

**Daily Report****Monday, 18 January 2021**

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 18 January 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:09 P.M., 18 January 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ Business: Coronavirus

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[137177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how his Department is monitoring the extent to which local authorities are paying available grants to eligible businesses for periods (a) during covid-19 lockdown and (b) when a tier system of covid-19 restrictions was in place.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government has put forward an unprecedented package of support in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19. This support includes extensive grant funding support for businesses that have been required by law to close, or have been severely impacted by, localised and national restrictions.

We are working closely with all local authorities to deliver funding to businesses that are in scope of these schemes as quickly as possible, while safeguarding public funds. As part of this, we have provided detailed guidance and FAQs to local authorities, as well as regular briefings and one-to-one support from ministers and officials. Local authorities provide reports to the Department on their progress in delivering grants to businesses.

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[137178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what remedial action is being taken where local authorities are not paying grants to eligible businesses for periods of (a) covid-19 lockdown and (b) when a tier system of covid-19 restrictions was in place.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government has put forward an unprecedented package of support in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19. This support includes extensive grant funding support for businesses that have been required by law to close, or have been severely impacted by, localised and national restrictions.

We continue to work closely with all local authorities to deliver funding to businesses that are in scope of these schemes as quickly as possible, while safeguarding public funds. As part of this, we have provided detailed guidance and FAQs to local authorities, as well as regular briefings and one-to-one support from ministers and officials.



**■ Business: Grants****Grahame Morris:****[137175]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many and what proportion of eligible businesses have received (a) Local Restrictions Support Grants and (b) the one-off grants announced in January 2021.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government has put forward an unprecedented package of support to help businesses which are severely affected by restrictions put in place to tackle Covid-19 and save lives. This support includes the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) scheme, announced in September 2020, through which businesses that are required by law to close have been able to access grants of up to £4,500 for every six weeks of closure. On 5 January 2021, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced one-off top-up grants of up to £9,000 per property to help retail, hospitality and leisure businesses affected by the new closures through to Spring. This is in addition to the Additional Restrictions Grant, announced in November and which received a £500 million top-up in January, to support other businesses affected by the new lockdown rules.

This funding is shared between all Local Authorities in England and we are working closely with Local Authorities to ensure that support is delivered to businesses that are in scope as quickly as possible.

**Grahame Morris:****[137176]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish regular updates on how many and what proportion of eligible businesses have received the (a) Local Restrictions Support Grants and b) the one-off grants announced in January 2021.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government has put forward an unprecedented package of support to help businesses which are severely affected by restrictions put in place to tackle Covid-19 and save lives. This support includes the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) scheme, announced in September 2020, through which businesses that are required by law to close have been able to access grants of up to £4,500 for every six weeks of closure. On 5 January 2021, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced one-off top-up grants of up to £9,000 per property to help retail, hospitality and leisure businesses affected by the new closures through to Spring. This is in addition to the Additional Restrictions Grant, announced in November and which received a £500 million top-up in January, to support other businesses affected by the new lockdown rules.

We are working closely with Local Authorities to ensure that funding is delivered to businesses that are in scope of these schemes as quickly as possible.

## ■ Carbon Emissions

**Mr Ben Bradshaw:**

**[132755]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a carbon fee and dividend as part of its plans to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

A carbon fee and dividend is an alternative form of carbon pricing policy. The UK already prices carbon emissions. This was previously through participation in the EU Emissions Trading System, and from January 2021 is via a UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS) as announced in the [Energy White Paper](#). This demonstrates our ongoing commitment to carbon pricing as a tool to reduce emissions in line with our ambitious net zero target.

Whilst we recognise the benefits of a carbon fee and dividend system, we believe that our UK ETS is better placed to support businesses to decarbonise at least cost. The UK ETS initially covers around one third of UK greenhouse gas emissions, and applies to the power sector, heavy industry, domestic aviation and flights from the UK to the European Economic Area. We will consult in the next 9 months on how to align the cap with the appropriate net zero trajectory, and we are also committed to exploring expanding the UK ETS to the two thirds of emissions currently not covered by carbon pricing, and will set out our aspirations to continue to lead the world on carbon pricing in the run up to COP26.

**Sarah Olney:**

**[133102]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of updating the economic regulatory duties that sit with each individual sectoral regulator to (a) reflect the need to deliver net zero emissions by 2050 and (b) support regulators to make transparent trade-offs where necessary.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government has established new coordination arrangements since setting the net zero target. This includes two cabinet committees, chaired by my Rt. Hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, to turbo-charge the net zero transition and co-ordinate action. The four main departments with lead responsibility for decarbonising sectors of the economy have also set up boards to oversee delivery of their policies aimed at reducing emissions.

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) undertook a study on economic regulation, which the Government responded to alongside the National Infrastructure Strategy. The Government agreed with the NIC that regulator duties should be coherent, covering price, quality, resilience and the environment, and has committed to consider new and existing duties in the round as part of a policy paper in 2021.

The Government supports the work already undertaken by the regulators to deliver net zero, and will continue to review the most appropriate measures, including legislated climate duties, alongside existing duties to ensure regulators make the necessary contributions to achieve legislated net zero targets.

## ■ Carbon Emissions: Sheffield City Region

**Gill Furniss:**

**[137270]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the amount of carbon dioxide was emitted in the Sheffield City Region in (a) April and (b) December 2020.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

While the Government does account for carbon dioxide emissions at the regional and local authority level, estimates of these emissions following the introduction of Covid restrictions last year are not yet available. For 2018, the latest year available, carbon dioxide emissions for the Sheffield local authority area were estimated to be 2,200ktCO<sub>2</sub>. Total carbon dioxide emissions for the Yorkshire and Humber region in 2018 were estimated to be about 10% of the UK's total.

As the Government continues to take the steps necessary to reduce our carbon emissions in line with our climate commitments, the Sheffield City Region, and the Yorkshire and Humber region more widely will play an important part in reaching net zero by 2050. For example, as part of the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a green industrial revolution, working with industry, the UK is aiming for 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030. This could see the UK benefitting from around 8,000 jobs across our industrial heartlands and beyond.

The Government is also determined for the UK to become a world-leader in technology to capture and store harmful emissions away from the atmosphere, with an ambition to remove 10MT of carbon dioxide a year by 2030, equivalent to all of Humber's industrial emissions today. This is supported by an extra £200 million of new funding to create two carbon capture clusters by the mid-2020s, with another two set to be created by 2030. This increased investment totals £1 billion, helping to support 50,000 jobs, potentially in areas such as the Humber, North East, North West, Scotland and Wales.

## ■ Carbon Emissions: Taxation

**Mr Ben Bradshaw:**

**[132754]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress the Government has made on producing a sustainable long-term plan for carbon pricing.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government is committed to carbon pricing as a tool to meet our ambitious emissions reductions targets. In the [Energy White Paper](#) we announced that a UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS) would be the UK's carbon pricing policy from 1 January 2021. The UK ETS initially covers around one third of UK greenhouse gas

emissions, and applies to the power sector, heavy industry, domestic aviation, and flights from the UK to the European Economic Area.

We recognise that meeting Net Zero will require us to build on this ambition. That is why in the next 9 months we will consult on how to align the UK ETS cap with an appropriate net zero trajectory. The cap will provide certainty about the UK's decarbonisation trajectory over the long-term, giving businesses the confidence to mobilise the scale of capital investment necessary to deploy clean energy technologies.

We are also committed to explore expanding the UK ETS and will set out our aspirations to continue to lead the world on carbon pricing in the run up to COP26.

## ■ Energy: Business

**Chris Grayling:** [\[137142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what obligation energy providers have to offer a service to business customers.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Unlike for domestic customers, energy suppliers are not obligated by their supply licence to offer a service to business customers. Contractual terms offered to businesses are a commercial matter for energy suppliers. An offer of a supply contract could depend upon a number of factors, such as the type of business, estimated amount and volatility of consumption, the customer's credit score and length of contract required. We would encourage businesses to shop around to find the best deal.

## ■ Energy: Foreign Investment in UK

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[133003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what representations he has received from energy providers based overseas on the effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on their investment plans in the UK.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The UK is one of the most open environments for investment across the world. According to the OECD, the UK is the third least restrictive nation amongst the G20. The UK-EU agreement will provide certainty and transparency to EU investors operating in the UK, and vice-versa.

## ■ Fireworks: Noise

**Sarah Olney:** [\[137272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to give local authorities the power to implement noise limits on fireworks.

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[137273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to require mandatory labelling of firework packaging with information about the noise level of the firework.

**Paul Scully:**

Existing legislation controls the sale, availability and use of fireworks, as well as setting a curfew and noise limit. Under the Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2015 there are strict labelling requirements. Fireworks are categorised and labelled according to their explosive content and category. The fireworks categories must be marked on the label and give an indication of the noise level and hazard level.

The Fireworks Regulations 2004 limits noise from fireworks available to consumers to a maximum of 120 decibels. These noise limits are GB wide and Local authority Trading Standards officers are responsible for their enforcement.

## ■ Fuel Poverty

**Gill Furniss:**

[\[137269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what fiscal steps he is taking to prevent fuel poverty during winter 2020-21.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Improving the energy efficiency of homes is the best long-term solution to tackle fuel poverty. The Energy Company Obligation is a GB wide energy efficiency scheme worth £640m per year until March 2022 and is focused on low-income and vulnerable households. The Green Homes Grant, launched in September 2020, is a £2 billion programme which will help improve the energy efficiency of homes in England. Of this, around half is specifically for low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households.

We recognise that some households may need immediate support this winter and so we provide assistance with energy bills for low income and vulnerable consumers through the Warm Home Discount, Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments.

We have also successfully negotiated an agreement with energy suppliers to support customers impacted by COVID-19. Based on the circumstances, this could include reassessing, reducing, or pausing debt repayments for households in financial distress and support for prepayment meter customers to stay on supply.

## ■ Furniture: Delivery Services

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[136456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government plans to advise furniture delivery companies to discourage delivery drivers from entering residences unless for specific purposes.

**Paul Scully:**

The other people's home guidance was updated on 6 January to reflect the national lockdown. Where it is absolutely necessary for delivery drivers to enter someone's home, they can do so by following the guidance, respecting social distancing and wearing a face mask.

**Green Homes Grant Scheme****James Murray:**[\[133247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Green Homes Grant is spent effectively.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

We are continually evaluating the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme against broad policy criteria (including value for money, job creation and carbon savings) and will make improvements to the scheme on an ongoing basis.

The Scheme also has robust measures in place against fraud, as well as requiring installers to be Trustmark registered and carry the appropriate (PAS/MCS) certification, ensuring work is done to a high-quality standard.

There will be an evaluation of the processes and outcomes of the Voucher Scheme. An independent research organisation, Ipsos MORI, was contracted in December 2020 to undertake the evaluation. This will run until 2023, with interim publications released prior to the final evaluation report.

**Helen Hayes:**[\[134012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the deadline for delivery of the Local Authority Delivery Scheme 2.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Green Homes Grant, Local Authority Delivery Scheme is part of a package of measures aimed at providing an urgent stimulus to the economy. BEIS intend to allocate £300m to the regional Local Energy Hubs for delivery by December 2021. This aims to balance the aim of the scheme to support economic recovery whilst being pragmatic over delivery timescales.

These economic stimulus schemes are part of a longer term, sustained investment in the growth of skills and jobs to build the supply chains necessary to achieve net zero. We have recently published the Energy White Paper and next year we plan to publish a Heat and Building Strategy outlining our approach alongside an updated Fuel Poverty Strategy for England, that builds upon the commitments in my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution, to extend the Energy Company Obligation and implement the Home Upgrade Grant.

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[134013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the deadline for the Local Authority Delivery Scheme on the development of sustainable jobs and skills.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

BEIS estimates the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme will support on average 8,000 jobs per annum over the years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[134014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to use the results of the Local Authority Delivery scheme to evaluate the effectiveness of local authorities in the future.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

BEIS has embedded evaluation into the delivery plans of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme so that Government can learn about its effectiveness, implement learning into the future of energy efficiency schemes and consider what ongoing role Local Authorities should have in the delivery of such schemes.

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[134015\]](#)

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

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

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

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

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

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

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[136581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the deadline for the Local Authority Delivery Scheme on the development of sustainable jobs and skills.



**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

BEIS estimates the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme will support on average 8,000 jobs per annum over the years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

**Sarah Olney:**[\[136582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to use the results of the Local Authority Delivery scheme to assess the effectiveness of local authorities in the future.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

BEIS has embedded evaluation into the delivery plans of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme so that Government can learn about its effectiveness, implement learning into the future of energy efficiency schemes and consider what ongoing role Local Authorities should have in the delivery of such schemes.

**Sarah Olney:**[\[136583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of aligning the deadlines for Local Authority Delivery scheme phases 1a, 1b and 2 to the Voucher Scheme deadline of March 2022.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Local Authority Delivery and Vouchers schemes have been designed to work alongside each other whilst reflecting the differences in delivery methods.

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

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

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

**Sarah Olney:**[\[136584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the deadline for delivery of the Local Authority Delivery Scheme 2.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Green Homes Grant, Local Authority Delivery Scheme is part of a package of measures aimed at providing an urgent stimulus to the economy. BEIS intends to allocate £300m to the regional Local Energy Hubs for delivery by December 2021. This aims to balance the aim of the scheme to support economic recovery whilst being pragmatic over delivery timescales.



These economic stimulus schemes are part of a longer term, sustained investment in the growth of skills and jobs to build the supply chains necessary to achieve net zero. We have recently published the Energy White Paper and we plan to publish a Heat and Building Strategy outlining our approach alongside an updated Fuel Poverty Strategy for England, that builds upon the commitments in the Prime Minister's ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution, to extend the Energy Company Obligation and implement the Home Upgrade Grant.

## ■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Certification

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[132786]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the extension to PAS 2030:17 certifications will be further extended to March 2022 in line with the Green Home Grants scheme extension.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The transitional arrangements which include allowing installations under either the 2017 or 2019 versions of PAS 2030 in the Green Homes Grant voucher scheme have been extended to the 30th June 2021. There are no plans to extend any further, therefore all installers will need to be certified to the updated standard by 30 June 2021. Further information can be found on UKAS's website:

<https://www.ukas.com/news/ukas-pas-2030-green-homes-communication-to-certification-bodies-extension-of-beis-transition-policy-for-the-ghgvs-to-30-june-2021/>.

## ■ Heating

**Sir Gary Streeter:**

[134332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to encourage the installation of heat pumps.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government takes the role heat pumps can have in driving down carbon emissions very seriously and has set an ambitious target of 600,000 heat pump installations a year by 2028. BEIS are currently supporting heat pump deployment via both the Domestic and Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI). As per November 2020 the total number of Non-Domestic RHI accredited applications for heat pump based installations was 2,500 and 62,492 in the Domestic RHI.

BEIS are also providing support via the Future Homes Standard, which will ensure that new homes are built zero carbon-ready without the need for costly retrofitting, a new market-based policy which puts industry at the heart of efforts to develop the heat pump market, our commitment to phase out the installation of high-carbon fossil-fuel heating off the gas grid through targeted regulation, and a range of other policies such as the Home Upgrade Grant and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. We are planning to publish consultations on the market mechanism and off-gas-grid regulations in due course, alongside the forthcoming Heat and Buildings Strategy.

As part of the £1.5 billion Green Homes Grant (GHG) scheme, the government will fund up to two-thirds of the cost of installing low-carbon heat (including air source, ground source and hybrid heat pumps) and energy efficiency measures in homes. Under the scheme, the government aims to retrofit 600,000 homes in England and to date, over 60,000 applications have been received.

## ■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

[\[134362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support the hospitality sector in (a) Sutton Coldfield and (b) England during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

**Paul Scully:**

We are providing the hospitality sector with a wide package of support. On 5 January, 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. A £594 million discretionary fund is also being made available to Local Authorities to help them support other impacted businesses.

## ■ Housing: Heating

**Scott Mann:**

[\[134506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for this Department's policies of the recommendation of the SAP Industry Forum's April 2020 SAP 11 Technologies Report that biopropane should be modelled as fuel choice for heat in both new and existing buildings.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Department has commenced work on the development of the next version of the Standard Assessment Procedure, SAP 11. It will consider the SAP Industry Forum's Report on the likely mainstream technologies for consideration in the mid-2020s as part of this. The Department has also commissioned a wider scoping project to advise more broadly on what SAP 11 will need to model and how it should do this. This project will further help to inform the development of SAP11 and is due to report back in February.

## ■ Infrastructure: Regulation

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[133101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has developed a plan for the future of the UK infrastructure market over the next 30 years to allow regulators to work with a consistent and stable set of priorities.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government has set out its strategic objectives and priorities for infrastructure investment in the National Infrastructure Strategy, and the 2018 National

Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline. The latter includes projects in both the public and private sectors, and there will be an estimated c£600bn of investment over the next decade. The pipeline will be updated in Spring 2021.

## ■ Post Offices: Coronavirus

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[137172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Post Office Ltd on support for sub post offices during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

**Paul Scully:**

Following the announcement of the lockdown, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer has put in place additional support to the most affected businesses, worth £4.6 billion across the United Kingdom. Post Offices are eligible to be awarded financial support through these measures. Post Offices are also able to access other existing business support schemes, such as VAT deferrals.

