising regional investment and growth through our High Potential Opportunities Programme.

### Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees

**Stephen Morgan:**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the answer of 18 November to Question 91998 on Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees, whether UK Export Finance is considering support for these projects following the Prime Minister’s announcement of 12 December that the UK will end support for fossil fuel sector overseas.

**Stephen Morgan:**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether UK Export Finance is considering providing financial support to the East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline.

**Graham Stuart:**

On 12 December 2020, the Prime Minister announced that the British government will no longer provide any new direct financial or promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas. This policy will be implemented as soon as possible following the conclusion of the consultation process that was also launched on 12 December.

During the consultation period and ahead of the implementation of the new policy, the government will continue to apply current policy for all in-scope activities including proposals for high carbon projects, with consideration of relevant factors including climate change.

With regard to the East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline, I refer the hon. Member for Portsmouth South to the responses I gave to the Hon. Member for Edmonton on 2 December 2020, UIN: 120945, and 8 December 2020, UIN: 122815. UK Export Finance (UKEF) has been approached on the project referred to, and no decision has been made. It is not UKEF policy to comment on potential transactions for reasons of commercial sensitivity.

### Newcastle United Football Club: Takeovers

**Mr Richard Holden:**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish all relevant correspondence between her Department and the Premier League relating to the proposed takeover of Newcastle United; whether her Department are involved in the arbitration proceedings on that matter; and whether a date has been set for arbitration in that matter.

**Graham Stuart:**

Regarding the publishing of correspondence, I refer my hon. Friend for North West Durham to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central on 13 November 2020, UIN: 113092.
The Department for International Trade has not had any involvement in any related arbitration proceedings. The proposed takeover has always been a commercial matter for the parties concerned.

**Staffordshire: Small Businesses**

*Jonathan Gullis:*

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department has taken to ensure that SMEs in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire can benefit from future free trade agreements.

*Graham Stuart:*

The Department is providing tailored regional activity to ensure Small & Medium Enterprises (SME’s) can fully benefit from the opportunities that Free Trade Agreements provide. In Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, we have added resources through our Midlands-based regional teams to manage this activity. We have recruited a dedicated International Trade Adviser (ITA) within the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to work with the LEP on their strategic trade priorities and on promoting the benefits of all future trade agreements. We also founded the Export Academy to provide businesses with the knowledge, skills, and tools to develop and export plan and implement it. Future activity will focus on a combination of online offerings, trade missions, and direct one-to-one support from our dedicated team of 6 International Trade Advisers that cover Stoke and Staffordshire.

**UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: Developing Countries**

*Emily Thornberry:*

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the effect of the lack of exceptions for originating imports from developing countries in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on (a) the profitability of businesses in developing countries and (b) the level of EU market access for UK exporters using components imported from developing countries.

*Greg Hands:*

This agreement creates a new relationship between the UK and the EU, a relationship based on free trade and friendly cooperation between sovereign equals. The UK will be a global champion for free trade – benefitting businesses, reducing costs for consumers, and helping the poorest countries in the world achieve genuine economic independence.

The Government has been clear that leaving the Single Market and Customs Union will result in new customs processes for businesses trading with the EU. We are moving to a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) relationship, and Rules of Origin are a standard part of all FTAs. We worked closely with industry throughout negotiations to secure modern and appropriate Rules of Origin that support tariff free trade with the EU across all sectors. This includes full bilateral cumulation with the EU, which is
critical to protecting our highly integrated supply chains, as well as sectoral rules that reflect the nature of UK-EU trade.

JUSTICE

■ Juries: Coronavirus

Alex Sobel:

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department plans to limit eligibility for jury service during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

Jury service is an important civic duty and numerous steps have been taken to ensure it is safe for members of the public to serve as jurors. Some people will have difficulty serving at this point and HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) has issued guidance to help staff deal sympathetically with all requests from the public who wish to be deferred or excused from jury service as a result of COVID-19. Each application for deferral or excusal is considered on its own merit, in a way that is both fair to the individual and consistent with the needs of the court in providing a representative jury. We are keeping the situation under constant review.

■ Prisons: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown:

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the potential merits of giving prison staff occupational priority within the covid-19 vaccine programme.

Ms Lyn Brown:

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what representations he has received from (a) the POA, (b) Napo and (c) other criminal justice sector organisations on the potential merits of giving prison staff occupational priority within the vaccine programme.

Lucy Frazer:

Vaccines are at the centre of the Government’s plan to ensure life can return to normal as soon as possible. We have announced agreements with seven different vaccine developers, securing access to more than 350 million doses to be made available across the UK. Detailed planning is underway between HMPPS, NHS and public health bodies to prepare for the delivery of vaccinations in prisons.

We have worked very closely with public health authorities since the beginning of the pandemic and continue to do so to ensure our approach is based on the best scientific advice available.

The decision about who will be eligible for the vaccine in Health and Justice settings, which includes prisons, is being decided by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Health and Justice healthcare teams are also prioritising influenza
vaccination clinics in prisons and have been encouraged to complete these as early as possible, to minimise any impact on the Covid-19 vaccine programme.