In addition, Post Office Ltd's Hardship Scheme remains open for Postmasters who are experiencing severe financial issues. Postmasters have been reminded of the application process and eligibility criteria. Further information on the Hardship scheme can be found at: <https://www.onepostoffice.co.uk/secure/covid-19-situation/post-office-hardship-scheme/>.

We continue to work closely with Post Office Ltd, the National Federation of SubPostmasters and other stakeholders to understand the impact that COVID-19 has had on the operation of the Post Office and how the Government can support Postmasters through this period.

## ■ Redundancy

**Lucy Powell:**

[\[137217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many proposed redundancies were indicated on HR1 forms received by the Redundancy Payments Service in each month since January 2019.

**Paul Scully:**

The table below sets out the volume of proposed redundancies indicated on HR1 forms received between January 2019 and December 2020:

<i>V OLUME OF PROPOSED REDUNDANCIES INDICATED ON HR1 FORMS RECEIVED BY THE REDUNDANCY PAYMENTS SERVICE</i>		
	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Jan</b>	28,138	29,496
<b>Feb</b>	32,189	27,804

*VOLUME OF PROPOSED REDUNDANCIES INDICATED ON HR1  
FORMS RECEIVED BY THE REDUNDANCY PAYMENTS SERVICE*

<b>Mar</b>	41,626	44,235
<b>Apr</b>	85,913	61,502
<b>May</b>	35,229	73,254
<b>Jun</b>	23,932	155,576
<b>Jul</b>	21,372	149,301
<b>Aug</b>	22,581	57,749
<b>Sep</b>	26,575	81,670
<b>Oct</b>	23,798	51,351
<b>Nov</b>	27,652	36,686
<b>Dec</b>	17,412	23,083

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

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

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

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

## ■ Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme

**Sir Gary Streeter:**

**[134331]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to assess the potential effect of the fall in oil prices on the take-up of the domestic Renewable Heat Incentive and heat pump installation.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

There are no plans to assess the potential effect of the fall in oil prices on the Renewable Heat Incentive. The number of heat pump accreditations onto the domestic Renewable Heat Incentive scheme had recovered to pre-Covid 19 volumes by December 2020, and the price of oil may rise again as the world economy recovers from the Covid 19 pandemic. The domestic Renewable Heat Incentive is due to close to new applications in March 2022.

## ■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus

**Justin Madders:**

[\[134483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits click and collect options for non-essential retail in reducing the rate of transmission of covid-19.

**Paul Scully:**

The single most important action we can all take is to stay at home unless people have a reasonable excuse, as set out in law.

In order to reduce social contact and help reduce the rate of transmission, the regulations require some businesses to close and impose restrictions on how some businesses provide goods and services. All shops can continue to operate click-and-collect (where goods are pre-ordered and collected without entering the premises) and delivery services. This allows the public to have access to goods they need quickly, where they aren't available from retailers that can remain open.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[\[134511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to prevent panic buying in response to the announcement of the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown in England.

**Paul Scully:**

We are taking all necessary precautions to protect the public, including engaging with industry and business representative organisations to ensure we are fully aware of the issues and impacts businesses are facing and how we can best provide support.

As we have seen this year, the UK has a large, diverse, and highly resilient food supply chain.

We continue to work closely with the food industry, who are well prepared to ensure people across the country have the food and supplies they need.

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[134606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support retail workers encourage public compliance of covid-19 restrictions in retail premises.

**Paul Scully:**

The Safer Workplaces [guidance](#) includes robust health and safety measures to ensure businesses are supported or, where required, challenged. Alongside legal requirements covered in the guides, they outline the enforcement powers held by the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities.

## ■ Social Rented Housing: Doncaster

**Nick Fletcher:**

**[134249]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council was unsuccessful in its bid to receive funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator scheme.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Funds for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator were awarded through a competitive assessment process which was completed on 30th November 2020. The assessment was undertaken against the criteria set out in the scheme guidance and involved 3 independent assessors and a moderation panel. On this occasion, within the total funding envelope available and the success criteria, the bid from Doncaster Council was not successful. Feedback was provided to Doncaster Council on 11th December by Ricardo PLC who are acting as the scheme administrators. Following the Spending Review announcement in November 2020 there will be a further round of the scheme in the next financial year.

If you would like to get in touch with the SHDF Demonstrator team, please email [SHDF.Demonstrator@beis.gov.uk](mailto:SHDF.Demonstrator@beis.gov.uk).

## ■ UK Emissions Trading Scheme

**Alexander Stafford:**

**[134630]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to establish a link between the UK Emissions Trading Scheme and other emissions trading schemes.

**Alexander Stafford:**

**[134631]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of which countries' emissions trading schemes are suitable for linkage with the UK Emissions Trading Scheme.

**Alexander Stafford:**

**[134635]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with his overseas counterparts on a linked UK ETS.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government recognises the importance of international co-operation on carbon pricing and the important role international carbon markets can play.

In that spirit, the UK is open to linking the UK ETS internationally in principle. There are more than 20 emissions trading systems globally.

This includes the EU ETS and the UK-EU Free Trade and Cooperation Agreement makes clear both parties will have their own effective systems of carbon pricing in place to help fulfil our respective climate goals. Both Parties have agreed to cooperate on carbon pricing in future and consider linking our respective systems, although we are not under any obligation to do so.

International collaboration is a key part of the UK's global leadership on climate change and I look forward to working closely with my overseas counterparts on all aspects of tackling this global challenge, including carbon pricing.

Details of emissions trading systems around the world are available in the International Carbon Action Partnership (ICAP) Status Report 2020, available at: <https://icapcarbonaction.com/en/icap-status-report-2020>.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[134633]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the benefits of a linked UK ETS.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[134634]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the benefits of a linked UK ETS for industry and international trade.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Carbon pricing policies that work using the cap-and-trade principle, such as the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), can deliver cost-effective decarbonisation, as they incentivise abatement to occur where and when it is cheapest. In principle, larger carbon markets lead to more cost-effective emission reductions, since emission allowances are tradable across a larger and more diverse pool of participants.

Linking carbon markets would also lead towards an alignment of carbon prices across the linked schemes. This can minimise the risk of any competitive distortions that may have resulted from unevenly applied carbon prices.

## ■ UK Emissions Trading Scheme: Carbon Emissions

**Alexander Stafford:**

[134629]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to align the UK emissions trading scheme with the Government's net zero target.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[134632]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the benefits of a net zero aligned UK ETS.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The UK ETS will be the world's first net zero carbon cap and trade market, and a crucial step towards achieving the UK's target for net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Reaching our net zero target will provide crucial benefits such as reducing the risks of catastrophic climate change, reduced air pollution, economic growth, and green collar jobs.

By placing a cap on the volume of greenhouse gas emissions and issuing tradable emissions allowances under the cap, the UK ETS creates a market to ensure the most economically efficient distribution of emissions allowances and to incentivise emissions reductions where these are most cost-effective. The transparent downward

cap trajectory provides a clear signal mobilising the participants in the covered sectors to invest in emissions reduction technologies and measures, which will be needed as supply of allowances tightens over time.

The UK ETS is more ambitious than the EU system it replaces - from day one the cap has been reduced by 5% below the UK's expected notional share of the EU ETS cap for Phase IV. We received the Climate Change Committee's advice on the Sixth Carbon Budget on the 9 December 2020, including their recommendation on the level of traded sector emissions from 2023 to 2030. We are considering this advice carefully and will consult on a net zero consistent trajectory for the cap in due course.

### ■ UK Trade with EU: Energy

**Alison Thewliss:**

[\[132999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to seek a future agreement with the EU on energy markets.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The free trade agreement with the EU provides for cooperation on a range of energy matters in order to support and strengthen the UK and EU's shared energy objectives. The UK and the EU are committed to cooperating closely on efficient trading, energy markets and access to networks. Other matters for cooperation include security of supply, future energy systems and the prevention of market abuse.

### ■ Voluntary Work: Leave

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[134573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the statutory provision for time off to fulfill public duties to (a) charity trustees and (b) other roles.

**Paul Scully:**

Employer-supported volunteering can help to build stronger communities and a stronger economy, by helping charities and community groups to do more and by creating a more motivated and productive workforce. Employees have the right to reasonable time off work to carry out specified public duties such as those of a magistrate or a local councillor. Whilst there are currently no plans to assess the current provisions, the Government is keen to see greater corporate responsibility on the part of employers and to encourage the public sector, charities and businesses to consider their impact on society.



**CABINET OFFICE**■ **Brexit****Patrick Grady:**[\[133006\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government plans to (a) issue any official commemorative items and (b) organise any celebratory events to mark the end of the transition period and coming into force of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

The Government was elected on a manifesto which made clear our plans to exit the EU and that the transition period would end on 31 December 2020. The UK Government has agreed and delivered a deal with the EU which fully delivers on this manifesto commitment.

While efforts are currently focused on dealing with the pandemic and supporting businesses and citizens, many millions of people welcome this outcome and will mark it in their own private ways. Suggestions from colleagues and the public are always welcomed.

■ **Coronavirus: Death****Jon Trickett:**[\[134354\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many education staff have died from covid-19.

**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 PQ134354 [PQ134354 - Response.pdf]

■ **Death: Yorkshire and the Humber****Jon Trickett:**[\[134347\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many excess deaths were recorded in Yorkshire and the Humber region in each year since 2010 and up to and including 2020.

**Chloe Smith:**

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

**Attachments:**

1. Response to PQ134347 [PQ134347 - Response.pdf]

**■ Public Sector: Procurement**

**Dan Carden:** [\[137292\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will extend the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to private companies contracted to deliver public services; and if he will make a statement.

**Chloe Smith:**

Since 2010, this Government has been at the forefront of opening up data to allow Parliament, the public and the media to hold public bodies to account and has introduced a range of measures to increase transparency in public sector contracts. At present, the Government has no plans to legislate in this area.

**■ Serious Violence Taskforce**

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:** [\[137244\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the cross-Whitehall Crime and Justice Taskforce was created; and who the members of that Taskforce are.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:** [\[137245\]](#)

To ask the the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the dates were of each of the meetings of the Crime and Justice Taskforce.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to [PQ107708](#). The membership of the Taskforce is available on Gov.uk.

**■ Social Security: Reciprocal Arrangements**

**Alan Brown:** [\[133948\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 15 of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, published on 24 December 2020, when the Working Group on Social Security Coordination is due to first meet.

**Alan Brown:** [\[133949\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 15 of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, published on 24 December 2020, what the selection process will be for the appointment of UK Government representatives to the Working Group on Social Security Coordination.

**Alan Brown:** [\[133950\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 15 of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, published on 24 December 2020, how many (a) EU representatives and (b) UK Government representatives will sit on the Working Group on Social Security Coordination.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement establishes a standard set of committees and working groups to oversee its operation.

The Government is considering carefully the process around the establishment of these committees and working groups.

**■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland****Fleur Anderson:**[\[134219\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reversing the requirements for UK small businesses that only sell their products within the UK to have an EU address on products for goods that will subsequently be sold within Northern Ireland.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

There is no requirement for an EU Member State address for any goods to be sold in Northern Ireland. Where rules applied by the Protocol mean that manufactured goods must be labelled with importer information in addition to manufacturer details, the relevant address may be either in Northern Ireland or the EU.

In the case of food labelling, specifically the requirement for a food operator address, a proportionate and risk-based enforcement approach is in any case being implemented to support businesses. Full guidance on the specific rules that apply in each case is available on gov.uk.

**■ UK Trade with EU****Emily Thornberry:**[\[132802\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to publish a comprehensive and independently-verified economic impact assessment for the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

**Emily Thornberry:**[\[132803\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what forecasts the Government has made for the growth in (a) UK exports of goods to the EU and (b) EU exports of goods to the UK in the 15-year period after the start of the implementation of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement relative to a baseline of no such agreement being in place after 31 December 2020.

**Emily Thornberry:**[\[132804\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what forecasts the Government has made for the growth in (a) UK exports of services to the EU and (b) EU exports of services to the UK in the 15-year period after the start of the implementation of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement relative to a baseline of no such agreement being in place after 31 December 2020.

**Emily Thornberry:****[132805]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what forecasts the Government has made for the growth in (a) UK GDP and (b) EU GDP in the 15-year period after the start of the implementation of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement relative to a baseline of no such agreement being in place after 31 December 2020.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

This is the first free trade agreement the EU has ever reached based on zero tariffs and zero quota. Businesses will be able to continue to trade smoothly, selling to their customers in the EU, and people will be able to continue to buy goods from Europe tariff-free, protecting consumer prices.

The agreement provides for streamlined customs arrangements, including recognising our respective trusted trade schemes, to support the smooth flow of goods at the border and to reduce administrative costs for traders. This deal also enables us to introduce our own modern subsidy system so that we can better support businesses to grow and thrive, in a way that best suits the interests of UK industries.

**Owen Thompson:****[133052]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate his Department has made of the additional costs to (a) businesses in (i) Midlothian and (ii) Scotland and (b) British exporters to Northern Ireland of trading arrangements made as a result of the European Union (Future Relationship) Bill.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

This is the first free trade agreement the EU has ever reached based on zero tariffs and zero quotas. The Agreement ensures there will be zero tariffs or quotas on trade between the UK and the EU, where goods meet the relevant rules of origin, and includes provisions to facilitate trade and address non-tariff barriers for UK exports to the EU and vice versa. This will benefit businesses across the UK.

On the movement of goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, the UK-EU Joint Committee agreement on the Northern Ireland Protocol complements the Trade and Cooperation Agreement to ensure trade is as streamlined as possible and minimises burdens for businesses.

**Emily Thornberry:****[137159]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Minister is responsible for the (a) administration of and public communication around the UK's new trading relationship with the European Union and (b) discussions with UK and European stakeholders about proposed improvements in that relationship.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement covers a wide range of areas and is the responsibility of various departments. Details of ministerial meetings with external organisations are published on gov.uk.

## ■ Veterans: Suicide

**John Healey:**

[\[136444\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent suicide among veterans.

**Johnny Mercer:**

In January 2019, the Government published the first Cross-Government Suicide Prevention Workplan, which sets out an ambitious programme across national and local government and the NHS. This includes actions being taken forward by MoD and NHS England for veterans and armed service personnel. The Government has committed to publishing an updated workplan and progress report against the National Strategy, expected in Spring 2021.

The majority of veterans successfully access mental health programmes available to the general population through the NHS, however for those veterans who need extra support, the NHS in England offers bespoke and specialist mental health services, which benefit from over £10m investment per year. Recent months have seen the rollout of the new NHS England High Intensity Service, which will provide further specialist care for veterans with acute mental health needs or who are in a mental health crisis. The Government has also provided £6 million in funding to support 100 service charities during the Covid-19 pandemic, including charities supporting veterans with their mental health.

## ■ Veterans: Unemployment

**John Healey:**

[\[136443\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of recent trends in the rate of unemployment among veterans.

**Johnny Mercer:**

Veterans offer a vast range of skills and talent to civilian employers and the Government recognises that having a job is one of the key foundations for those leaving the Armed Forces to transition into civilian life. This is why the Government is taking a number of steps to support veterans into employment such as making it easier to join the Civil Service and introducing a national insurance tax break for their employers. The MOD's Careers Transition Partnership supports Service leavers entering the job market. Of the 2018/19 UK regular service leavers who used a CTP service, and reported their employment outcomes, 86% were employed, 8% economically inactive, and 6% unemployed six months after using the service.

**DEFENCE****■ Armed Forces: Carbon Emissions**

**Deidre Brock:** [\[135975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the carbon emissions of the British Forces South Atlantic have been over the last three years.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not record the total carbon emissions of the British Forces South Atlantic Islands.

As part of the MOD Climate Change and Sustainability Review we are developing a methodology to expand the scope of defence greenhouse gas emissions reporting to include overseas activities.

**■ Armed Forces: Ethnic Groups**

**John Healey:** [\[137122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel from BAME backgrounds have been promoted into the officer ranks since 2012.

**Johnny Mercer:**

The information needed to answer the right hon. Member's question is taking time to collate, and I will write to him shortly.

**■ Armed Forces: Training**

**Owen Thompson:** [\[136004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will review the effectiveness of steps taken by his Department to ensure that UK training programmes provided for foreign armed forces do not contribute to the internal suppression of civilians in those countries.

**James Heappey:**

All assistance we provide to foreign armed forces is conducted in accordance with an Overseas Security and Justice Assessment of the country concerned which assesses risks, including those relating to human rights and international humanitarian law, and considers what measures might be necessary to mitigate any such risk.

**■ Defence: Finance**

**John Healey:** [\[137121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of currency depreciation in defence procurement on the defence budget.

**Jeremy Quin:**

We address the impact of foreign exchange using forward purchase contracts agreed with the Bank of England. Foreign Currency Exchange hedging is layered over a number of years which means that by the start of the year, a significant proportion of the forecast foreign currency requirement has already been purchased. The layering

approach mitigates the risk of over or under hedging and provides budget stability in the forward programme. It is not intended to generate gains or savings from the foreign exchange market.

## ■ Forces Help to Buy Scheme

**John Healey:** [137118]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Forces Help to Buy payments have been completed in each region since the scheme began.

**Johnny Mercer:**

The requested information is published in the Forces Help to Buy Scheme quarterly statistics which can be found at the following address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/forces-help-to-buy-scheme-quarterly-statistics-index>. Table 5 of the most recent statistics shows the regional breakdowns for the total number of payments made since the scheme began in April 2014 to September 2020.