The POA, NAPO, and other recognised HMPPS trade unions are being provided with regular updates on the vaccine situation as part of ongoing engagement on the Covid-19 situation. As part of this engagement, the unions have enquired about any potential for HMPPS front line staff in particular to be accorded some level of priority in the roll-out and have been briefed in line with current advice. Public safety will always come first: a vaccine will only be approved for use if it has met robust standards on safety, effectiveness and quality through clinical trials.

### Prisons: Staff

**Ms Lyn Brown:**
To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what policies are in place to ensure that individual risk assessments for prison staff members are conducted on the basis of input from the individuals concerned.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**
To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what policies are in place to ensure that risk assessments for prison staff with extremely vulnerable family members are regularly updated in line with levels of risk of covid-19 infection (a) in their workplace and (b) during travel between their workplace and home.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**
To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what policies are in place to ensure that prison staff members with extremely vulnerable family members are offered paid leave if they need to shield during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Lucy Frazer:**
The safety of our staff and those in our care remains our top priority.

We are clear that staff who live with people who are clinically extremely vulnerable people should work from home wherever possible. If they are unable to work from home, staff will have an individual risk assessment completed by their line manager, over the phone or electronically if necessary, to ensure that appropriate health and safety measures and any reasonable adjustments are in place to protect them in the workplace. Social distancing and basic hygiene are effective controls to reduce transmission and we continue to provide access to the right cleaning and hygiene products in prisons as we move into recovery. We have also worked closely with suppliers to ensure adequate supply of soap, cleaning materials, and personal protective equipment for staff.

Guidance for staff and managers is clear that these risk assessments should be reviewed every 4 weeks, and in a range of situations. These include changes in personal circumstances, management, control measures where they work, the level of risk (such as an outbreak), or a change in published Gov.uk guidance.
TRANSPORT

Aviation and Passenger Ships: Coronavirus

Olivia Blake:

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to implement covid-19 test and isolate measures for incoming passengers at airports and ports.

Robert Courts:

International arrivals from countries, territories or regions not on the Travel Corridor list (“non-exempt” places) are required to self-isolate in the UK for 10 days after leaving the non-exempt place. The Government implemented the “Test to Release for International Travel” (TTR) scheme on 15 December. Arrivals from non-exempt places can book, pay for, and take a privately provided test on the fifth day after leaving the non-exempt place, and if the result is negative, cease self-isolating.

TTR provides much stronger public health protection than a test upon arrival at a port or airport, as the long incubation period of COVID-19 would mean many cases would be missed if travellers were tested earlier than 5 days after leaving the non-exempt place.

British Transport Police: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he is allocating additional resources to the British Transport Police to support their work on the rail network in (a) England and (b) areas subject to Tier 4 covid restrictions.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The cost of policing the rail network in Great Britain is primarily covered through the funding agreements that the British Transport Police Authority holds with Network Rail, the train operators and Transport for London. However, the Department has set aside up to £3million of additional funding to support the costs of enhanced levels of policing by the British Transport Police required in response to changes in COVID-19 travel restrictions. The location and scope of any enhanced policing capacity on the network are determined by the Chief Constable taking account of operational circumstances and in the light of anticipated demand.

City Deals: Sheffield City Region

Dan Jarvis:

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the remaining £50 million awarded to the Sheffield City Region as part of its City Deal has been approved.

Rachel Maclean:

The remaining funding of £50 million from the City Deal for the Sheffield City Region was agreed on an indicative basis up until 2024/25 and will be considered through the next multi-year Spending Review. The recent Spending Review in November last
year focussed on supporting the Government’s response to Covid-19 and funding for the next financial year.

Electric Scooters

Hilary Benn:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans for electric scooters to be required to emit a sound to warn pedestrians of their approach; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:  
The Department has been working closely with a number of local authorities and rental e-scooter service providers since last July to establish trials to build evidence about e-scooter use.

All e-scooters used in trials must have a horn or bell so that users can make others aware of their presence and continuous sound emitter devices are also being trialled; their efficacy will be reviewed along with all other evidence from trials later this year.

Hammersmith Bridge: Repairs and Maintenance

Fleur Anderson:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to fund the (a) restoration of Hammersmith suspension bridge and (b) construction of a temporary bridge at that location.

Rachel Maclean:  
As owners of Hammersmith Bridge, the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham is responsible for the maintenance, repair and decision-making on its upkeep. The borough is currently considering proposals for a temporary bridge but no decisions have been taken.

We are committed to ensuring Londoners can cross the river again as soon as safely possible. That is why the Government ensured that £4m was put towards the stabilisation and repair of Hammersmith Bridge via the extraordinary funding and financing package agreed with TfL on 31 October 2020. A further condition of TfL’s bailout was the provision of a ferry service via its active travel fund.

High Speed 2 Railway Line

Alexander Stafford:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for this policy on HS2 of the findings of the National Infrastructure Commission’s Rail Needs Assessment for The Midlands and The North: Final Report, published on 15 December 2020 that prioritising regional links has the potential to deliver the highest benefits for cities in the Midlands and the North rather than the eastern leg of HS2 Phase 2b.
Andrew Stephenson:
Following full consideration of the National Infrastructure Commission's report, the Government expects to publish the Integrated Rail Plan early in 2021.