**John Healey:** [137119]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel and their families have been rejected by the Forces Help to Buy scheme's application process since the establishment of that scheme by rank.

**Johnny Mercer:**

Since the Forces Help to Buy Scheme (FHTB) began, 51,186 First Stage FHTB applications have been received. 26,317 of these applications have proceeded to the Second Stage.

Payment has been made to around 22,200 applicants, totaling around £336 million, an average of approximately £15,100 per claim. At least 95% of payments, as at 30 September 2020, have already resulted in a purchased property or extension.

Detailed statistics on FHTB are published quarterly and can be found at the following address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/forces-help-to-buy-scheme-quarterly-statistics-index>.

However, it will take time to collate information on the numbers of applications, by rank, which did not pass initial and detailed eligibility checks and I will write in due course.

## ■ Frigates

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [135843]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the optimal rate for the delivery of frigates.

**Jeremy Quin:**

There is no single optimum rate for the delivery of frigates; delivery rates are decided on an individual programme basis and are dependent on a range of different factors.

**■ Iron and Steel: Procurement**

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[136670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that his Department's procurement spend on steel remains within the UK steel supply chain.

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[136671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that procurement opportunities are promoted to UK steel firms before a decision is made by (a) his Department and (b) his tier 1 contractors.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Steel for our major defence programmes is generally sourced by our prime contractors from a range of UK and international suppliers and that remains the case. This Government is committed to creating the right conditions in the UK for a competitive and sustainable steel industry. It publishes its future pipeline for steel requirements, together with data on how Departments are complying with steel procurement guidance at the following link:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/steel-public-procurement](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/steel-public-procurement)

This enables UK steel manufacturers to better plan and bid for Government contracts.

**■ Military Aid: Coronavirus**

**John Healey:** [\[137120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his oral contribution of 12 January 2021, Official Report, column 194 on reservist training, if he will publish details of other steps his Department has taken to meet financial pressures in the last 12 months; and what savings were made by each of those measures.

**James Heappey:**

It is a routine aspect of managing the defence budget that many measures are taken during the course of the financial year to ensure that spending remains within levels authorised by Parliament and to allow resources to be reallocated to new and emerging priorities. It would not be appropriate to publish a full list of all such measures taken over the past 12 months as that would reveal information of value to our potential adversaries. The Armed Forces remain fully funded to deliver their core defence tasks and the extra £16.5 billion of investment in Defence announced in the spending review will ensure that they can continue to do so.



## ■ Military Aid: Northern Ireland

**Gavin Robinson:**

[\[136534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 27 April 2020 to Question 38930, how many Military Aid to Civil Authority (MACA) requests were (a) made of and (b) approved by his Department from Northern Ireland up to 12 January 2021.

**James Heappey:**

Between 27 April 2020 and 12 January 2021, 10 MACA requests related to Northern Ireland were received by Defence, all of which were approved. Of these 10, seven are related to COVID-19 support.

## ■ Military Bases: Northern Ireland

**Gavin Robinson:**

[\[137222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the written statement on 17 November 2020 on Estate optimisation HCWS582, what progress his Department has made on the intended disposal of sites in Northern Ireland.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) remains committed to the disposal of Kinnegar Logistics Base and the capabilities will be re-provided for in Aldergrove Station.

The MOD has completed a range of technical studies in support of the disposal of the site and officials continue to engage with the Local Authority.

## ■ Navy: Coronavirus

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[136047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure Royal Navy staff undertaking in-person training are protected from covid-19 (a) nationally and (b) at the Gosport shore base.

**James Heappey:**

The Royal Navy takes the threat of COVID-19 very seriously and all training is fully risk-assessed and kept under continual review. The current Public Health England and Government Guidance is being followed at all establishments.

At HMS SULTAN in Gosport, appropriate procedures and management oversight are in place to ensure that all guidelines are being strictly followed to decrease the risk of infection to trainees and staff, their families and the local community. This includes measures to reduce overall footfall on the establishment to mitigate the anticipated post-Christmas and New Year virus peak.

**Dr Julian Lewis:**

[\[137113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 June 2020 to Question 60642 on Navy: Coronavirus, what recent assessment his Department has made of the risk of covid-19 infection spreading throughout a ship's company at sea; and what priority he is giving to vaccinating ships' companies before embarkation.

**James Heappey:**

COVID risk assessments across RN ships are carried out on a continuous basis. All measures are being taken to ensure that risk is as low as is reasonably possible. The priority for the administration of the COVID vaccine has been defined by the Department of Health and Social Care. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has determined the overarching priority order for administration of the vaccine. Healthcare personnel and key vulnerable/age specific groups, are being vaccinated as part of Phase 1, with others following in Phase 2 onwards. Personnel across Defence are assessed under the same criteria.

**■ Type 32 Frigates****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[135842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of UK design capacity for the Type 32 frigate.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The assessment of the adequacy of UK design capacity for the Type 32 frigate will be undertaken as part of the concept phase, which has not yet been launched.

**■ USA: Defence Equipment****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[135841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure compatibility between the purchase of US equipment for UK armed service and job creation within the defence industry through the levelling up agenda.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The UK's involvement in international bilateral and multilateral partnership and equipment programmes, including with the US, offers significant opportunities for UK companies. This can be seen in the UK's role in the F-35 supply chain, with British companies building approximately 15% by value of all F-35s. The Ministry of Defence works closely with US and international suppliers to highlight opportunities for the UK Defence Industry, for example this includes supply events with major US primes, the most recent of which attracted 800 attendees from across all nations of the UK who were briefed on future opportunities.

As part of the cross-Government review of the UK's defence and security sectors (DSIS), we will identify how to enhance our strategic approach to ensure we continue to maintain competitive, innovative and world-class defence and security industries that drive investment and prosperity across the Union and underpin national security now and in the future.

**■ Veterans: Medals****Robert Halfon:**[\[136499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to award service medals to nuclear test veterans.

**Johnny Mercer:**

The outcome of the review by the independent Advisory Military Sub-Committee (AMSC) into the case of medallic recognition for veterans who participated in the British Nuclear Test programme was published by the Cabinet Office on 10 December 2020. The AMSC concluded that the case did not meet the level of risk and rigour which is generally required for the award of a campaign medal or clasp and the Ministry of Defence respects the findings of the independent review.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****Broadband****Kate Osborne:**[\[134199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of classifying broadband as an essential utility.

**Matt Warman:**

The Government believes that a fast, reliable broadband network is essential, which is why we are committed to ensuring nationwide gigabit-capable broadband as soon as possible. We are making good progress towards this target, with around 1 in 3 UK premises now able to access a gigabit-capable connection according to the latest figures from Ofcom and ThinkBroadband.

With regards to classifying broadband as an essential utility, operators already have strong rights to support rollout of new fibre. We are proposing to further strengthen these rights following through the Telecoms Infrastructure (Leasehold Property) Bill, which aims to make it easier for providers to connect tenanted properties where there are unresponsive landlords. Alongside this, we are committed to consulting on further reforms to the Electronic Communications Code, the statutory framework underpinning the rights of telecoms operators to deploy digital infrastructure on public and private land.

The Government will continue to take action to support gigabit rollout in other ways. For example, in harder to reach areas, we are investing £5 billion through our UK Gigabit Programme.

**Civil Disorder: USA****Sarah Owen:**[\[136625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Foreign Secretary on the storming of the US Capitol on 6 January 2021 and its implications for the Government's policies on online harms.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

Ministers have regular meetings and discussions with their ministerial colleagues, on a range of issues, including online harms policy.

The government has set out its proposals for a new regulatory framework to tackle online harms in the [Full Government Response](#) to the Online Harms White Paper, published on 15 December 2020.

## ■ Culture: Coventry

**Taiwo Owatemi:**

[\[136629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to support the arts and culture industry in Coventry as they begin to commemorate Coventry as the city of culture 2021.

**Caroline Dineneage:**

The Government recognises the huge contribution the arts and culture sector makes, not only to the economy and international reputation of the UK, but also to the wellbeing and enrichment of its people. It is for this reason that we have invested an unprecedented £1.57 billion, the biggest ever one-off cash injection, into UK culture to tackle the crisis facing our most loved arts organisations and heritage sites across the country including Coventry, which will be our next City of Culture. The Culture Recovery Fund has awarded over £6 million in funding to arts and heritage organisations in Coventry to help support them through the current Covid-19 outbreak.

The Government has supported Coventry City of Culture Trust (the organisation responsible for planning and delivering the programme) with an investment of £15m for capital and resource projects. In addition, Arts Council England, has allocated £3.4m to support Coventry's success as City of Culture.

The arts and cultural sector is instrumental to Coventry's success and the Trust has employed local arts freelancers, invested in cultural infrastructure and, during the first lockdown, initiated a £100k resilience fund for the local arts community. In addition, through its programming, the Trust has provided a much needed injection of funding into the sector and supported artists in the region, nationally and internationally.

Coventry North West has received four awards totalling £221,063 from the Culture Recovery Funds: Mercurial Arts Limited received £64,548; The Highlife Centre received 2 amounts of £79,515 and £61,000; and the Canal and River Trust received £16,000.

## ■ Data Protection

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[135932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 16 December 2020 to Question 127557 on Data Protection, who will have oversight for the new mandatory code of conduct; and how the effectiveness of that code will be evaluated.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

Government has announced the introduction of a new pro competition regime, including an enforceable code for digital platforms with substantial and enduring

market power. As part of this, we have announced the establishment of a dedicated Digital Markets Unit (DMU) which will be housed within the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). The DMU will introduce, maintain and enforce the code of conduct.

The DMU will be set up in non-statutory form in April 2021 to begin to operationalise the new pro-competition regime. Government will consult on the pro-competition regime in early 2021 and legislate to put on a statutory footing as soon as parliamentary time allows.

## ■ Events Industry: Coronavirus

**Jonathan Gullis:**

[\[133264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support his Department has provided to (a) fairgrounds, (b) other outdoor events and (c) the wider events sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

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

In light of the national restrictions announced on 4 January, the Chancellor has announced one-off top up grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses worth up to £9,000 per property to help businesses through to the Spring. He also announced that a £594 million discretionary fund will be made available to support other impacted businesses.

This comes on top of the existing Additional Restrictions Grant discretionary funding and the Local Restrictions Support Grants.

On 13 January I met with representatives of the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain to assess how we can most effectively support the fairground industry through this period. We also remain in close contact with the wider events sector via the Tourism Industry Council and the Events Industry Senior Leaders Panel to closely monitor the situation.

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[134146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support is being made available to (a) photographers and (b) other freelancers who work primarily in the wedding, conference, and events sector in response to the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown; and what his Department's long-term strategy is regarding support for people who work in that sector.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

We are aware that the wedding, conference and events sectors have been severely impacted by Government measures to control the spread of Covid-19. We have

introduced a range of support measures to assist businesses and individuals during this period, including various government-backed loans and business grants. Self-employed individuals can seek support through the self-employed support scheme.

The Chancellor also announced that Local Authorities in England will be given an additional £594 million discretionary funding to support their local businesses. This builds on the £1.1 billion discretionary funding which local authorities in England have already received to support their local economies and help businesses impacted.

It is up to each local authority to determine eligibility for the Additional Restriction Grant based on their assessment of local economic need; however, we encourage local authorities to support businesses which have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, but which are ineligible for the other grant schemes.

We continue to engage with stakeholders, including through the Tourism Industry Council and the Events Industry Senior Leaders Advisory Panel, to monitor the situation facing the sector and to assess how we can support its long term recovery. The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy is engaging with representatives from the wedding industry to discuss the longer-term reopening of that sector.

#### ■ Football: Finance

**Alex Sobel:**

**[134103]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what financial support he plans to provide to local football pyramid clubs below tier 6 that have experienced reduced income from parent club fees.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Sports and physical activity providers and facilities are at the heart of our communities, and play a crucial role in supporting adults and children to be active.

Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many sport clubs have benefited from. Sport England's Community Emergency Fund has provided £210m directly to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through this pandemic. The £300m Sports Winter Survival Package also aims to protect the immediate futures of major spectator sports in England over the winter period.

Furthermore, on Tuesday 5 January, the Chancellor announced £4.6 billion in new lockdown grants to support businesses and protect jobs. Businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors are eligible to receive a one-off grant worth up to £9,000.

We are continuing to work with organisations to understand what they need and how we may be able to support them.

## ■ Gambling

**Lee Anderson:** [\[134575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will ensure that the Gambling Act Review (a) focuses on empowering customers, (b) does not propose blanket measures that punish the responsible majority, that does not help people at risk and risks pushing people away from the regulated sector and (c) focuses on tailored measures based on evidence.

**Lee Anderson:** [\[134576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to instruct employers to indicate on payslips how much a person will be allowed to spend on gambling.

**Lee Anderson:** [\[134577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will ask HMRC to instruct employers to indicate on payslips, along with an employee's national insurance contribution, the maximum amount of retained income they will be allowed to spend on gambling.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Review of the Gambling Act 2005 was launched on 8 December 2020. As set out in the Terms of Reference, the Review is wide-ranging in scope and will be evidence-led. The Call for Evidence will run until 31 March 2021, and we are seeking evidence from a broad range of interested groups and stakeholders.

The Review aims to ensure that the Gambling Act is fit for the digital age, and offers an opportunity to make sure that we have the balance right between protecting vulnerable people from gambling related harm, and respecting the freedom of adults to choose how they spend their money and leisure time.

The Gambling Commission's consultation and call for evidence on Remote Customer Interaction discusses the important issues of identifying consumers in vulnerable situations and assessing affordability. The consultation and call for evidence responses will inform the Commission's next steps for setting Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice. It may also inform the Gambling Commission's advice to government on the Review of the Gambling Act 2005.

## ■ Home Shopping: Fraud

**Stuart Anderson:** [\[134148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to tackle false advertising on online shopping websites.

**Caroline Dineneage:**

DCMS is considering how online advertising is regulated in the UK through our Online Advertising Programme (OAP). This work will look at the extent to which the



current regulatory regime is equipped to tackle the challenges posed by the rapid technological developments seen in online advertising.

Our aim is to foster fair, accountable and ethical online advertising that works for citizens, businesses and society as a whole.

This work will complement other reviews in this area, including work by the CMA, the Information Commissioner's Office and the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation.

## ■ **Mobile Phones: Cybercrime**

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[135928]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he last made an assessment of the (a) weaknesses in the UK's SS7 phone signalling system and (b) implications for national security of that matter.

**Matt Warman:**

It was announced in 2016 as part of the National Cyber Security Strategy that SS7 and Diameter protocols used within mobile networks would be tackled within the National Cyber Security Centre's (NCSC) Active Cyber Defence programme. The NCSC's second report on Active Cyber Defence which was published in July 2019 included details on work to further remediate weaknesses in SS7. The NCSC continues to work closely with mobile operators to reduce the vulnerability of UK networks.

The Telecommunications (Security) Bill currently going through the House will require that telecoms providers take measures to protect their networks and services from security compromises. This would include measures to mitigate risks associated with SS7 protocols.

## ■ **Social Media: Freedom of Expression**

**Lee Anderson:**

**[134581]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other social media platforms promote free speech while encouraging people to respect each other.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

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

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



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

## ■ **Television Licences: Non-payment**

**Marco Longhi:**

**[137331]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to publish the outcome and data of the consultation on decriminalising TV licence evasion, which closed on 1 April 2020.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

The consultation closed in April 2020 after receiving 150,000 responses.

The government intends to publish the response to the consultation on decriminalisation of TV licence evasion shortly.

## ■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

**[133904]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of ensuring that travel exemptions apply to fashion creatives on the same basis as they are applied to performing arts professionals, TV production staff and journalists arriving in the UK.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

The bar for exemptions remains very high due to the current public health context. The [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website lists the jobs that qualify for travel exemptions [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules>).

The travel quarantine exemptions do not currently include an exemption for fashion professionals, but this list is kept under review.

## ■ **Video On Demand**

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[135926]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to encourage the adoption of BBFC age ratings on online video streaming platforms.

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[135927]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of applying BBFC ratings to user-generated video content on YouTube, Facebook and similar sites and linking those ratings to parental filters.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

It is vital that children are protected from accessing age-inappropriate, harmful content online. We have now published the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation, which sets out how the proposed legal duty of care

on online companies will work in practice and gives them new responsibilities towards their users. The strongest protections in our online harms proposals are for children. All companies in scope will be required to assess whether children are likely to access their services, and if so, provide additional protections for children using them. Companies will need to take steps to protect children from harmful content and activity on their service. We will set out in secondary legislation the priority harms that this regulation will tackle, in consultation with Ofcom. Ofcom will then set out in Codes of Practice the steps companies can take to protect children from harm on their services.

Ahead of Online Harms legislation, Regulations transposing the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive came into force on 1 November 2020 which require UK-established video sharing platforms to take appropriate measures to protect minors from harmful content and all users from illegal content. The Regulations require that the most harmful content is subject to the strongest protections, such as age assurance or more technical measures. Ofcom, as the regulatory authority, may take robust enforcement action against video sharing platforms which do not adopt measures to adequately protect their users.

Over the past year we have been working with the BBFC and industry to drive the voluntary adoption of the BBFC's age rating symbols to Video On Demand platforms. Doing so will provide consumers with well recognised age ratings and consumer advice.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Apprentices: Assessments

**Mr Toby Perkins:** [137173]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprentices are awaiting their End-Point Assessment and unable to complete their apprenticeship.

**Mr Toby Perkins:** [137174]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what alternative arrangements he has made for apprentices who are unable to undertake End-Point Assessments.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We do not hold data on the number of apprentices who are awaiting their end-point assessment. Our apprenticeships data is published here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships>. There were 46,930 apprenticeship achievements reported between 23 March and 31 July 2020.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has introduced alternative arrangements for End-Point Assessments (EPAs), including remote assessment where practicable, 12 week extensions to the time limit for completion, and relaxation of the order in which elements can be taken. The Institute has published a list of over 100 apprenticeship standards where additional discretions have been introduced,

including cybersecurity technologist and nursing associate. Further information on this is available here: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/covid-19/recent-announcements/list-of-standards-with-temporary-discretions-or-flexibilities/>.

Following the introduction of National Restrictions on 6 January, EPAs should now take place remotely wherever possible, in line with the Institute's guidance on the delivery of assessment. Assessments can continue in colleges, training providers' premises, assessment venues and workplaces where they cannot be conducted remotely and where providers and assessment organisations judge it right to do so. Further information is available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/950845/Apprenticeship\\_response\\_to\\_COVID-19\\_FINAL.pdf#page=28&zoom=100,69,640](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950845/Apprenticeship_response_to_COVID-19_FINAL.pdf#page=28&zoom=100,69,640).

All EPA flexibilities and discretions put in place due to the COVID-19 outbreak will be extended until at least 31 August 2021. We continue to review the flexibilities in place to ensure high-quality assessment can continue allowing apprentices to undertake their assessments despite current operating constraints. Our intention is to safeguard the quality of apprenticeships, and EPAs are an integral part of that.

## ■ Assessments: Appeals

**Lee Anderson:**

**[134578]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of enabling exam-year students to appeal their teachers' recommendations for their assessment grades.

**Nick Gibb:**

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, the Government considers that examinations cannot be held in a way which is fair. The Department has announced that GCSE, AS and A level examinations will not go ahead this summer as planned. In his statement to the House on 6 January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education confirmed proposals that pupils taking GCSE, AS and A levels this summer should be awarded grades based on an assessment by their teachers.

The Department and Ofqual have launched a joint consultation on how to fairly award all pupils, including private candidates and students taking vocational qualifications, with a grade that supports them to progress to the next stage of their lives. We are consulting on the evidence needed to inform teachers' assessments of their students' grades, including providing externally set papers to support their assessments. Teachers will be provided with training and guidance to support them.

The consultation proposes that examination boards should both provide information for schools and colleges to inform their own quality assurance, and that they themselves should undertake checks of schools' and colleges' processes and the evidence for the grades submitted.

The consultation also proposes that there must be provision for pupils to appeal their grades or the process by which they were assessed, and we welcome all views from

schools, colleges, students and their parents and carers on the proposed arrangements for the appeals process next year. The Department will provide further details on the appeals process for 2021 when the consultation has closed, and the approach has been finalised.

## ■ Care Leavers and Children in Care: Coronavirus

**Steve McCabe:**

**[135792]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) looked-after children and (b) care leavers can access (i) IT equipment and (ii) internet during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

**Vicky Ford:**

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, academy trusts and local authorities by 11 January. We have published the latest data

here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-progress-data>

We prioritised the delivery of devices for children receiving support from a social worker and care leavers during the summer term of the 2019/20 academic year. The Department delivered devices to local authorities, so that all children receiving support from a social worker and care leavers would have access to a device. These devices are the property of the local authority and they are responsible for their ongoing maintenance and support.

We have partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online as well as delivering 54,000 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home. We are grateful to EE, O2, Smarty, Sky Mobile, Tesco Mobile, Three, Virgin Mobile, and Vodafone. We continue to invite a range of mobile network providers to support the offer.

## ■ Children in Care

**Tulip Siddiq:**

**[134512]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department plans to publish (a) updated transparency data on looked-after children in independent or semi-independent placements for the year ending 31 March 2020 and (b) a response to the consultation on unregulated provision for children in care and care leavers.

**Vicky Ford:**

The latest information on children looked after in England, including the number of looked after children placed in independent and semi-independent placements on 31 March 2020, is contained in the children looked after in England statistics release, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions>.

Children in care and care leavers are some of the most vulnerable children and young people in society, and we must do all that we can to ensure that they have access to suitable, safe and secure accommodation that meets their needs and keeps them safe. Our consultation on unregulated provision for children in care and care leavers asked for views on a set of ambitious proposals to reform unregulated provision for children in care and care leavers, including banning the use of independent and semi-independent placements for children and young people under the age of 16, the introduction of new national standards in independent and semi-independent provision and giving Ofsted new legal powers to act against illegal providers.

The consultation received a strong response from the sector, and care-experienced young people. We will publish the government's response to the consultation in due course.

## ■ Children: Computers

**Shabana Mahmood:**

[\[134394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions his Department has with local education authorities on children with no access to remote learning equipment during the covid-19 outbreak who will be designated as vulnerable children and the local schools' ability to provide face-to-face learning in schools during the January 2021 lockdown.

**Shabana Mahmood:**

[\[134395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how will parents will be notified that they have a right for their children to attend school if they do not have access to remote learning equipment during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown period.

**Shabana Mahmood:**

[\[134396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions his Department has had with schools in Birmingham on access to remote learning equipment during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown period.

**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 750,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities by the end of last week.

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

Some pupils who have difficulty engaging in remote education may be considered to be vulnerable children and therefore eligible to attend school. It is up to the child's school or local authority to make this decision. The decision would be based on the

needs of the child and their family, and a range of other factors, as set out in our published guidance.

The Department understands that schools may face staffing pressures that can create challenges in trying to deliver both high quality on site and remote education, especially where pupil attendance on site remains high due to high numbers of key worker and vulnerable children. Leaders in schools and colleges should ensure the balance of on site and remote teaching is manageable for staff and reflect this in the offer posted on their school or college website.

For schools that do not already have a full remote education curriculum or resources in place, or where they may face staffing pressures, the Department strongly recommends that they consider using Oak National Academy or other high quality resource providers.

9,294 laptops have been delivered directly to Birmingham local authority this academic year. Further devices have also been delivered to academy trusts that include schools located in Birmingham local authority which are not included in this figure.

**Shabana Mahmood:**

**[134397]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has published for teachers and teaching assistants to ensure that they are aware that children who cannot access remote learning equipment will be classified as vulnerable children and will have the right to attend face-to-face education in the school environment during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

**Nick Gibb:**

During the national lockdown, schools should only allow vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers to attend. Guidance for this is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>. The definition of vulnerable children has been in place since March, has been consistent throughout our response to the COVID-19 outbreak, and includes those children who may be vulnerable for a reason at local discretion. Several examples of the sorts of factors that may contribute to vulnerability are included, but it is not an exhaustive or definitive list.

On 8 January 2021, the Department published updated guidance on remote education, available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/950510/School\\_national\\_restrictions\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf). In this guidance, we refer to the definition of vulnerable children, which notes that some children who have difficulty engaging in remote education may be considered vulnerable and, therefore, eligible to attend provision. It is up to the child's education provider or local authority to make this decision. The decision would be based on the needs of the child and their family, and a range of other factors, as set out in the following guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining->

[educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision#vulnerable-children-and-young-people](#).

The updated remote education guidance also sets out that where pupils continue to experience barriers to digital remote education, the Department expect schools to work to overcome these barriers. This could include distributing school-owned laptops or supplementing digital provision with different forms of remote education, such as printed resources or textbooks. This should be supplemented with other forms of communication to keep pupils and students on track, or answer questions about work.

The Department has also published a good practice guide, which provides advice to teachers and school leaders to support effective delivery of the curriculum remotely. This is available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-good-practice/remote-education-good-practice>. This is part of our broader package of support for schools, accessible via the following 'Get Help with Remote Education' page: <https://get-help-with-remote-education.education.gov.uk/good-teaching-practice.html>.

**Margaret Greenwood:**

**[134473]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish earlier than 17 February the information entitled Devices and internet connectivity data: progress update.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department has published new data on the delivery of devices as of 12 January 2021. This information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-progress-data>.

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 750,000 laptops and tablets that have been delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities by the end of last week.

The Department has 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.

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.

**Mick Whitley:**

**[136616]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to speed up the rollout of digital devices and wi-fi to children who are unable to access remote learning from home.



**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 750,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities by the end of last week, with 100,000 of these delivered in the first week of January alone.

We have already sent over 50,000 4G wireless routers, with free data for the academic year, to schools, so that children have access to remote education.

The Department has also partnered with some of the UK's leading mobile network operators to provide free data to disadvantaged families, which will support access to education resources, including Oak National Academy, and other websites.

Families will benefit from this additional data until July 2021. Schools are able to request free mobile data uplifts via the Get Help with Technology service.

A number of mobile network providers are also progressing the zero-rating of educational resources, such as Oak Academy and BBC Bitesize.

**Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[137170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on what date he estimates that every child in need of a device for remote learning will have adequate access such a device during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education, and on Tuesday 12 January the Department announced that it will be providing a further 300,000 laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. This is on top of our previous commitment to provide a million devices. We are delivering devices as quickly as they are available, during a time of unprecedented global demand. We have based our allocation of devices on recent data on free school meal eligibility, to ensure that they reach the children and young people that need them most.

**Kate Hollern:**[\[137223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) pupils are eligible for digital devices and (b) digital devices have (i) been and (ii) yet to be delivered in each region.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. This includes over 750,000 laptops and tablets that have been delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities by the end of last week.

Figures on the number of devices delivered, including by local authority, is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-progress-data>. These figures are broken down by local authority and



academy trust, depending on which organisation ordered devices. Information on delivery by region is not available.

Our overall commitment of 1.3 million devices is comparable with Ofcom's UK-wide estimate that between 1.14 million and 1.78 million children in total in the UK have no home access to a laptop, desktop, or tablet. We have allocated devices based on recent data on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals.

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.

### ■ Children: Day Care

**Jane Stevenson:**

[\[137312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to roll out lateral flow tests to childminders and early years settings.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department is continuing to work closely with other government departments and local authorities to secure the most effective approach to asymptomatic testing for the whole of the early years sector. This includes ongoing discussions about providing testing via the education testing programme as well as strongly encouraging local authorities to prioritise appropriate testing for early years staff via Community Testing programmes, which now covers all local authorities. Many local authorities' Community Testing programmes are already underway for early years staff to access asymptomatic testing where appropriate.

The Department is rolling out our asymptomatic testing programme to primary schools, schools-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools who will receive testing kits for staff from Monday 18th January. The asymptomatic testing programme will offer all primary school, schools-based nursery and maintained nursery school staff home Lateral Flow Device test kits for twice weekly testing. This will help to break the chains of transmission of COVID-19 in primary schools and nurseries by identifying asymptomatic positive cases. Those who test positive will then self-isolate, helping to reduce transmission of the virus.

### ■ Children: Disadvantaged

**Ben Lake:**

[\[136592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions his Department had with the Welsh Government on the allocation and distribution of Wi-Fi vouchers from telecommunication companies for disadvantaged children in 2020.

**Nick Gibb:**

Mobile networks are currently providing internet access for pupils in England to engage with remote learning. All devolved nations have set up separate initiatives to support their schools.

Last year, the Department ran a pilot in partnership with British Telecom (BT) to provide children and young people free access to a BT WiFi hotspot. Through this, 10,000 BT codes were sent to local authorities and academy trusts for them to pass onto disadvantaged families so that they could access a BT WiFi connection until 31 December 2020. The pilot was not extended 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.

The Department has kept colleagues in the devolved administrations updated throughout the COVID-19 outbreak response on our progress with providing laptops and internet access for remote education.

### ■ Children: Mental Health Services

**Kate Green:**

**[134427]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what mental health support the Government is providing to vulnerable young people attending school (a) in person and (b) virtually during the 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

**Vicky Ford:**

The government has made children's wellbeing and mental health a central part of our response to the COVID-19 outbreak, and the support we have already put in place for children and young people will be critical during this time. The department has issued guidance for schools which includes information and sources of further advice on supporting mental health and wellbeing, available here:

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

We have ensured that schools have the flexibility to offer a place in school as a vulnerable child to any pupils for whom being in school will help to manage their mental health, or to access support more easily. Decisions will be informed by the school's experience of how pupils have been affected so far.

Schools will continue to offer pastoral support to pupils working remotely at home, informed, and supported by training and expert advice that we have made available, including through the £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return scheme and through local links with mental health providers. This information and support is relevant to remote provision as well as to those attending school. Schools should make sure that parents and pupils know who to contact if they have new concerns about mental health and wellbeing.

A £1 billion COVID "catch-up" package, with £650 million shared across early years, schools and 16-19 providers over the 2020/21 academic year, is also supporting education settings to put the right catch-up and pastoral support in place. The Education Endowment Foundation have published a COVID-19 support guide to support schools in directing this funding, which includes further information about interventions to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing.

Public Health England has produced guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. For those who need specialist support or help, all NHS Mental Health Trusts are providing 24/7 open access telephone lines to support people of all ages and continue to deliver mental health support to children and young people.

The government continues to invest in and prioritise mental health. The NHS will receive approximately an additional £500 million this year, to address waiting times for mental health services, give more people the mental health support they need, and invest in the NHS workforce.

In the long term, we remain committed to our joint green paper delivery programme with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England, including introducing new mental health support teams for all schools and colleges, providing training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges, and testing approaches to faster access to NHS specialist support.

#### ■ **Children's Centres: Yorkshire and the Humber**

**Jon Trickett:**

**[134353]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many sure start centres there were in Yorkshire and the Humber region in (a) 2010 and (b) 2020.

**Vicky Ford:**

Based on the information supplied by local authorities, the table attached shows the number of Sure Start children's centres in the Yorkshire and Humber region in 2010 and 2020.[1]

[1] Source: Downloaded from Get Information about Schools database <https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk>. Based on information supplied by local authorities as at 11 January 2020. These figures may be different to previous answers, and could change again in future, since local authorities may update their data at any time.

#### **Attachments:**

1. Table 134353 [Table\_134353\_Sure\_Start\_Yorkshire\_Humber.xlsx]

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Nurseries**

**Jon Trickett:**

**[134358]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the (a) advice and (b) guidance provided by (i) the Chief Medical Officer and (ii) Public Health England which informed the decision to allow nurseries to remain open during national lockdown restrictions from 6 January 2020.

**Vicky Ford:**

Schools have been restricted since 6 January 2021, not because they are unsafe but because additional measures are needed to contain the spread of the virus. The wider significant restrictions in place as part of the national lockdown to contain the

spread of the virus in the community enable us to continue prioritising keeping nurseries and childminders open, supporting parents and delivering the crucial care and education needed for our youngest children.

Early years settings remain low risk environments for children and staff. Current evidence suggests that pre-school children (0 to 5 years) are less susceptible to infection and are unlikely to be playing a driving role in transmission which is referred to in the 65th SAGE meeting, available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/935102/sage-65-meeting-covid-19-s0863.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/935102/sage-65-meeting-covid-19-s0863.pdf).

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 system of controls are the right measures for early years settings, which reduce risks and create inherently safer environments.

Early years settings have been open to all children since 1 June 2020 and there is no evidence that the early years sector has contributed to a significant rise in virus cases within the community. Early modelling evidence from SAGE evidenced in the report 'Modelling and behavioural science responses to scenarios for relaxing school closures' showed that early years provision had a smaller relative impact on transmission rate when modelled with both primary schools and secondary schools. The report is available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/886994/s0257-sage-sub-group-modelling-behavioural-science-relaxing-school-closures-sage30.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/886994/s0257-sage-sub-group-modelling-behavioural-science-relaxing-school-closures-sage30.pdf).

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.

PHE have endorsed a 'system of controls' which are the set of actions all early years settings must take. They are outlined in more detail in the 'Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak' guidance, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>.

These build on the hierarchy of protective measures that have been in use throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. When implemented in line with a revised risk assessment, these measures create an inherently safer environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced for children and staff.

## ■ Education: Coronavirus

**Emma Hardy:**

**[137289]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the proposed taskforce on the mental health challenges facing pupils, students and staff throughout the education sector, announced at the Education Committee hearing of 13 January 2021 on the impact of covid-19 on education and children's services, what the planned timescale is for the establishment of that taskforce; what the remit will be of that taskforce; whether representatives of staff unions will be invited on to that taskforce; how pupils and students will be represented on that taskforce; and when that taskforce will make recommendations.

**Emma Hardy:**

**[137290]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what further support he plans to provide to support the mental health challenges facing pupils, students and staff throughout the education sector prior to recommendations from the proposed taskforce announced at the Education Committee hearing of 13 January 2021 on the impact of covid-19 on education and children's services.

**Vicky Ford:**

The government has made children's wellbeing and mental health a central part of our response to the COVID-19 outbreak. We have been working with the Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England to monitor the impact on children and young people and will confirm shortly the next steps for setting up the task force to build on that work and make sure that we continue to hear from those affected, including education staff.

The support we have already put in place for children and young people will be critical during this time. We continue to prioritise keeping early years settings open in full because of the clear benefits to children's education and wellbeing. We know how important it is for children's wellbeing to have social interactions with their peers and staff. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we are providing £1.15 million funding to existing charity grant partners to support disadvantaged and vulnerable parent and child mental health and wellbeing, and to help children catch up and transition back into early education.