Alexander Stafford:
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the planned timescale is for a hybrid bill for the Eastern Leg of Phase 2b of High Speed Two.

Andrew Stephenson:
Following full consideration of the National Infrastructure Commission's report, the Government expects to publish the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) early in 2021. Plans for legislation covering the Eastern Leg of HS2 Phase 2b will be confirmed following the publication of the Integrated Rail Plan.

Immigration Controls: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to learn from steps taken effectively by New Zealand and Australia and introduce stronger border controls alongside increased covid-19 restrictions to restrict the spread of the virus into the UK.

Robert Courts:
The UK already has some of the strongest safeguards against importing COVID-19 in the shape of mandatory 10-day quarantine for the vast majority of arrivals outside of those covered by travel corridors.

As the pandemic is continually evolving, we continue to work alongside global partners to learn lessons and implement new measures if and when needed.

Passengers arriving from all international destinations will be required to present a negative COVID-19 test result before entering the UK to help protect against rising infection rates and new strains of coronavirus circulating internationally.

The move is in addition to robust existing measures the Government is taking to reduce the risk of imported cases. Passengers arriving from countries not on the Government’s Travel Corridor list will still need to self-isolate for ten days regardless of their pre-departure test result, to provide robust protection.

Motor Vehicles: Testing

Catherine West:
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of further extending the MOT eligibility period in response to the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Rachel Maclean:
MOT due dates for cars, motorcycles and light vans were automatically extended by six months from 30 March 2020 to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. These
extensions ceased from 1 August 2020 and there are no current plans to reintroduce extensions to MOT due dates.

Most garages remain open and are carrying out MOTs. MOT garages have received guidance on how to carry out MOT tests in a COVID-19 secure way and many MOT providers have also been able to introduce contact-free testing services, including pick-up and drop-off of vehicles.

Ports

Jon Trickett: [133690]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the average length of delay at each UK port in January 2021.

Robert Courts:

As yet, it is too early to use observed information to predict whether any disruption may occur later in January and if so to what degree. However, alongside the Border and Protocol Delivery Group we shall continue to monitor the situation.

We have always been clear that some change is to be expected now that we have left the EU’s custom union and single market. Full compliance with the new rules is vital to avoid disruption, and the best way to ensure readiness is to follow the guidance on gov.uk and use the ‘Check an HGV’ service.

We stand ready to help keep goods flowing smoothly as we adjust to our new relationship with the EU and ensure we take advantage of the opportunities it brings.

Railway Stations: Taxis

Daniel Zeichner: [134463]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) discussions he has had with and (b) advice he has issued to train companies on reducing station taxi rank fees for taxi and private hire vehicles during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department has received correspondence from a number of train operating companies on reducing station taxi rank fees for taxi and private hire vehicles during the covid-19 outbreak. As the majority of drivers are self-employed, they are already largely eligible for the Government’s Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (equivalent to the furlough scheme for salaried employees), as well as other Government sources of funding potentially, such as the deferral of VAT.

Daniel Zeichner: [134464]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of train companies maintaining taxi rank fees at stations during the covid-19 outbreak on on the income of taxi and private hire vehicle drivers.
Chris Heaton-Harris:
The Department has made no assessment of the effect of train companies maintaining taxi rank fees at stations during the covid-19 outbreak on the income of taxi and private hire vehicle drivers.

Railways

Charlotte Nichols:
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the Integrated Rail Plan.

Andrew Stephenson:
Following full consideration of the National Infrastructure Commission's report, the Government expects to publish the Integrated Rail Plan early in 2021.

Railways: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he had with the Prime Minister, prior to the announcement of London and the South East being placed in Tier 4, on the potential effect of changing the previous Christmas travel plans for 23 to 27 December on the rail network.

Chris Heaton-Harris:
The Secretary of the State for Transport and the Prime Minister meet regularly to discuss issues related to the pandemic.

Andrew Rosindell:
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with rail operators on providing refunds for tickets that can no longer be used due to national lockdown measures.

Chris Heaton-Harris:
Passengers who bought tickets other than Advance tickets are eligible for a refund, in accordance with the National Rail Conditions of Travel.

Advance tickets are normally non-refundable, as is clearly stated at the point of purchase. However, we have agreed with the rail industry that passengers with Advance tickets purchased before the announcement of national lockdown measures on 4 January who are prevented from travelling due to these measures are eligible for a fee-free change of journey or, if they bought them from a train operator, they may apply for a Rail Travel Voucher, valid for 12 months.

The National Rail Enquiries website and all train operator and retailer websites provide up to date information on ticket terms and conditions.
Railways: Dawlish

Luke Pollard:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the damage to the Dawlish Sea Wall from the closed-cell neoprene coming dislodged from the structure in December 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:  
The effectiveness and structural integrity of the new sea wall was demonstrated during the severe weather and flooding of part of the railway in Dawlish on 16 December 2020, with the new wall preventing this section of track from flooding. Network Rail’s contractors will continue to remove any dislodged neoprene as well as any material found on the beach.