The department has issued guidance for schools which includes information and sources of further advice on supporting mental health and wellbeing:

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

Schools have the flexibility to offer a place in school as a vulnerable child to pupils for whom being in school will help them manage their mental health, or to access support more easily. Schools are also continuing to offer pastoral support to pupils working remotely at home, informed, and supported by training and expert advice that we have made available including through the £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return scheme and through local links with mental health providers. This information

and support is relevant to remote provision as well as to those attending school. Schools should make sure that parents and pupils know who to contact if they have new concerns about mental health and wellbeing.

We are also committed to providing and signposting wellbeing guidance and support; and ensuring that specialist mental health support is available for those students and staff in further education (FE) who need it. Our guidance to the FE sector for the period of national lockdown includes a specific section on mental health, signposting providers to additional resources, such as webinars and online platforms, for supporting students and staff with their mental health and wellbeing.

The Department for Education College Collaboration Fund provides £5.4 million national programme of competitive grant funding for all statutory FE colleges to be delivered in this financial year 2020/21. We particularly welcomed applications that address one of five specific quality improvement needs, and five of the projects funded support student and/or staff mental health and wellbeing through online programmes and remote support.

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

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

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

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

We have also put in place support for staff. We have worked in partnership with the sector and mental health experts to announce a range of public commitments on mental health and wellbeing, including improving access to resources, building wellbeing into teacher training and policy making, and the creation of the first ever Education Staff Wellbeing Charter.

We have taken action to respond to the mental health needs of school leaders by launching a £95,000 pilot led by Education Support to provide online peer-support and telephone supervision from experts to around 250 school leaders. This service will run until March 2021. The outcome of the pilot will inform future wellbeing support.

Alongside this action in education for those who need specialist support or help, all NHS Mental Health Trusts are providing 24/7 open access telephone lines to support people of all ages and continue to deliver mental health support to children and young people. The government is continuing to invest in and prioritise mental health. The NHS will receive around an additional £500 million this year, to address waiting times for mental health services, give more people the mental health support they need, and invest in the NHS workforce.

#### ■ **Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes**

**Tulip Siddiq:**

**[137259]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding Edenred has received to deliver the national free school meal voucher scheme in 2020.

**Vicky Ford:**

The Department for Education made an award of a contract to Edenred pursuant to Regulation 32(2)(c) Public Contracts Regulations 2015 to provide extremely urgent deliverables as part of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The contract was let as a direct award using the terms of an existing Crown Commercial Service framework. The Department does not comment on the commercial arrangements of third parties but can confirm that we have only paid for the face value of goods delivered (in this case, vouchers).

Our supplier, Edenred, reported that over £380 million worth of voucher codes had been redeemed into supermarket eGift cards by schools and families through the scheme as of 19 August 2020.

#### ■ **GCE A-level: Standards**

**Jon Trickett:**

**[133694]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the change in the percentage gap from 2018 to 2019 between local authority areas with the highest proportion of A-Level results achieved at AAB or higher, and local authority areas with the lowest proportion of A-Level results achieved at AAB or higher.



**Nick Gibb:**

The published data available from the Department's most recent release showed a narrowing of the percentage gap between the local authorities with the highest and lowest AAB proportions between 2017/18 and 2018/19 academic years. The gap fell from 48.4ppts to 38.8ppts; the difference in 2017/18 and 2018/19 respectively in the proportion of students achieving AAB or higher, where Reading and Knowsley local authorities recorded the highest and lowest proportions in both years. This information is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results/2019-20>.

However, it is important to note that data for the worst performing and best performing local authorities sit at the extremes of the data, and as such naturally fluctuate from year to year. It would not be prudent for the Department to draw out significant policy implications from the change in the gap in just one year.

The Department remains committed to high attainment for all students across the UK. Since 2011, we have reformed the national curriculum, GCSEs and A levels to set world-class standards across all subjects and invested heavily in improving the quality of teaching.

UCAS sector-level data on higher education entry rates by English region shows that in 2020, 18 year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds were proportionally 80% more likely to enter full time higher education than in 2009. This data is available here: <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-sector-level-end-cycle-data-resources-2020>.

**■ Home Education****Fleur Anderson:****[136648]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that home-schooled pupils will be able to achieve the qualifications they are working towards at the end of the 2020-21 academic year.

**Nick Gibb:**

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, the Department will not be asking students to sit GCSE, AS and A level exams this summer as planned. The Department is working at pace to understand the implications of cancelling exams in all circumstances, including for home schooled pupils.

The Department has been clear that it is important to find an accessible route for private candidates, and those not in school this year, to be assessed and receive a grade. A rapid consultation on how to fairly award all pupils a grade that supports them to progress to the next stage of their lives will be launching shortly. We will continue to engage with a range of relevant stakeholders when developing plans for our policy on GCSE, AS and A level assessments in 2021, as will the exams regulator Ofqual. A full equalities impact assessment, informed by the results of the consultation, will be published in due course.



## ■ International Baccalaureate: Assessments

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[136646]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the International Baccalaureate organisation on exams due to take place in academic year 2020-21.

**Nick Gibb:**

Ofqual, as the regulatory body for qualifications in England, is responsible for overseeing how individual awarding organisations award grades in qualifications such as the International Baccalaureate.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to Ofqual on 13 January 2021, stating that the Department cannot guarantee that all students will be in a position to sit their exams fairly this summer and that alternative arrangements may be needed to award qualifications. The letter set out the Secretary of State for Education's view that some other general qualifications, such as the International Baccalaureate, which are similar to GCSEs and A levels, should be subject to similar alternative arrangements to those for GCSEs and A levels. The Department will be taking forward a consultation alongside Ofqual to consider these arrangements and how we can seek to ensure fairness for all students.

The letter is available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/951797/Letter\\_from\\_Gavin\\_Williamson\\_to\\_Simon\\_Lebus.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951797/Letter_from_Gavin_Williamson_to_Simon_Lebus.pdf).

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[136647]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that students due to sit International Baccalaureate exams in the UK in the 2020-21 academic year are not at a disadvantage compared with students able to sit the baccalaureate in other countries.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Extended Extraordinary Regulatory Framework published by Ofqual sets out how qualifications, including the International Baccalaureate, can be adapted to mitigate disruption from COVID-19 to the teaching, learning and assessment of qualifications.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to Ofqual on 13 January 2021 stating that the Department cannot guarantee that all pupils will be in a position to sit their exams fairly this summer and that alternative arrangements may be needed to award qualifications. The letter set out the Secretary of State for Education's view that some other general qualifications, such as the International Baccalaureate, which are similar to GCSEs and A levels, should be subject to similar alternative arrangements to those for GCSEs and A levels. These arrangements will be considered through consultation the Department is taking forward with Ofqual, which includes consideration of how the arrangements will seek to ensure fairness for all pupils.

**■ Learning Disability and Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus****Mr Andrew Mitchell:****[134365]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that the needs of children with special needs and learning disabilities are being met during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown in England.

**Vicky Ford:**

On 7 January 2021, we published guidance to schools on the current national lockdown, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families can be disproportionately impacted by being out of education. We therefore set out in the guidance that schools are expected to allow vulnerable children and young people to attend, including those with an Education, Health and Care plan. We want these children and young people to continue to receive high-quality teaching and specialist professional support. The system of protective measures that schools have in place means that any risks associated with attendance are well managed. If a pupil does not attend, we expect the school to provide remote education.

Specialists, therapists, clinicians, and other support staff for pupils with SEND should provide interventions as usual.

We will update the guidance as needed and, as part of this, we will be providing more detailed advice and support for special schools.

**■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus****Mr Virendra Sharma:****[134392]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of closing nurseries and early years settings as a result of the exponential rise in covid-19 transmission among children.

**Sarah Champion:****[134442]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of whether early years provision based on school sites should remain open under January 2021 covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

**Emma Hardy:****[134536]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what risk assessment his Department has conducted on the transmission rate of covid-19 in nurseries.

**Daisy Cooper:****[134593]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the evidence used to support the Government's decision to keep (a) early years settings and (b) nurseries

open during the national lockdown while closing other educational settings to most children.

**Vicky Ford:**

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister announced on 4 January 2021 that early years settings remain open for all children during the national lockdown.

Details can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

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

Early years settings remain low risk environments for children and staff. Current evidence suggests that pre-school children (0 to 5 years) are less susceptible to infection and are unlikely to be playing a driving role in transmission. There is no evidence the new strain of the virus causes more serious illness in either children or adults and there is no evidence that the new variant of COVID-19 disproportionately affects young children.

PHE advice remains that the risk of transmission and infection is low if early years settings follow the system of controls, which reduce risks and create inherently safer environments. This 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 and there is no evidence that the early years sector has contributed to a rise in virus cases within the community. Early modelling evidence from SAGE evidenced in the report: Modelling and behavioural science responses to scenarios for relaxing school closures showed that early years provision had a smaller relative impact on transmission rate when modelled with both primary schools and secondary schools. The report is available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/886994/s0257-sage-sub-group-modelling-behavioural-science-relaxing-school-closures-sage30.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/886994/s0257-sage-sub-group-modelling-behavioural-science-relaxing-school-closures-sage30.pdf).

Early years childcare providers were one of the first sectors to have restrictions lifted last summer, in recognition of the key role they play in society. Childminders and nursery staff across the country have worked hard to keep settings open through the COVID-19 outbreak so that young children can be educated, and parents can work. The earliest years are the most crucial point of child development and attending early education lays the foundation for lifelong learning and supports children's social and emotional development. We continue to prioritise keeping early years settings open in full because of the clear benefits to children's education and wellbeing and to support

working parents. Caring for the youngest age group is not something that can be done remotely.

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

## ■ Pre-school Education: Finance

**Helen Hayes:**

**[136573]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason the Government plans to base early years entitlement funding on January 2021's attendance figures during a national lockdown and not pre-pandemic attendance levels, as it did in the Autumn 2020 term.

**Vicky Ford:**

Whilst 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 759,000 on 17 December 2020. On 17 December, the government therefore announced a return to funding early years settings on the basis of 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.

While early years settings remain open for all children, we know that attendance was lower in the first week of January 2021 than it was before Christmas. We are looking at the attendance data and will continue to keep the funding position under review.

The Early Years Census count will go ahead this week as expected. To support local authorities, we have issued further advice about how to conduct the census count this year. In summary we have taken the view that where a child is reasonably expected to attend early years provision, and that provision is made available to them by the provider, their expected hours should be recorded in the Early Years Census. This means children who, were it not for the impact of COVID-19 on either their own personal circumstances or on the operation of their early years setting, would be attending early years provision will be included in the census count. This includes children who have previously attended the provision and children who were expected to start attending the provision in January 2021. Where the provider is temporarily closed due to circumstances such as staff infections or isolation periods, they should return their expected levels of provision for census week. Where the provider chooses not to offer the entitlements – i.e. to close, or only offer a limited provision to children of key workers - then they should not make a return for a child who is not being offered a place.

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://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak-23-march-2020-to-4-january-2021>. The next release is due on Tuesday 19 January. 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.

## ■ Primary Education: Coronavirus

**Joy Morrissey:**

**[134585]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that primary schools, identified as a lower transmission risk, can reopen to all children as soon as possible.

**Nick Gibb:**

Head teachers, teachers, and staff of schools, nurseries and colleges have been doing an extraordinary job to remain open, keep schools safe, and provide education for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. On 7 January, the Department published further guidance which sets out what schools will need to do during this new period of national lockdown. The guidance is available here: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/950510/School\\_national\\_restrictions\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf).

Face-to-face education is best for children's mental health and for their educational achievement. The Department has resisted restrictions on attendance at schools since the first lockdown but, in the face of the rapidly rising numbers of COVID-19 cases across the country and intense pressure on the NHS, we need to reduce all our social contacts wherever possible. Limiting attendance during the national lockdown will support the reduction of the overall number of social contacts in our communities.

During the period of national lockdown, schools, colleges and wraparound childcare and other out-of-school activities for children should allow only vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers to attend. All other pupils and students should not attend and should learn remotely.

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.

## ■ Remote Education

**Seema Malhotra:**

**[137216]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many laptops have been (a) ordered and (b) delivered from the Government scheme to support online remote learning for (i) primary schools and (ii) secondary schools in each region of England in January 2021.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for

disadvantaged children and young people. Over 750,000 laptops and tablets had been delivered to schools, academy trusts and local authorities by the end of last week, nearly 140,000 of which had been delivered this month.

The number of devices available for each school, trust or local authority is based on recent data on free school meal eligibility. On 12 January 2021 we announced that we will be providing a further 300,000 devices over the course of this term.

Figures on the number of devices delivered is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-progress-data>. These figures are broken down by local authority and academy trust, depending on which organisation ordered devices. Information on delivery by region is not available.

## ■ Remote Education: Buckinghamshire

**Joy Morrissey:**

**[134586]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of school closures on children with limited or no broadband connectivity in Buckinghamshire.

**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 750,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities by the end of last week.

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

All schools in Buckinghamshire have been invited to order their allocation of laptops and tablets and to request connectivity support. As of the 12 January, 834 devices have been delivered directly to Buckinghamshire local authority. Devices have also been allocated to academy trusts that have schools in Buckinghamshire.

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 can request free mobile data uplifts via the Get Help with Technology service.

## ■ Remote Education: Garston and Halewood

**Maria Eagle:**

[\[137133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many G4 routers have been supplied to schools in Garston and Halewood constituency to help families who do not have affordable broadband or data to access online learning during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

**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. Over 750,000 laptops and tablets had been delivered to schools, academy trusts and local authorities by the end of last week, nearly 140,000 of which had been delivered this month.

We have also provided over 54,000 4G wireless routers, with free data for the academic year so that children have access to remote education. Routers have been distributed to schools, academy trusts and local authorities, who are responsible for allocating them to the families that need them most. For this reason, figures on the number of routers provided at constituency level is not available.

The Department has also partnered with some of the UK's leading mobile network operators to provide free data to disadvantaged families, which will support access to education resources, including Oak National Academy, and other websites.

Families will benefit from this additional data until July 2021. Schools are able to request free mobile data uplifts via the Get Help with Technology service.

A number of mobile network providers are also progressing the zero-rating of educational resources, such as Oak Academy and BBC Bitesize.

## ■ Remote Education: Greater Manchester

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[135955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) primary and (b) secondary school pupils in (i) Tameside and (ii) Oldham who do not have wifi or an unlimited mobile data connection and cannot access remote learning.

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[135956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken since March 2020 to help ensure that school pupils in (a) Tameside and (b) Oldham can access remote learning during covid-19 restrictions.

**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 750,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities by the end of last week.

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.

## ■ Remote Education: Hearing Impaired

**Dawn Butler:**

**[136459]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help deaf students access remote learning during the covid-19 lockdown that began in January 2021.

**Vicky Ford:**

All primary schools, secondary schools and colleges in England are now expected to provide remote education for the majority of their pupils and students, with the exception of vulnerable children and young people (including those with an Education, Health and Care Plan) and the children of critical workers, who can attend school or college in person. Where vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers do not attend school or college, the Department expects schools and colleges to provide them with remote education.

For pupils with SEND, their teachers are best placed to know how the pupil's needs can be most effectively met to ensure they continue to make progress even if they are not able to be in school due to COVID-19. The requirement for schools to use their best endeavours to secure the special educational provision called for by the pupils' special educational needs remains in place.

Schools should follow the age-related guidance for primary schools and secondary schools:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/952443/210114\\_School\\_national\\_restrictions\\_guidance\\_FINAL\\_14012021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952443/210114_School_national_restrictions_guidance_FINAL_14012021.pdf). For example, for Key Stage 1 children in a special school, a minimum of 3



hours should be the aim on average across the cohort, with less for younger pupils. However, we expect schools to consider these expectations in relation to the pupils' stage of development and special educational needs, for example, where this would place significant demands on parents' help or support.

Schools should work collaboratively with families, putting in place reasonable adjustments as necessary, so that pupils with SEND can successfully access remote education and an ambitious curriculum appropriate for their level of need alongside their peers. All further education colleges should give particular consideration on how best to support vulnerable and disadvantaged students and students with SEND who may not be able to access remote education without support.

To ensure pupils with SEND are supported effectively, the Department has provided additional funding to one of our demonstrators, National Star College, to provide specialist training in assistive technologies to teachers, leaders and SENCOs in all state funded schools in England. This training will help to secure remote education arrangements for pupils with special educational needs. Advice and guidance is also available to support the development of an inclusive curriculum.

In addition, the Department has made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects for Reception up to Year 11. Specialist content for pupils with SEND is also available. To support pupils with hearing loss, lessons supplied by Oak are captioned. For younger age groups (year 1 to 3 English and Maths), where their reading ability might make captions harder to understand, lessons are also signed in British Sign Language. All lessons are pre-recorded and can be accessed at any time on any internet-connected device. Depending on the lesson picked, faces of teachers can be seen which may assist pupils with lip reading (please note that this is dependent on video quality). Some of these lessons are also supported with slides, quizzes and worksheets that are text based.

There is a wide range of further resources available to support schools and further education colleges to meet the remote expectations we have set. The Get Help With Remote Education page on gov.uk provides a one-stop-shop for teachers and leaders, signposting the support package available: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-remote-education>.

## ■ School Admissions (England) (Coronavirus) (Appeals Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations 2020

**Andrew Gwynne:**

**[137156]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will extend the provisions of The School Admissions (England) (Coronavirus) (Appeals Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 beyond the expiry date of 31 January 2021.