Luke Pollard:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the quality of work on the recently completed Dawlish Sea Wall in response to the separation of neoprene lining from the wall and its discharge into the sea.

Chris Heaton-Harris:  
The structural integrity of the new section of sea wall at Dawlish was not affected by the neoprene foam becoming dislodged from the structure. The neoprene was installed during construction to help the concrete set correctly.

Railways: Midlands and North of England

Alexander Stafford:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the National Infrastructure Commission’s Rail Needs Assessment for The Midlands and The North: Final Report, published on 15 December 2020, what steps his Department is taking to prioritise regional links in the Midlands and the North.

Andrew Stephenson:  
Following full consideration of the National Infrastructure Commission’s report, the Government expects to publish the Integrated Rail Plan early in 2021.

Alexander Stafford:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and the Midlands.

Andrew Stephenson:  
Following full consideration of the National Infrastructure Commission's report, the Government expects to publish the Integrated Rail Plan early in 2021.

Railways: Passengers

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the steps that were taken by (a) the Government, (b) the British Transport
Police, (c) rail operators and (d) station and rail staff to respond to the sudden increase in the volume of passengers making use of the rail network on Saturday 19 December 2020 after the Government’s announcement imposing Tier 4 covid-19 restrictions on London and the South East region on that day.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**
Following the announcement on 19 December 2020, the Government and Chief Medical Officer urged people to avoid travelling unless essential to limit the risk of transmission, and the Department updated its safer travel guidance.

Rail operators had already taken steps to minimise the risk of overcrowding, for example by advising passengers to reserve tickets in advance and follow the safer travel guidance. Rail operators reacted quickly to the increase in passengers by adding additional carriages to trains and adding in extra trains wherever possible. In addition, extra staff were deployed quickly onto stations to help provide passenger assistance and manage the crowding that took place on a small number of central London stations for a brief period.

The British Transport Police (BTP) deployed additional officers on 19 December 2020. The Department continues to work closely with the BTP to build on existing measures to keep passengers and staff safe and promote COVID-19 compliance.

### Railways: Refunds

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to ensure that people who bought train tickets for travel from 23 to 27 December 2020 before the announcement in November 2020 of rules on Christmas travel are able to get a refund.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**
Passengers who bought tickets other than Advance tickets for travel from 23 to 27 December 2020 before the announcement in November 2020 of rules on Christmas travel are eligible for a refund, in accordance with the National Rail Conditions of Travel.

Passengers with Advance tickets that were bought before the announcement on 24 November of the former Christmas travel window from 23 to 27 December are not eligible for a refund, however, as announced on 3 December, they are eligible for a fee-free change of journey or, if they bought them from a train operator, they may apply for a Rail Travel Voucher, valid for 12 months.

### Railways: Standards

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential operational effect on the UK rail network of an end to the transition period without an agreement on future trade relations.
Chris Heaton-Harris:
A comprehensive free trade agreement with the EU was announced on 24 December 2020.

UK Trade with EU: Customs
Deidre Brock: [132984]
To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the average delay to hauliers exporting to the EU under the terms of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement compared to Customs Union membership.

Rachel Maclean:
Now the that transition period has ended goods are required to undergo further checks than those required when the UK was in the EU customs union. We have always been clear there would be changes now that we are out of the customs union and single market, so full compliance with the new rules is vital to avoid disruption, and the best way to ensure readiness is to follow the guidance on gov.uk and use the ‘Check an HGV’ service.

As yet it is too early to use observed data to provide an estimate, as freight volumes have been low, as they usually are in early January. We stand ready to help keep goods flowing smoothly as we adjust to our new relationship with the EU and ensure we take advantage of the opportunities it brings.

TREASURY

Business: Taxation
Mr Barry Sheerman: [130642]
To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to improve the payment rates of corporate tax.

Jesse Norman:
HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) keep corporation tax payment policy under regular review with continuing engagement with businesses, agents and representative bodies in response to taxpayer need.

HMRC have acted to speed up the process by which companies which are affected by coronavirus and experiencing cash flow problems can make claims for repayment of corporation tax, by permitting early claims against anticipated losses. This gets cash to businesses hardest hit by the pandemic, helping to minimise the risk of business failure in the months and years ahead and thereby ensuring the continuity of corporation tax receipts in the future.
Cash Dispensing

Jonathan Gullis:
To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress he has made in ensuring access to cash in (a) Burslem and (b) England.

Jonathan Gullis:
To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent steps he has taken to increase access to free-to-use cash machines in Stoke-on-Trent.

John Glen:
The Government recognises that cash remains important to millions of people across the UK and has committed to protecting access to cash for those that need it. The Government published a Call for Evidence on 15 October 2020 seeking views on the key considerations associated with cash access, including deposit and withdrawal facilities, cash acceptance, and regulatory oversight of the cash system. The Call for Evidence closed on the 25 November 2020 and the Government is considering responses. Next steps will be set out in due course.

With regards to ATMs, LINK (the scheme that runs the UK’s largest ATM network) has existing commitments to protect the broad geographic spread of free-to-use ATMs. LINK has taken action to ensure that remote and deprived areas continue to have access to free-to-use machines, and the Payment Systems Regulator continues to hold LINK to account over their commitments to maintain broad geographic coverage.

LINK has committed to protect free ATMs more than one kilometre away from the next nearest free ATM or Post Office, for example through premium payments for ATMs in remote and deprived areas. LINK has also committed to protecting free access to cash on high streets – where there is a cluster of five or more retailers – that don’t have a free-to-use ATM or a Post Office counter within one kilometre. LINK’s members have also made £5 million available to fund ATMs at the request of communities with poor access to cash.

Furthermore, there is an industry led initiative to implement Community Access to Cash Pilots. These pilots are to trial and test solutions for ensuring that communities can conveniently withdraw and deposit cash, and identify ways basic banking services can be better delivered, that could be adopted in other locations. Nine places were selected across the UK for these pilots, of which Burslem is one. The Burslem pilot includes a Post Office refurbishment and testing cashback without a purchase. The Government looks forward to the outcomes of these pilots.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Directors

Mick Whitley:
To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of reforming the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to allow directors
of small limited companies to undertake work while on furlough to support the economic viability of those companies.

**Jesse Norman:**
Where furloughed directors need to carry out particular duties to fulfil their statutory obligations, they may do so provided it is no more than would reasonably be judged necessary for that purpose. In particular, they should not do work of a kind they would carry out in normal circumstances to generate commercial revenue or provide services to or on behalf of their company. This also applies to companies with a sole director.

Businesses that can remain open but are operating with reduced demand can use flexible furlough to keep staff working part time.

### Directors: Coronavirus

**Margaret Greenwood:**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of companies in which the director has been ineligible for covid-19-related financial support in (a) England, (b) the North West and (c) Wirral.

**Jesse Norman:**
The information requested is not available. Company directors who pay themselves a salary through their company’s PAYE scheme may be eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). The CJRS has been extended until the end of April 2021 for all parts of the UK, with employees receiving 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. By extending the cut-off date to submit a PAYE Real Time Information (RTI) submission to HMRC to the period from 20 March to 30 October 2020, notifying a payment of earnings for that employee, the CJRS extension should be available to those directors who paid themselves after 19 March 2020.

### Eat Out to Help Out Scheme

**Bridget Phillipson:**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will place in the Library a copy of the epidemiological advice he received on the Eat Out to Help Out Scheme before announcing that scheme on 8 July 2020.

**Jesse Norman:**
The hospitality sector was one of the worst affected by the lockdown and the Eat Out to Help Out scheme was designed to support 129,000 businesses and help protect almost 2 million jobs, disproportionately occupied by workers who are young, female and BAME. By midnight 31 August, there had been 100 million meals claimed for as part of the scheme.

The scheme was designed in a safe and responsible manner to aid business owners who worked hard to implement the social distancing guidelines and make their premises safe. The scheme was designed to boost demand when it is typically lowest
– during the week, Monday-Wednesday – rather than at the weekend when some restaurants will face excess demand. It did not include spend on alcohol due to its public health impact, which has significant economic and social costs.

The Government considers the effect of all measures in aggregate, based on a range of epidemiological evidence and the expert advice of SAGE. Public Health England’s National COVID-19 Surveillance Reports over August and the early part of September showed that only a small fraction of incidents investigated were linked to restaurant settings. These reports are available on the Government’s website.

### Employment: Coronavirus

Taiwo Owatemi:

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what additional financial support he has made available to employers and employees subject to Tier 4 covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Taiwo Owatemi:

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what additional financial support he has made available for employers and employees in Tier 4 covid-19 lockdown areas.

Jesse Norman:

Following further national restrictions announced on 4 January, the Government introduced further support over and above existing measures worth £4.6 billion across the UK. More information can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/46-billion-in-new-lockdown-grants-to-support-businesses-and-protect-jobs

This support will help businesses get through the difficult period through to the Spring. The Government will take further decisions about its economic response to coronavirus and how best to support the economy, businesses and jobs at the Budget.

### Hospitality Industry: VAT

Caroline Lucas:

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 17 November 2020 to Question 114934, what his Department's review process is for reducing the rate of VAT applied to hospitality, accommodation and attractions beyond 31 March 2021; what criteria will be used in that review process; when he plans to announce the outcome of that review to businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary VAT reduced rate came into effect on 15 July 2020 and was initially scheduled to end on 12 January 2021.

To continue supporting the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and to protect 2.4 million jobs, the Government extended the temporary reduced rate of VAT (5 per cent) for goods and services supplied by the tourism and hospitality sectors until 31 March 2021.
While it keeps all taxes under review, this relief comes at a significant cost to taxpayers, and there are currently no plans to extend the length of the reduced rate further.

**Job Retention Bonus**

**John McNally:**
To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason he decided to withdraw the Job Retention Bonus.

**Jesse Norman:**
The objective of the Job Retention Bonus (JRB) was to incentivise employers to retain employees between November and the end of January through a £1,000 bonus paid to the employer. The extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) allows employers to do that until the end of April by covering 80% of the furloughed employees' wages. The policy intent of the JRB therefore fell away with the extension of the CJRS. The Government will set out details of how a revised retention incentive will work in due course.