**Nick Gibb:**

The temporary regulations introduced in April 2020 contain provisions allowing school admission appeal hearings to be heard by telephone or video conference, or to be decided based on written submissions only.

The regulations were due to expire on 31 January 2021. However, due to the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 outbreak and the continuation of social distance rules, we have introduced another set of temporary regulations (The School Admissions (England) (Coronavirus) (Appeals Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations 2021) which extend the temporary provisions until 30 September 2021.

These will come into force on 31 January 2021 and updated guidance will be published. We will keep the temporary arrangements under review.

The temporary regulations and guidance only apply where it is not reasonably practicable to comply with the School Admission Appeals Code for a reason relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19. This means the temporary arrangements are available to use when they are needed – when they are not, the duty to comply with the The Schools Admission (Appeal Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 and the School Admission Appeals Code remains.

**Schools: Admissions****Andrew Gwynne:**[\[137157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reforming the schools appeals process in line with the temporary changes during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

Temporary regulations to amend the school admission appeals process were introduced in April 2020 to address the fact that the COVID-19 outbreak meant admission appeals could not go ahead in line with the existing statutory requirements.

Due to the ongoing nature of COVID-19 and the continuation of social distancing rules, we have introduced another set of temporary regulations which will extend the temporary provisions until 30 September 2021.

We will continue to monitor and review the impact of the temporary arrangements and will take account of feedback from local authorities, schools and parents when considering whether there is scope for wider reform of the appeals process in the longer term. Any proposals for permanent changes would require changes to legislation which would include a full public consultation and all changes would be subject to parliamentary approval.

**Schools: Coronavirus****Joy Morrissey:**[\[134584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the primary focus of Government school policy is the interests of parents and pupils during the national lockdown.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department recognises that face to face education is best for children's mental health and for their educational achievement. The Department has resisted restrictions on attendance at schools since the first lockdown but, in the face of the rapidly rising numbers of COVID-19 cases across the country and intense pressure on the NHS, we need to reduce all our social contacts wherever possible. Limiting attendance during the national lockdown will support the reduction of the overall number of social contacts in our communities.

During the period of national lockdown, schools will remain open to vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers only. If critical workers can work from home and look after their children at the same time, then they should do so. The Department expects schools to work with families to ensure all critical worker children are given access to a place, if this is required, to enable them to provide vital services. The Department encourages all vulnerable children to attend.

Schools should also continue to offer wraparound provision, such as breakfast and afterschool clubs, for those children eligible to attend school so that parents and carers who are critical workers can continue to work.

All primary schools, secondary schools and colleges in England are now expected to provide remote education for the majority of their pupils and students, with the exception of vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers, who can attend school or college in person. Where vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers do not attend school, we expect schools to provide them with remote education.

The Department has 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. With most pupils now having to learn remotely and schools having made huge progress in developing their remote education provision, it is right that we increase the expectations on what pupils receive so that we mitigate the impact of children being out of school. The Department's expectation for remote education provision has also been updated in this guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-good-practice/remote-education-good-practice>.

The Department knows this will be a challenging time for pupils and their families. On 8 January we published guidance, "What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges", to provide parents with the latest information:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/951035/210108\\_Parents\\_Guidance\\_vF.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951035/210108_Parents_Guidance_vF.pdf). 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.

## ■ Schools: Uniforms

**Andrew Lewer:** [134545]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate the Government has made of the average annual cost of school uniform.

**Andrew Lewer:** [134546]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if the Department will take steps to encourage second-hand uniform shops and uniform swap schemes.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department commissioned the Cost of School Uniform report in 2015 which found the average total expenditure on school uniform for the 2014/15 school year was £212.88.

The Government is supporting the Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms) Private Members' Bill to enable us to put our guidance on the cost of school uniform on a statutory footing. The Department's existing guidance on cost considerations will form the basis for the new statutory guidance.

Second-hand uniform and swap schemes can increase both affordability and sustainability of school uniform. The Government would therefore like to see second-hand school uniform made available for parents at all schools to acquire from the school directly or from a local, established, scheme.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

**Andrew Rosindell:** [134376]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional support his Department is providing to children with Special Educational Needs to ensure that their education is not affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families can be disproportionately impacted by being out of education. Due to the national restrictions, we have published new guidance on 7 January for all schools, including special schools and specialist post 16 provision, available here:

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

This guidance sets out that schools are expected to allow vulnerable children and young people to attend, including those with an Education, Health and Care plan. We want these children and young people to continue to receive high-quality teaching and specialist professional support. Specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for pupils and SEND should provide interventions as usual.

We also published 'Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings' in July 2020, and this has been regularly updated. This guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special->

[schools-and-other-specialist-settings/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings.](#)

**Alexander Stafford:**

**[134637]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to protect staff at SEN schools during the January 2021 lockdown.

**Vicky Ford:**

The department has worked closely with Public Health England (PHE) to publish comprehensive guidance based on a system of controls which, when implemented in line with a revised risk assessment, creates an inherently safer environment for staff, pupils and students where the risk of transmission of the infection is substantially reduced. This provides a framework for all schools to put in place proportionate protective measures to measure risk effectively. New guidance has been published 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>.

We recognise that social distancing and other protective measures can be harder to implement in specialist settings, particularly when working with children and young people with complex needs, or those who need close contact care. The guidance for full opening: 'Special Schools and other specialist settings' has been developed with experts from PHE and provides advice on how special schools and other special education settings specifically can implement a system of controls to reduce the risk of transmission. Specialist settings should use their discretion and assess their own individual circumstances to achieve the greatest reduction in contacts. This should not unduly limit the quality or breadth of teaching, or access to support, specialist staff and therapists. This guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings#the-system-of-controls-protective-measures>.

The government is delivering a programme of rapid asymptomatic testing from the start of January 2021 for staff, pupils and students in secondary schools and colleges. The DfE has provided guidance on delivering asymptomatic testing in specialist settings to support delivering testing in special schools and specialist colleges. More information can be found via this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/mass-asymptomatic-testing-in-specialist-settings>. The government also announced that all primary schools, including primary special schools, will receive testing kits for staff from the 18 January 2021.

The PPE portal can be used by residential special settings to access COVID-19 personal protective equipment (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.

Following the reintroduction of shielding, clinically extremely vulnerable staff are advised not to attend the workplace. Staff who are in this group will previously have received a letter from the NHS or their GP telling them this. Staff who are identified as clinically extremely vulnerable should follow government guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>.

## ■ Students: Fees and Charges

**Seema Malhotra:**

**[134436]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his policy is on student tuition fees during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Michelle Donelan:**

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

Universities are autonomous and responsible for setting their own fees, up to a maximum of £9,250 for standard full-time courses offered by approved (fee cap) providers for the 2020/21 academic year. The government has already announced that maximum tuition fee caps will remain frozen for the 2021/22 academic year.

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.

Whether or not an individual student is entitled to a refund of fees will depend on the specific contractual arrangements between the provider and student. If students have concerns, there is a process in place. They should first raise their concerns with their university. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education to consider their complaint. The OIA website is available via the following link: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has published guidance on consumer contracts, cancellation and refunds affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. This sets out the CMA's view on how the law operates to help consumers understand their rights

and help businesses treat their customers fairly. This is available via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-consumer-contracts-cancellation-and-refunds>.

The OfS has also published guidance on student consumer protection during the COVID-19 outbreak, which is available via the following link: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/student-and-consumer-protection-during-coronavirus/>.

## ■ Supply Teachers: Pay

**Daisy Cooper:**

**[136620]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will write to schools to clarify his Department's guidance on how they should pay supply teachers who are currently employed by them on either (a) day-to-day or (b) long term assignments, during school closures as a result of the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

**Nick Gibb:**

All primary schools, secondary schools and colleges in England are now expected to provide remote education for the majority of their pupils and students, with the exception of vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers, who can attend school or college in person. Where vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers do not attend school, we expect schools to provide them with remote education.

Schools will continue to receive their budgets for the coming year as usual, regardless of any periods of partial or complete closure. Schools have autonomy over these budgets and their employment arrangements and decisions on staffing are made at the local level.

Schools can continue to engage supply teachers and other supply staff during this lockdown period and schools may want to consider how supply teachers, and other temporary staff, can assist in delivering face to face education to pupils who continue to attend school and to deliver remote education for those who are not attending.

The Department is considering what further guidance may be helpful to schools with their workforce planning. Schools should continue to check updates to our guidance on restricting attendance in the national lockdown, available here: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/950510/School\\_national\\_restrictions\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf).

## ■ Teachers: Coronavirus

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[134618]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the long-term support available to clinically extremely vulnerable teachers working during the covid-19 outbreak.



**Nick Gibb:**

As set out in the published guidance for schools on restricting attendance during the national lockdown, following the reintroduction of shielding on 5 January 2021, clinically extremely vulnerable individuals are advised that they should not attend the workplace:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/950510/School\\_national\\_restrictions\\_guidance.pdf#page=30&zoom=100,72,76](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf#page=30&zoom=100,72,76). Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals are those identified through a

letter from the NHS or a specialist doctor as in the group deemed clinically extremely vulnerable (clinically extremely vulnerable or shielding list). The guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable individuals can be found here:

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

Clinically extreme vulnerable people will get priority access to vaccination against COVID-19 before the general population and in line with the priority ordering set by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Individuals will be contacted by the NHS with more information on when and how they will be invited to get the vaccine.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, we have worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Public Health England (PHE) to develop specific guidance for school settings. All staff who attend school settings should follow the measures set out in the system of controls section of the published guidance to minimise the risks of transmission. Where schools implement the system of controls, in line with their own workplace risk assessment, PHE and DHSC confirm that these measures create an inherently safer environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced.

**Universities: Charities****Sarah Champion:****[134440]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to require universities with charitable status to (a) register with the Charity Commission and (b) file a serious incident report in the event that an adverse event, actual or alleged, occurs.

**Michelle Donelan:**

Most universities in England are exempt charities, which means they are exempt from registration with, and direct regulation by, the Charity Commission.

Exempt charities have a principal regulator appointed, whose duties include promoting compliance with charity law.

The Office for Students (OfS) is the higher education regulator in England, and in accordance with charity law, is the principal regulator for higher education exempt charities in England.



Universities registered with the OfS are subject to ongoing conditions of registration. The OfS may investigate any adverse event, actual or alleged, where a breach of these conditions may have occurred, and take action as necessary, in accordance with its role as the regulator of higher education, and principal regulator of higher education exempt charities of England.

This can include engaging with the Charity Commission on the possible use of its powers under charity law.

## ■ Universities: Coronavirus

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[134374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with universities on providing extra support for (a) mature students and (b) students with children who may be facing additional pressure and responsibilities during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Michelle Donelan:**

We realise that this is an incredibly difficult time for students and are aware of the disproportionate impact that the COVID-19 outbreak will have on some students. In these exceptional circumstances, some students may face financial hardship. Students experiencing financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak should contact their higher education provider.

The Department has worked closely with the Office for Students (OfS) to help clarify that providers can draw upon existing funding to increase hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. Providers are able to use OfS Student Premium funding worth around £256 million for this academic year towards student hardship funds.

As announced last month, we are also making available up to £20 million of additional hardship funding to support those that need it most, particularly disadvantaged students.

Students will normally qualify for Child Benefit if they are responsible for a child under 16 (or under 20 if they stay in approved education or training). Full-time students with children can also apply for Childcare Grant and Parents' Learning Allowance. Full-time students who are single parents or student couples, one or both of whom are responsible for a child, and part-time students responsible for a child can apply for Universal Credit.

## ■ Vocational Education: Assessments

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[134638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that students in Rother Valley who have been unable to sit their BTEC and vocational exams in January 2021 due to the covid-19 outbreak are not disadvantaged compared with students who have sat those exams.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We want to ensure that no student is disadvantaged if they cannot take their exam or assessment. In consultation with Ofqual, awarding organisations and the sector we will develop an approach to ensure students receive a fair grade. If a student is unable to take their exam or assessment in January 2021, for example, if they are shielding or their provider is unable to offer the assessment, they will not be disadvantaged.

We will continue to develop our approach in consultation with Ofqual, awarding organisations and the sector, providing more detail on the way forward for vocational exams and assessments for February 2021 onwards.

**Alexander Stafford:****[134639]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that students in Rother Valley who have taken BTEC and vocational exams in January 2021 are provided with the opportunity to resit those examinations later in the 2020-21 academic year.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We are working with Ofqual, awarding organisations and other stakeholders to discuss the next steps and provide more detail on the way forward. We will put in place arrangements to ensure students are not disadvantaged.

We want to ensure that students who have worked hard to prepare for January assessments and exams have the opportunity to take them, if their school or college decides to go ahead.

In the event that is not possible, we will put in place arrangements to ensure they are treated fairly in comparison to their peers taking similar assessments and have a way to progress with as little disruption as possible.

We will continue to develop our approach in consultation with Ofqual, awarding organisations and the sector, providing more detail on the way forward for vocational exams and assessments for February 2021 onwards.

**■ Vocational Education: Coronavirus****Andrew Rosindell:****[134373]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support students taking vocational qualifications who are unable to complete coursework assessments as a result of colleges being closed during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Gillian Keegan:**

No student will be disadvantaged if they cannot take their exam or assessment.

In conjunction with Ofqual, we are currently consulting on alternative arrangements for the award of vocational and technical qualifications where exams and assessments do not take place or where students have been unable to attend:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-alternative-arrangements-for-the-award-of-vtqs-and-other-general-qualifications-in-2021>.

We are exploring how students who need to attend on site during the national lockdown in order to prepare for practical assessments due to be taken in February and March 2021 can do so, where it is impossible for this training to take place remotely.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ **Animal Products: UK Trade with EU**

**Dave Doogan:**

**[137309]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has received representations and information on businesses needing clarification of whether they require an EHC for exports to Northern Ireland and the EU which contain processed animal protein including milk products, gelatine, hydrolysed proteins, eggs, dicalcium phosphate and collagen; and whether he is taking steps to support those businesses.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra is in regular discussions with businesses on the Export Health Certificate (EHC) requirements for products sent to Northern Ireland and the EU which contain processed animal protein (PAP).

Mammalian PAP must have been processed in a region which is, under the international rules, in the negligible risk category for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). It must have been processed by pressure sterilisation (known as 'Method 1'). This means mammalian PAP products from Great Britain cannot be certified for export to Northern Ireland or the EU.

This issue was raised in our discussions with the EU last year and we continue to look at options to negotiate a position on trade.

We continue to hold discussions regularly with the rendering industry. We have worked with other countries to obtain additional export health certificates for PAP, meaning we were able to open markets for these products elsewhere.

### ■ **Boats: Repairs and Maintenance**

**Anne Marie Morris:**

**[136525]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether boat owners are permitted to visit their boats for essential (a) maintenance and (b) safety checks during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The coronavirus guidance published by jointly by the Departments for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, and Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (updated on 7 January 2021) provides that maintaining second homes, caravans, boats and other assets is not generally a reasonable excuse for leaving home. However, people may leave home to secure their second home, caravan or boat to secure their second home, in order to avoid it posing a risk of harm/injury to themselves or others.

Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) examiners can access boats in the course of professional activity to conduct safety examinations where these are necessary to renew or obtain a BSS certificate, akin to an MOT for a road vehicle. The BSS website (<https://www.boatsafetyscheme.org/requirements-examinations-certification/arranging-the-examination/>) sets out guidance on how to arrange a BSS examination within the current national covid restrictions, and where necessary boat owners should contact their navigation authority for further advice on this.

## ■ Cephalopods and Shellfish: Animal Welfare

**Kerry McCarthy:** [137154]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's timeframe is for the publication of the Review of the Evidence for Sentience in Decapod Crustaceans and Cephalopod Molluscs report.

**Victoria Prentis:**

LSE Consulting's draft report reviewing the evidence for sentience in decapod crustaceans and cephalopod molluscs was submitted to Defra in December 2020.

The report is currently being peer reviewed and will be finalised in light of peer review comments. Our intention is to publish the final report later this year.

## ■ Chemicals: Regulation

**Ruth Jones:** [134556]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the cost to the UK chemicals industry of the new UK REACH system.

**Ruth Jones:** [134557]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the new UK REACH system.

**Ruth Jones:** [134558]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the UK chemicals industry.

**Ruth Jones:** [134559]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the cost of sharing chemical data with the EU after the transition period.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The main costs to the GB chemicals industry in transitioning to UK REACH will result from obtaining the data needed to support registrations for the GB market. These costs will vary depending on the ease and extent to which the company in question can obtain the data, which will be a matter of commercial negotiation. We agree with industry that the costs may be substantial, though until business discussions to access REACH data start in earnest, we cannot firm up an estimate of the likely costs.

These costs could have been mitigated in part through an agreement with the EU on an arrangement to share EU REACH registration data held by the European Chemicals Agency. While the UK was successful in agreeing a chemicals annex as part of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement, the EU did not wish to progress the UK proposal on REACH registration data within that annex.