**Migrant Workers: Income Tax**

**Sir Robert Syms:**
To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much income tax revenue was generated from people holding a work visa in the category of skilled work visa in the 2018-19 financial year; and if he will make a statement.

**Jesse Norman:**
HMRC do not hold information on the visa status of workers paying income tax.

**Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus**

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**
To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will reduce business rates for (a) local shops and (b) businesses during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**
This year the Government has provided an unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties due to the direct adverse effects of COVID-19, worth about £10 billion.

In the 2020 Spending Review, the Government committed further support to businesses, including in retail, hospitality and leisure, by freezing the business rates multiplier for 2021-22. In order to ensure that any decisions best meet the evolving challenges posed by COVID-19, the Government will outline plans for 2021-22 reliefs in due course.
Parents: Coronavirus

Holly Mumby-Croft:

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support the Government is providing for parents of self-isolating children with special needs who (a) may not be entitled to 14-days paid dependants leave and (b) are unable to form a childcare bubble due to the particular needs of their child.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided a substantial package of support for individuals through this difficult time. Parents of children who are self-isolating under Government guidance may be eligible for “new style” Contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) if they are ineligible for SSP and unable to work from home. The Government has made it easier for people to claim by removing the seven-day waiting period which means people can get support from day one.

Parents on lower incomes can also benefit from the Government’s temporary £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element for 2020-21. This means that for a single Universal Credit claimant (25 or over), the standard allowance has increased from £317.82 to £409.89 per month. The Government has also suspended the Universal Credit Minimum Income Floor to support self-employed people on low incomes until the end of April. In addition, the Government has invested over £900 million this year, increasing the Local Housing Allowance rates for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit to the 30th percentile of market rents.

Revenue and Customs: Internet and Telephone Services

Anneliese Dodds:

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what HMRC’s full-time equivalent staffing levels were for (a) telephone and (b) webchat services providing businesses and individuals with advice on customs arrangements in each of the last 48 months.

Jesse Norman:

Prior to 9 November 2020 customs & international trade telephone enquiries were handled through a combined Excise, Customs & international Trade (EXCIT) helpline. Demand for this line was significantly lower as the majority of the customer base, business and intermediaries alike, were experienced in trading on Rest of the World terms. Given the combined remit, HMRC are unable to provide the data requested.

Revenue and Customs: Northern Ireland

Bridget Phillipson:

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many HMRC staff have been employed at sites in Northern Ireland in each quarter of each of the last five years.
Jesse Norman:
The table details the HMRC staff headcount and Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) employed in Northern Ireland in each quarter of the last four years and Q1, Q2 and Q3 of 2020-21.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016-17 headcount</td>
<td>1,507</td>
<td>1,504</td>
<td>1,754</td>
<td>1,871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>1364.4</td>
<td>1344.03</td>
<td>1589.22</td>
<td>1689.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-18 headcount</td>
<td>1,855</td>
<td>1,899</td>
<td>1,893</td>
<td>1,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>1682.09</td>
<td>1719.62</td>
<td>1713.89</td>
<td>1709.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-19 headcount</td>
<td>1,882</td>
<td>1,909</td>
<td>1,922</td>
<td>2,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>1705.01</td>
<td>1716.86</td>
<td>1738.2</td>
<td>1809.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-20 headcount</td>
<td>2,013</td>
<td>1,955</td>
<td>1,952</td>
<td>1,903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>1820.79</td>
<td>1769.28</td>
<td>1765.97</td>
<td>1722.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020-21 headcount</td>
<td>1,899</td>
<td>1,898</td>
<td>2,003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>1735.12</td>
<td>1732.85</td>
<td>1855.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Revenue and Customs: Training

Bridget Phillipson:
To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many HMRC staff-hours have been devoted to receiving training in each of (a) 2015, (b) 2016, (c) 2017, (d) 2018, (e) 2019, and (f) 2020 to date.

Jesse Norman:
HMRC’s learning provision is delivered via multiple platforms, including a new platform rolled out in 2019.

The table below provides figures for 2014 to 2018. The data from each platform is not directly comparable, and there has not been sufficient time to reconcile the records for 2019 and 2020. In addition, the table below does not capture learning carried out without system registration; there will also be experienced staff who take self-study courses as part of continuing professional development, as well as staff who move
into specific areas of work. It is therefore not possible to collate learning hours fully for all years in question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL DURATION (DAYS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>126,834.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>148,558.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>169,255.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>96,087.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>85,315.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bridget Phillipson:**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much HMRC spent on staff training in (a) 2016, (b) 2017, (c) 2018, (d) 2019 and (e) 2020 to date.

**Jesse Norman:**

The total amount spent on recruitment and staff training is £26.7m for 2015-16, £32.6m for 2016-17, £20.7m for 2017-18, £22.0m for 2018-19, and £30.8m for 2019-20. This data includes training at the VOA, which is part of the HMRC group.

For 2020/21, the HMRC group have spent about £11m on recruitment and training up until 30 November 2020, and are forecasting to spend about £26m by the end of the year. However, this forecast is subject to change.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many HMRC staff-hours have been given to receiving training which pertains to elements of HMRC’s responsibilities (a) in preparation for or (b) as a result of the UK leaving the EU in each of (a) 2016, (b) 2017, (c) 2018, (d) 2019, and (e) 2020 to date.

**Jesse Norman:**

Since 2016, HMRC have had a range of roles comprising specialist and non-specialist roles to support the preparation for the UK leaving the EU, as well as operational and support roles for the post-transition period. Not all roles require additional training and HMRC do not track their requirements against all roles. HMRC are therefore unable to provide a breakdown of training time across the years and against staff complement, both for the preparation and post-transition period, without incurring significant additional costs.
Roads: Construction

Caroline Lucas: [131221]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason the National Infrastructure Commission has not developed a methodology for estimating the carbon impact of building additional road capacity.

Jesse Norman:

The National Infrastructure Commission provides impartial, expert advice on national infrastructure priorities. It has discretion to determine independently its work programme, methodologies and recommendations, as well as the content of its reports.

Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Bridget Phillipson: [130692]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on what basis the upper absolute limit of trading profits of £50,000 in the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme was initially set; whether that level was affected by his estimate of the length of time for which that support would be necessary; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The £50,000 threshold for average trading profits was designed to ensure the Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant is targeted at those who most need it, and who are most reliant on their self-employment income.

The self-employed are very diverse and have a wide mix of turnover and profits, with monthly and annual variations even in normal times, and in some cases with substantial alternative forms of income too. About 95 per cent of those with more than half their income from self-employment in 2018-19 could be eligible for the SEISS.

Bridget Phillipson: [131245]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on how many occasions since 1 April 2020 he has asked for an assessment of adequacy of the design of the Self Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government acknowledges it has not been possible to support everyone as they might want. The Government recognises that the rules needed to ensure that the SEISS works for the vast majority may mean that some people are not eligible for the grant. However, as the NAO acknowledges, the SEISS has been successful in supporting millions of people and protecting from large scale job losses.

The Government continues to take a flexible and responsive approach and has extended the SEISS, to provide support over the winter months.

Further, on 22 October, HM Treasury and HM Revenue and Customs announced that the Government will carry out an evaluation of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). This will be undertaken through 2021 and 2022. This is because
self-employment data necessary to carry out a full SEISS evaluation will not be available until 2022, upon receipt of Self-Assessment returns.

### Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Northern Ireland

**Carla Lockhart:**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people in Northern Ireland accessed support through the Self Employment Income Support Scheme in 2020; and what the total amount of that support was.

**Jesse Norman:**

By 31 July 2020, 78,000 individuals from Northern Ireland had claimed the first SEISS grant and the total claim amount was £223,000,000.

By 31 October 2020, 70,000 individuals from Northern Ireland had claimed the second SEISS grant and the total claim amount was £175,000,000.

By 31 October 2020, 81,000 individuals from Northern Ireland had claimed either the first or second SEISS grant or both and the total claim amount was £398,000,000.

These figures were taken from the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme statistics published on 21 August and 25 November respectively.

### Stamp Duty Land Tax: Coronavirus

**Sir Alan Campbell:**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing people who have instructed solicitors to buy or sell a house to benefit from the stamp duty holiday after the deadline.

**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 or change the point at which a transaction is eligible to receive the relief.

### Taxation

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of adopting a simplified tax structure after the transition period.
Jesse Norman:
The Government remains committed to a tax system that wherever possible is simple, fair and easy to use, and that tackles avoidance and evasion. It will continue to consider recommendations made by the independent Office of Tax Simplification, and keeps all taxes, including the overall system, under review. Any changes to tax policy will be announced at fiscal events.

UK Trade with EU: Rules of Origin

Emily Thornberry:
To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the cumulation provisions in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the profitability of UK exporters using components made in third countries.

Emily Thornberry:
To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what (a) industries and (b) products his Department has assessed as unlikely to meet the requirements as set out in the rules of origin provisions in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement to qualify for tariff-free access to the EU market.

Jesse Norman:
Departments across Government, including BEIS and Defra, have been consulting and working with industry stakeholders to develop the UK’s approach to rules of origin in the best interests of UK businesses and consumers.

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement includes modern and appropriate rules of origin which support tariff-free trade with the EU across all sectors. This includes full bilateral cumulation with the EU, which is critical to protecting highly integrated supply chains, as well as sectoral rules which reflect key UK interests in sectors such as automotive, aluminium and sugar.

The Agreement does not provide for cumulation with third countries, but the rules of origin will allow British manufacturers to use a significant level of input from abroad in British products, such as sugar in confectionery and batteries in electric vehicles.

In addition, to support all industries, the UK and EU have agreed an administrative simplification. Until 31 December 2021, for both goods imported from the EU to the UK and vice-versa, traders do not need supplier declarations from business suppliers to be in place at the time the goods are exported. This effectively allows an exporter to declare the origin of their goods without needing underlying documentation in place to prove it, although traders will need to be able to provide supplier declarations for the period covered by the easement if asked by customs authorities after 31 December 2021.

The Government continues to work closely with businesses to help them to adapt to new trading requirements.
Valuation Office Agency: Staff

Bridget Phillipson:  
To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of the workforce management information published by the Valuation Office Agency.