To help mitigate the costs of the transition to UK REACH we have recently extended the deadlines for businesses to provide the full registration data, allowing industry more time to adapt to the new compliance obligations and spread costs over a longer period

The cost to Government in establishing UK REACH includes establishing the new Comply with UK REACH service and putting in place the capacity in the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Environment Agency and Defra to operate the new regime. We anticipate spending around £20 million this financial year on the development, operation and maintenance of the REACH IT system and staff resourcing. Ministers from Defra, the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and HSE have an established forum for engagement with the chemicals sector through the Chemicals EU Exit and Trade Group, which meets on a regular basis. Defra has firmly established relationships with a large number of Trade Associations and industry representatives. We have closely engaged with industry throughout the development of UK REACH, listening to concerns and, where feasible, adapting policy in response in order to help manage the transition in a pragmatic way.

## ■ Dogs: Imports

**Ben Lake:**

[\[133108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to raise the minimum age for dogs to be imported into the UK from 15 weeks to six months after the transition period ends.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Now that the transition period has ended, we have the opportunity to manage our own rules applying to pet travel movements into Great Britain. We are listening to the concerns of stakeholders around future requirements and the Government is developing a range of options to ensure there are robust controls on disease and animal welfare while allowing pet owners to continue to be able to travel with the minimum of disruption.

## ■ Economic Situation: Rural Areas

**Selaine Saxby:**

[\[133305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to join up the work on the Biomass Strategy, the England Tree Strategy and development of the Agricultural Transition Plan to encourage tree planting and support rural economies.

**Rebecca Pow:**

There are many important interdependencies between our policies on trees, agriculture and biomass. Defra and BEIS are working closely in partnership to maximise the role of nature-based solutions to meet net zero and ensure that these strategies are mutually supportive.

- The England Tree Strategy will set out policies to deliver planting commitments, support nature recovery, protect and improve woodlands, and provide a source of employment, sustainable wood fibre and energy.
- The Biomass Strategy will set out the results of a review of the amount of sustainable biomass – including woody biomass - available in the UK, and how this could be best utilised across the economy to help achieve net zero.
- These strategies will set out long term priorities to be implemented alongside the Agricultural Transition, and the introduction of the Environmental Land Management scheme, which will support farmers, foresters and land managers to improve the environment, improve animal health and welfare, and reduce carbon emissions.

**■ Ella Kissi-Debrah****Ruth Jones:**[\[133177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he last spoke to the family of the late Ella Kissi-Debrah.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Our thoughts remain with Ella's family and friends. I will be meeting with Rosamund Kissi-Debrah to discuss air quality issues in the near future.

**■ Environment Protection: Coronavirus****Ruth Jones:**[\[133175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the economic recovery from the covid-19 outbreak aligns with the Government's long-term targets on climate and biodiversity.

**Rebecca Pow:**

While the world is rightly focussed on tackling the immediate threat of coronavirus, other great global challenges like climate change and biodiversity loss have not gone away. This government remains committed to being a world leader on tackling the environmental crises we face.

The government's work to conserve and enhance the environment is guided by two overarching objectives; the urgent need to reverse biodiversity loss, and our legally binding objective to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to Net Zero by 2050. Our ambitious 25 Year Environment Plan sets the overarching and long-term framework for much of this work, showing how we will improve the environment over a

generation; by creating richer habitats for wildlife, improving air and water quality, and curbing plastic in the world's oceans.

New measures announced in the 10 point-plan for a Green Industrial Revolution will help us deliver on this ambition. We will safeguard our cherished landscapes through the creation of new National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; create the equivalent of well over 30,000 football pitches of wildlife rich habitat through 10 Landscape Recovery projects over the next four years, and run a £40 million second round of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund to enable a range of nature conservation and restoration projects across England.

### ■ **Fishing Vessels: Territorial Waters**

**Henry Smith:**

[\[133781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to ban supertrawlers from UK waters.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Now that the transition period has ended, we are reviewing our policy on access for supertrawlers. This review will be driven by evidence. Under the Fisheries Act we have the powers to choose which vessels we license but our measures must comply with the UK/EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement which prohibits discrimination against individual vessels. Supertrawlers are mostly pelagic, operating mid-water, and do not make contact with the seabed.

Vessels permitted to fish in UK waters will have to be licensed and comply with UK rules and regulations including those on sustainability. Licence conditions set by UK Sea Fisheries Authorities will apply to both UK and foreign vessels alike.

### ■ **Floods**

**Daniel Kawczynski:**

[\[134384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what comparative assessment he has made of his Department's preparedness to respond to flooding in winter (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21 in (i) Shrewsbury and (ii) other places that experienced flooding in winter 2019-20.

**Rebecca Pow:**

In recent years, investment in defences has been effective at better protecting properties and reducing the impacts of flooding on people's lives and livelihoods. We have seen progressively fewer properties flooded following recent incidents, avoiding more damages to people, businesses, landowners and infrastructure than might otherwise have been. In England, during the winter 2019/20 approximately 4,600 properties were sadly flooded while 128,000 properties were better protected from flooding.

In the last 12 months, the Environment Agency (EA) has completed around 20,000 inspections of flood assets that were damaged in the winter 2019/20 floods. The EA has a prioritised programme of repairs based on risk to lives and livelihoods



underway. All of the flood defences damaged last year have either been repaired or have contingency plans in place to reduce the risk to their communities this winter.

Throughout the year, the EA has also continued to build and maintain flood risk management assets. The EA is on track to better protect 300,000 properties from flooding and coastal erosion between 2015 and 2021. Between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, the EA worked with other Risk Management Authorities to complete approximately 176 flood and coastal erosion risk management schemes which helped better protect approximately 45,400 homes from flooding and 3,200 homes from coastal erosion. The EA is working through the River Severn Partnership to address long-term resilience.

During the flooding at the end of December 2020, 692 metres of demountable defences were erected across the country, 672m of which were in the West Midlands. 723 metres of temporary barriers were erected, 423 metres of which were in the West Midlands. This meant that over 9,300 properties were protected from flooding, with over 3,700 being in the West Midlands. The majority of these were within the River Severn catchment.

The EA has continued to engage virtually with communities at risk of flooding during the Coronavirus pandemic, adapting its approach by sharing scheme updates and consulting with local residents in a safe way.

The EA's autumn Flood Action Campaign helped ensure that communities are better prepared and know how to check their flood risk with key messages around a three-point plan to PREPARE, ACT, SURVIVE. Over 1.4 million properties are signed up to receive free flood warnings.

Following the flooding in winter 2019/20 and again in February 2020 following storms Ciara and Dennis, the Government announced Property Flood Resilience (PFR) repair grants of up to £5,000 in affected areas to help eligible homes, charities and businesses become more flood resilient. The repair grants apply to those affected in district or unitary authorities that have 25 or more severely flooded properties.

The most recent figures (held by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government) show that 18 district or unitary councils with over 2300 properties are eligible in England for the November 2019 PFR repair scheme. Over 29 districts or unitary councils (including Shropshire Council, which includes Shrewsbury) with over 5000 properties are eligible in England for the February 2020 PFR repair scheme.

In recognition of the challenges created by the Coronavirus pandemic, both the 2019 and 2020 schemes have been extended by nine months to give homeowners and businesses more time to carry out repairs and local authorities a greater period to process the grants.

Local authorities on the November scheme now have until 31 December 2021 to recover their costs while local authorities on the February scheme have until 1 July 2022.

## ■ Food: Ports

**Daniel Zeichner:**

**[132939]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the amount of food that risks being wasted by delays at ports at the end of the transition period.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain and the food industry is well-equipped to respond to disruption as was demonstrated during the initial Covid-19 response. Defra has well established ways of working with the food industry on preparedness for and response to potential food supply chain disruptions.

The Government carried out a worst-case scenario analysis to ensure there was sufficient waste management capacity to handle any additional waste arising. Over a 6 month period the Reasonable Worst Case Scenario (RWCS) for perishable goods including food, feed and drink was 142 KT and to date disruption has been minimal. The UK Government also published on Gov.uk planning assumptions on border flows for imported goods at the end of the transition period.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/920675/RWCS\\_for\\_our\\_borders\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/920675/RWCS_for_our_borders_FINAL.pdf)

To support the smooth flow of produce across the border and help prevent food wastage, the Government has put in place traffic management mitigations such as Operation Brock, published a Border Operating Model which prioritises border flow in the early months of 2021, and worked with ports to provide additional inland sites for customs checks. The Government has also implemented a 'fast-track' service for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) arriving at the Kent border with a negative Covid-19 test worked closely with retailers to establish upstream testing to facilitate traffic flow.

## ■ Guide Dogs: Travel

**Catherine West:**

**[136578]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the rules are on guide dog owners travelling to the (a) EU and (b) Northern Ireland following the end of the transition period.

**Victoria Prentis:**

On 3 December 2020 the EU voted in favour of giving the UK Part 2 listed status for the purposes of non-commercial pet travel after the transition period. This listed status has now been formally adopted by the EU. Part 2 listed status means similar health requirements to travel to the EU as before the end of the transition period, but new documentation is required for pets and recognised assistance dogs. We are disappointed not to have been awarded Part 1 listed status for pet travel, as we are clear we meet all the requirements for this and have one of the most rigorous pet checking regimes in Europe to protect our biosecurity. We will continue to press the

EU commission on this matter, recognising that achieving this would alleviate some of these new requirements.

In order to travel to the EU and Northern Ireland, users of recognised assistance dogs must ensure that the dog meets the following requirements:

- It has been implanted with a microchip
- It has received a valid rabies vaccination
- It is accompanied by an animal health certificate unless the dog has been issued with a pet passport in an EU country or Northern Ireland
- It is accompanied by a written declaration regarding the non-commercial nature of the movement.
- It has received tapeworm treatment if travelling directly to Finland, Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Norway or Malta
- The pet will need to enter an EU country or Northern Ireland through a Travellers' Point of Entry (TPE) where the owner must contact the competent authority present for the purposes of the documentary and identity checks.

Passengers are also advised to contact the competent authority in the country they are travelling to for any additional restrictions or requirements before travel.

Defra has been proactively and positively engaging with the assistance dog community and relevant stakeholders on the impacts on dog movements to the EU after the end of the transition period. We will continue to closely work with assistance dog organisations to share the latest advice and guidance (in accessible formats) with their members on pet travel requirements.

## ■ Hemp

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[137274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of allowing hemp farming in the UK.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra will be commissioning a project on the potential use of underutilised, underdeveloped or novel crops, including hemp. We are also considering the role of hemp in the Bioeconomy and the opportunities this presents for UK farmers.

The provision to cultivate (under Home Office Licence) low THC Cannabis (industrial hemp) for seed and fibre production does already exist in the UK.

## ■ Nature Conservation: Finance

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[133172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to provide financial support to wildlife trusts and nature reserves whose income has reduced as a result of the Tier 4 covid-19 restrictions in England.

**Rebecca Pow:**

My department constantly keeps under review the financial health of Defra-related sectors, including in relation to how sectors are faring in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In December 2020, the Government announced the successful applicants to round 1 of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, which brought forward up to £40 million for environmental charities and their partners to kick-start a pipeline of nature-based projects while creating and retaining jobs in the sector. A list of the 68 successful projects can be found on the National Lottery Heritage Fund website.

The Government has committed a further £40 million to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund in 2021/22, and my department will be announcing further details of a second round in the coming weeks.

Environmental charities have also been able to benefit from wider government financial support for businesses during Covid-19, particularly the Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended until the end of April 2021.

**■ Neonicotinoids****Ben Lake:**[\[136034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the emergency authorisation of products containing neonicotinoid thiamethoxam.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The application for emergency authorisation of the neonicotinoid product Cruiser SB, containing thiamethoxam, was made in respect of use in England only, because there is no significant commercial sugar beet production elsewhere in the UK. This application was not discussed between Defra and the Welsh Government, but Welsh officials were kept informed of the application and the decision.

**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[137225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will publish the advice it received from (a) the Health and Safety Executive, (b) the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides and (c) his Department's Chief Scientific Adviser prior to making the decision to issue an emergency authorisation to use products containing neonicotinoids to treat sugar beet seed in 2021.

**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[137226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what advice and information his Department received from (a) the Health and Safety Executive, (b) the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides and (c) his Department's Chief Scientific Adviser which led him to conclude that the application for an emergency authorisation to use products containing neonicotinoids to treat sugar beet seed in 2021 should be granted.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The process for considering emergency authorisation for a pesticide is derived from the legislation and includes consideration of potential risks to people and to the environment. This process was followed for an application to use the neonicotinoid seed treatment Cruiser SB on sugar beet in 2021. The Secretary of State decided that the criteria for an emergency application have been met and that the application should be granted to protect the 2021 crop from significant yield losses. His decision was informed by assessments and advice from the Health and Safety Executive, the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) and Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser.

The ECP publishes the minutes of its discussions, and its advice on the Cruiser SB application is contained in the minutes from the 24 November 2020 meeting [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/946083/ecp-201124-fullminutes.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/946083/ecp-201124-fullminutes.pdf). Other advice on pesticide authorisations is not normally published.

**■ Peat Bogs: Fires****Ruth Jones:****[133188]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the scope of legislative proposals needed to end the burning of important peatland habitats.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government is committed to phasing out rotational burning on protected blanket bog. We recognise the debate on both sides, and we are considering all the evidence to ensure that any legislation is effective. The considerations are complex, and it is important that we take the right steps to restore and protect this valuable habitat.

We do recognise that there will sometimes be circumstances where vegetation management is necessary and where burning may be the only practicable technique available and we will consider the views of landowners, managers and other stakeholders when assessing the scope of any future restrictions.

**■ Pets: Northern Ireland****Patrick Grady:****[137233]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the financial cost to pet owners making multiple trips between Northern Ireland and Scotland, England or Wales of having to obtain a new animal health certificate on each journey.

**Victoria Prentis:**

For the purposes of the EU Pet Travel Scheme, Great Britain and the Crown Dependencies are considered a Part 2 listed third country which requires an Animal Health Certificate (AHC) for travel to the EU. Under the Northern Ireland Protocol, EU rules also apply to the non-commercial movements of pets into Northern Ireland from

Great Britain. As such, an AHC is required when travelling to NI from Scotland, England or Wales.

The cost of completing and certifying pet travel documentation, including AHC, is set by individual veterinary practices.

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[137234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the validity of animal health certificates for those travelling between Northern Ireland and Scotland, England or Wales to (a) allow multiple trips and (b) allow more than ten days before travel.

**Victoria Prentis:**

For the purposes of the EU Pet Travel Scheme, Great Britain and the Crown Dependencies are considered a Part 2 listed third country which requires an Animal Health Certificate (AHC) for travel to the EU. Under the Northern Ireland Protocol, EU rules also apply to the non-commercial movements of pets into Northern Ireland from Great Britain. As such, an AHC is required when travelling to NI from Scotland, England or Wales.

The model AHC is set down in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 577/2013 and it states that the certificate is valid for 10 days from the date of issue until the date of entry into the Union, and that it is valid for onward travel within the Union for a period of four months subject to certain conditions. Great Britain cannot unilaterally choose to amend the conditions specified on this certificate.

## ■ **Plastics: Waste**

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[137253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason the Government has opted not to adopt EU regulations banning the export of plastic waste to non-OECD countries; and what assessment he has made of the effect of that matter on the Government's wider commitment not to regress on environmental standards after the UK left the EU.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal agreed in May 2019 to introduce tighter controls on the shipment of plastic waste following the submission of a reform proposal by the Norwegian government.

In implementing the amendments made to the Convention the European Union has prohibited the export of one category of plastic waste, consisting of highly mixed plastics, to countries that are not members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The UK Government's manifesto commitment to ban plastic waste exports to non-OECD countries goes further than this as it is not limited to one category of plastic waste. Defra will consult on going beyond the Basel Convention requirements, and the approach adopted by the EU,

and work is underway to make this happen. The UK is not regressing on environmental standards in this area. We were a strong supporter of the changes made to the Basel Convention to make shipments of plastic waste more transparent and better regulated and we worked closely with the Norwegian government in developing the original proposals.

The UK government has implemented the amendments made to the Basel Convention. These amendments came into force in Great Britain on 1 January 2021 and will ensure that shipments of highly mixed plastic wastes can only take place if permission is obtained from the regulators in the country of dispatch and destination. Furthermore, the Government is currently engaged in contacting all non-OECD countries to enquire about the local controls that should be adhered to by British exporters when they propose to export sorted plastic waste for recycling. The results of this consultation will be implemented in our legislation shortly.

#### ■ River Severn: Flood Control

**Daniel Kawczynski:**

**[134383]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what physical steps have been taken to tackle flooding along the River Severn since January 2020.

**Rebecca Pow:**

I refer the hon. Member to the replies previously given on 1 October 2020 for [PQ 94381](#), 9 October 2020 for [PQ 97520](#), 9 October 2020 for [PQ 97519](#), 16 October 2020 for [PQ 100332](#) and 24 November 2020 for [PQ 115549](#).

#### ■ Slaughterhouses: Finance

**Anne Marie Morris:**

**[137214]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of offering Government funding to support the (a) establishment of and (b) operation of existing small abattoirs.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra recognises the contribution that small abattoirs make to local supply chains and that there are animal welfare benefits in shorter journey times to slaughter.

The Government is currently funding one mobile abattoir project through the Rural Development Programme for England as part of the Growth Programme. The project is farmer led and is due to be operational in early Summer 2021.

We are also exploring potential opportunities under the Agriculture Act to fund small abattoirs as part of wider agricultural funding mechanisms currently in development. Small abattoirs will need to demonstrate a viable business model and meet the needs of the market.