Jesse Norman:  
The VOA has put processes in place designed to assure the accuracy of workforce management information before it is published.

Workforce information published in the Annual Report is assured within the VOA’s Chief People Officer Group where the information is checked, approved and signed off by the Finance Director. Further internal assurance is carried out by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, as well as the internal verification by the Chief Finance Officer and Chief Executive Officer. The management information is then subject to external review and clearance by the NAO. These combined provide strong assurance over the accuracy of the workforce information published in the Annual Report.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Carer’s Allowance

Kirsten Oswald:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has any plans to reassess the potential merits of the state pension being offset against entitlement to carer’s allowance.

Kirsten Oswald:  
To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason the contribution-based state pension is being offset against entitlement to carer’s allowance.

Guy Opperman:  
There are no plans to reassess this policy. Successive Governments have supported the policy that where someone is entitled to two benefits for the same contingency then only one will be paid. Entitlement to State Pension and Carer’s Allowance differ but are both paid as an income replacement.

Carer’s Allowance replaces income where the carer has given up the opportunity of full-time employment in order to care for a severely disabled person, while State Pension replaces income in retirement. To avoid duplicate provision for the same need, social security “overlapping benefit” rules - operate to prevent them being paid together.

If a carer’s State Pension is less than Carer’s Allowance, State Pension is paid and topped up with Carer’s Allowance to the basic weekly rate of Carer’s Allowance which from April 2020, increased to £67.25.
Entitlement to Carer’s Allowance also gives access to the additional amount for carers in Pension Credit of £37.50 a week. If a pensioner’s income is above the limit for Pension Credit, they may still be able to receive Housing Benefit.

**Department for Work and Pensions: Databases**

Chi Onwurah:

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many information gateways there are in operation in her Department; and how those gateways are managed and monitored.

Guy Opperman:

DWP takes the security of its data very seriously and actively monitors systems to ensure payments are accurate. Where issues are identified, appropriate actions are taken. Revealing details of DWP monitoring capabilities in public, would likely prejudice the capability, effectiveness and ability to strongly preserve those systems. In order to safeguard our benefit payment and processing systems we are unable to provide the information requested.

**Health and Safety Executive: Staff**

Paul Blomfield:

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many staff the Health and Safety Executive (a) employed in 2019-20 and (b) employs in 2020-21; and how many of those staff were dedicated to working in Scotland in each of those years.

Mims Davies:

On 31 March 2020 HSE employed 2343 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, 222 of whom were based in Scotland, and a further 28 contingent labour staff [1].

On 31 December 2020 HSE employed 2345 FTE staff, 211 of whom were based in Scotland, and a further 133(p) contingent labour staff.

HSE is a national regulator and regulatory effort is not necessarily confined by geographical region. HSE has specialists who work across geographical regions such as those regulating major hazard sectors. Regions are also able to draw on the support of HSE’s Science Directorate to assist investigations and to support important health and safety research and HSE’s Engagement and Policy Division who develop regulatory policy and design communications strategy.

[1] ‘Contingent labour’ is defined as temporary staff not on HSE’s payroll, which may include agency workers, specialist contractors, interim managers etc.

(p) Provisional - due to the early reporting of this figure final reconciliation of contingent labour staff is still ongoing and may be subject to change once this is complete.
Poverty

Jon Trickett: [133695]
To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the finding of research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that 1 in every 100 households in Blackpool, Hull, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham and Salford are in extreme poverty.

Will Quince: No assessment has been made.

Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Kirsten Oswald: [132967]
To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of new applicants for universal credit who are self-assessment taxpayers, since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:
Around 913,000 people made a claim to Universal Credit, between 16 March 2020 and 12 November 2020, that have been required to report self-employed earnings at some point during their claim.

Notes:
- Figure rounded to the nearest thousand.
- This figure does not include people who made a UC claim but did not subsequently make it onto the official UC caseload.
- Not everybody would have been required to report self-employed earnings from the outset of their claim.

Kirsten Oswald: [132968]
To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of new applicants for universal credit since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak who are self-assessment taxpayers and have been (a) refused benefit or (b) had their benefit reduced as a result of having savings set aside to meet their tax bill for tax year 2019-20.

Will Quince: The information requested is not available as we do not record reasons as to what purpose an individual’s savings are used for.

Universal Credit: Students

Mike Hill: [134072]
To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the financial effect on students in receipt of a student loan who normally top-up their income through work but who can neither work as a result of the covid-19 outbreak nor
claim universal credit due to regulations restricting claims for those in receipt of student loans.

**Will Quince:**
No assessment has been made.

Students access fees and living costs support for their higher education courses through various loans and grants funded through the student support system. It is important that Universal Credit does not duplicate this support which is designed for their needs, unlike the social security system. Students cannot normally satisfy the entitlement conditions for Universal Credit. Exceptions are made where students have additional needs that are not met through the student support system, such as being responsible for a child.

Students can continue to look for work where it is safe to do so. There are jobs available in key sectors such as agriculture, distribution and health and social care. Students are encouraged to explore these opportunities and others, where able to do so. The online service Find a Job (www.gov.uk/find-a-job) can be used to search and apply for jobs.