## ■ Zoo Animals Fund

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[133868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to extend the Zoo Animals Fund beyond 29 January 2021; and whether that fund is planned to be made more accessible to large zoos and aquariums.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Zoo Animal Fund remains open for applications until 29 January 2021 and provides support up until the end of March 2021. We are considering whether an extension to this application deadline may be possible. The Zoo Animals Fund is an envelope of funding to provide for zoos who, due to a coronavirus-related drop in income are experiencing severe financial difficulties and need support in caring for their animals between now and the start of the next peak visitor season, which is normally around Easter time. If zoos are downsizing or rehoming their collection the fund can also provide support for this to ensure the animals' welfare. To make the Fund even more accessible we expanded the eligibility criteria so that grant payments to zoos begin when zoos reach their final 12 weeks of financial reserves, rather than 6 weeks, and so that zoos can apply for funding at any time before reaching this 12 week point to help with their business planning.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

## ■ Bosnia: Refugees

**Catherine West:**

[\[137262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with (a) his Bosnian counterpart and (b) the EU on the conditions facing refugees in Bosnia.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK government recognises the challenges faced by the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in dealing with migration flows but is concerned by the humanitarian situation faced by refugees, particularly in winter conditions. Following the fire that devastated the Lipa temporary migrant camp in December 2020, the UK has again urged BiH authorities to take urgent steps to ensure appropriate shelter is available for migrants.

The UK continues to coordinate with international partners, including the EU, to help BiH meet its humanitarian responsibilities and assist the migrants and refugees present in the country. In 2019, the UK provided £565,000 of bilateral funding to support communities and authorities in BiH hosting migrants and refugees.

Our Embassy in Sarajevo regularly raises the challenges associated with migration with the relevant authorities in BiH, and we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

**■ China: Turkey****Shabana Mahmood:**[\[134398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made representations to Turkish officials on the treatment of Uighur Muslims in China and the implications of the Treaty of Extradition between Turkey and China.

**Nigel Adams:**

Her Majesty's Government diplomatic engagement and Overseas Development Assistance programmes support Turkey's ongoing efforts to assist its migrants and refugees in a way that respects their welfare and human rights. On 13 January, we raised the Turkey-China Treaty of Extradition with the Turkish authorities and received assurances that safeguards were in place for those affected.

**■ China: Uighurs****Shabana Mahmood:**[\[134399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to make representations to international bodies on the effect of Chinese extradition treaties with other nations on Uighur Muslims who have fled persecution from China.

**Nigel Adams:**

We have repeatedly called on countries to respect the obligation of not forcing persons to return to a country where there are substantial grounds for believing that the person would be in danger of fundamental rights violations, and will continue to do so. The UK will continue to take a global leadership role in standing up for the rights of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang.

**■ Commonwealth: Diplomatic Service****Wayne David:**[\[137141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what consular assistance arrangements his Department has with embassies and consulates of Commonwealth countries in (a) Andorra, (b) Benin, (c) Burkina Faso, (d) Cape Verde, (e) Central African Republic, (f) Comoros, (g) Congo, (h) Djibouti, (i) Dominica, (j) East Timor, (k) Equatorial Guinea, (l) Gabon, (m) Guinea-Bissau, (n) Honduras, (o) Liechtenstein, (p) Monaco, (q) Nicaragua, (r) San Marino, (s) St Kitts and Nevis, (t) Suriname, (u) Togo and (v) Tonga.

**Nigel Adams:**

We provide help and support to British nationals around the world 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, through our network of trained staff, including our network of over 200 Honorary Consuls

([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/909020/Honorary\\_Consulates\\_August\\_2020.csv](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/909020/Honorary_Consulates_August_2020.csv)/preview). British nationals in these countries who require Consular assistance can contact the

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office 24/7 for help or advice by calling 0207 008 5000, or contacting their nearest British embassy, High Commission or Consulate (<https://www.gov.uk/world/embassies>).

In one of the few countries where there is no British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate, we may provide in country support via agreements with partner countries, and/or existing coverage from FCDO posts in neighbouring countries.

Commonwealth embassies may offer to help British nationals. We may also help Commonwealth nationals in non-Commonwealth countries where they do not have diplomatic or consular representation, but will normally ask their nearest embassy to provide any ongoing assistance required.

Details of the remit of our consular support are set out in Support for British Nationals Abroad: A Guide

([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/914039/FCO\\_BritsAbroad\\_A4web\\_020920.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/914039/FCO_BritsAbroad_A4web_020920.pdf)).

## ■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

**Helen Hayes:**

**[137252]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on poverty rates in the global south; and what discussions he is having with international partners on that matter.

**Wendy Morton:**

COVID-19 is likely to have resulted in over 140 million additional people living in extreme poverty - around 2 per cent of the global population - and many more will have temporarily fallen below the poverty line. This is a seven-year reversal in progress to reduce poverty.

The UK is at the forefront of the international response, committing up to £1.3 billion of new ODA to counter the health, economic, and humanitarian impacts, and to support the global effort to find and equitably distribute a vaccine.

The UK has prioritised engagement with our international partners to encourage a more coordinated and inclusive response - for example, playing a leading role in securing agreement of the new G20 Finance Action Plan and suspending all debt repayments for the poorest and most vulnerable countries until the end of June 2021. Just this month, the Foreign Secretary held discussions with the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund on the COVID-19 response.

We will continue to engage with our international partners at all levels and use our Presidencies of the G7 and COP26 to drive a sustainable, inclusive and green recovery from COVID-19.

■ **Embassies: Staff****Lisa Nandy:**[\[130710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 14 December 2020 to Question 126854 on Embassies: Staff, how many UK-based staff there are in each UK embassy in each EU Member State, by headcount band.

**Nigel Adams:**

For security reasons, the FCDO provides headcount detail in bands. The FCDO was formed on 2nd September 20, with Legacy Departments continuing to use legacy systems for recording staff locations in the interim. People in former DFID roles are recorded at Country level with no ability to report at Post level currently available. Therefore the data provided is at Country level only.

As at 31st October 2020, the UK based headcount band for each Country in Europe is set out in the table below.

Data does not include Posts where there is no UKB presence, or Posts in Eastern Europe.

COUNTRY/TERRITORY	FCDO HEADCOUNT AT 31ST OCTOBER 2020
Albania	Fewer than 10
Austria	Fewer than 10
Belgium	10 to 19
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Fewer than 10
Bulgaria	Fewer than 10
Croatia	Fewer than 10
Cyprus	10 to 19
Czech Republic	Fewer than 10
Denmark	Fewer than 10
Estonia	Fewer than 10
Finland	Fewer than 10
France	30-39
Germany	20-29
Greece	Fewer than 10
Holy See	Fewer than 10

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COUNTRY/TERRITORY	FCDO HEADCOUNT AT 31ST OCTOBER 2020
Hungary	Fewer than 10
Iceland	Fewer than 10
Ireland	10 to 19
Italy	10 to 19
Kosovo	Fewer than 10
Latvia	10 to 19
Lithuania	Fewer than 10
Luxembourg	Fewer than 10
Malta	Fewer than 10
Montenegro	Fewer than 10
Netherlands	10 to 19
North Macedonia	Fewer than 10
Norway	Fewer than 10
Poland	10 to 19
Portugal	Fewer than 10
Romania	Fewer than 10
Serbia	10 to 19
Slovakia	Fewer than 10
Slovenia	Fewer than 10
Spain	10 to 19
Sweden	10 to 19
Switzerland	10 to 19
Turkey	20-29
Turkey	10 to 19

**■ Hassan Mushaima****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[137255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Bahraini counterpart on the continued detention and wellbeing of Hasan Mushaima.

**James Cleverly:**

We continue to monitor the case of Hassan Mushaima and have raised the case at senior levels with the Bahraini Government. The Government of Bahrain has been clear in public statements that access to medical care for those in detention is guaranteed by the Constitution of Bahrain. Any concerns regarding the treatment of Mr Mushaima should be submitted to the Independent Ombudsman and the National Institute of Human Rights for further investigation.

**■ Mohammed bin Salman****Ian Mearns:**[\[136503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of whether Prince Mohammed Bin Salman and the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia are separate entities for the purposes of investment in the UK.

**James Cleverly:**

The Department has not made an assessment. The Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia publishes information on its role and governance online.

**■ Saudi Arabia: Political Prisoners****Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[136476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of working with the Biden Administration to encourage Saudi Arabia to release (a) Prince Turki Bin Abdullah, (b) human rights activists Loujain al-Hathloul and (c) other political detainees.

**Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[136478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last made representations to his Saudi counterpart on the cases of (a) Prince Turki Bin Abdullah, (b) Prince Mohammed Bin Nayef and (c) other political detainees and women's rights activists including Loujain al-Hathloul.

**James Cleverly:**

Our close relationship with Saudi Arabia allows us to raise our concerns about human rights, including on political detainees, in private and in public. We raise concerns about individual cases regularly, using a range of Ministerial and diplomatic channels, including our Embassy in Riyadh. The UK signed a statement at the UN Human Rights Council on 15 September 2020. It noted our human rights concerns in Saudi Arabia, regretted the continued detention of at least five women's human rights

defenders arrested in 2018, and called for the release of all political detainees. We continue to raise concerns at all levels and are monitoring the situation closely.

The Prime Minister spoke to President-elect Biden on 10 November to congratulate him. They discussed the close and longstanding relationship between our countries and committed to building on this partnership in the years ahead. The Prime Minister and President-elect also looked forward to working closely together on their shared priorities, from tackling climate change, to promoting democracy, and building back better from the coronavirus pandemic.

**Mr Virendra Sharma:**

[\[136477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for International Trade on the potential merits of ensuring that the release of uncharged political detainees and fair, transparent trials for those charged are conditions for agreeing free trade deals with Saudi Arabia.

**James Cleverly:**

We remain concerned over the continued detention of a number of individuals in Saudi Arabia, particularly those detained because of their political views. We raise concerns regularly and continue to call for political detainees to be given adequate legal representation. The UK signed a statement at the UN Human Rights Council on 15 September 2020 that called for the release of all political detainees. At the current time, the UK is not negotiating a free trade deal with Saudi Arabia.

## ■ **USA: Civil Disorder**

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[136626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his US counterpart on the storming of the US Capitol on 6 January 2021.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Foreign Secretary has conveyed to the US Administration the UK's shock at the events in the Capitol on 6 January.

The UK Government condemns the scenes at Congress. There is no justification for violent attempts to frustrate the lawful and proper transition of power.

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[137322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions (a) he and (b) his Department have had with President-elect Biden's administration on the events which took place at the Capitol on 6 January 2021.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have publicly stated their position on the shocking events at the Capitol on 6 January 2021. Officials at the British Embassy in Washington are in regular contact with senior Democrats and have amplified the concerns expressed by the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary.



**■ USA: Foreign Relations**

**Helen Hayes:** [\[137251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent engagement the Government has had with the incoming Biden administration on UK-US joint priorities.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Prime Minister spoke with President-Elect Biden on 10 November to congratulate him on his election victory. They looked forward to strengthening the partnership between our countries and to working on our shared priorities - from tackling climate change, to promoting democracy and building back better from the COVID pandemic.

**■ Xinjiang: Conflict Prevention**

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** [\[136556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether an Early Warning Mechanism using Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability has been triggered for Xinjiang.

**Nigel Adams:**

Her Majesty's Government has not conducted a Joint Assessment of Conflict and Stability on Xinjiang. We keep the human rights situation there under constant review, regularly raising our concerns directly with the Chinese authorities. We track and assess developments in Xinjiang closely, including through speaking to independent experts, consulting with partners and regular visits to the region by British diplomats in order to observe the situation first hand, most recently in October 2020.

**■ Yemen: Humanitarian Aid**

**Gill Furniss:** [\[137268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect British NGO's importing life-saving goods into Yemen from potential legal repercussions following the US Administration's designation of the Houthis as a terrorist group.

**James Cleverly:**

Following the US Administration's decision to designate the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation, we have urged the US ensure that the international humanitarian response, commercial imports and UN peace efforts are able to continue. We welcome the US commitment to work with the UN, NGOs and donors to address the implications for humanitarian activity and imports into Yemen. We await the release of full legal documentation of the designation framework, which will allow us to more fully understand its impact.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Ambulance Services: Yorkshire and the Humber****Jon Trickett:**[\[134352\]](#)

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

**Edward Argar:**

The Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust has confirmed that there were 62 stations in 2010 and in 2020.

**■ Boston Consulting Group: Contracts****Caroline Lucas:**[\[104712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons Boston Consulting Group (BCG) was chosen as a contractor to conduct consultancy work on test and trace; on what date the contract was signed; whether it was signed under special pandemic powers that bypass normal tendering processes; what the value is of the BCG contract; what the process was for agreeing the day rates in that contract; whether he plans to publish the BCG contract in line with Government procurement rules that Departments must publish a contract award notice within 30 days of agreement; and if he will make a statement.

**Helen Whately:**

Boston Consultancy Group are an approved supplier on the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework contract. They gained their place on the framework through fair and open competition via an Official Journal of the European Union procurement. Value for money and capability were part of the assessment criteria. The contract award date was 24 April 2020 and the contract start date was 27 April 2020.

The pay rates of individual consultants engaged from each supplier is commercially sensitive information. Payment rates are as per the CCS rate card with discounts attained depending on value and length of role. All the Departmental COVID-19 contracts are published on the GOV.UK Contract Finder Service, which contains information on the award criteria for each individual contract.

**■ Care Homes: Coronavirus****Barbara Keeley:**[\[109250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his contribution of 19 October 2020, Official report, column 790, what steps he is taking to ensure that visits to care homes are not suspended in Tier (a) 2 and (b) 3 covid-19 restriction areas.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 4 November 2020]:* We recognise how important it is to allow care home residents to safely meet their loved ones. On 5 November we published

guidance to enable COVID-19 secure visits to take place for care home residents while national restrictions were in place. This guidance was intended to enable providers, supported by local professionals, families and the wider community, to provide appropriate visiting opportunities, that balance these important benefits against the continued priority of preventing infections to protect staff and residents.

On 1 December we published new guidance for care home visiting following the November period of national restrictions, enabling indoor visits to take place provided a visitor had a negative COVID-19 test combined with infection prevention and control precautions.

On 19 December tier 4 was introduced which restricted visiting to the same basis as the November national restrictions, given the increased prevalence of the virus in tier 4 areas.

On 6 January the current national lockdown began. We updated our guidance on 12 January. For this period, visiting is restricted to outdoor visiting and screened visits. Visits in exceptional circumstances including end of life should always be enabled.

Recognising the importance of visiting for the wellbeing of residents and those who visit them, we will work to enable more visits as soon as it is safe to do so.

**Holly Mumby-Croft:**

**[113273]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department will take to help maintain contact between social care residents and their families while care homes are unable to facilitate in-person visits during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

We recognise how important it is to allow care home residents to safely meet their loved ones, especially for those at the end of their lives. We appreciate the particular challenges visiting restrictions pose for people with dementia, people with learning disabilities and autistic adults, amongst others, as well as for their loved ones. On 5 November we published guidance to enable COVID-19-secure visits to take place for care home residents while national restrictions are in place.

We recognise that in certain circumstances, such as where there is an outbreak of COVID-19, care providers may not be able to facilitate in person visits. We have previously announced that up to 11,000 iPad tablets, worth £7.5 million, will be distributed to thousands of care homes across England to help residents keep in touch with loved ones and to reduce the risk of infection from people going into homes as coronavirus cases continue to rise.

## ■ Care Homes: Insurance

**Tim Loughton:**

**[114754]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what representations he has received from charitable residential care homes on difficulties they have experienced whilst insuring their voluntary trustees for public liability in the event of a communicable disease, such as covid-19.

**Helen Whately:**

We are aware that the adult social care insurance market is changing in response to the pandemic and recognise that some care providers may encounter difficulties as their policies come up for renewal. We have heard from a small number of charities working in the care sector about challenges with insurance and possible implications for their trustees. We continue to work closely with insurance representatives and care providers to better understand the breadth and severity of such issues, and whether there is any action the Government should take.

**Care Homes: Visits****Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[110108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to support care homes to enable them to offer safe visits to family carers.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 5 November 2020]:* Throughout the pandemic we have sought to ensure care home residents have been able to receive visits where it has been possible to do so safely. We have also acted quickly to protect vulnerable residents where it has been necessary, while still ensuring that visiting could continue to take place in some form.

We have regularly revised our guidance and have worked closely with the care home provider sector, public health professionals and others to support the effective implementation of the guidance. We have also supported care homes with the rollout of rapid lateral flow testing and personal protective equipment throughout December 2020 to enable more meaningful visits in tiers 1-3.

Unfortunately, in response to the new variant and rising population infection rates, it has been necessary from 6 January 2021 to enter a further period of national restrictions. We have again updated our guidance to make clear that visits to care homes can still take place with arrangements such as substantial screens, visiting pods, or behind windows. Close-contact indoor visits are not allowed.

No visits, other than exceptional circumstances such as end of life, will be permitted in the event of an outbreak. This is due to the increased prevalence of COVID-19 in communities and the consequent risk to care home residents.

Recognising the importance of visiting for the wellbeing of residents and those who visit them we will work to enable more visiting in care homes as soon as it is safe to do so.

**Holly Mumby-Croft:**[\[127035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) support and (b) guidance is available for family members wishing to visit care home residents where the care homes has been repeatedly in periods of lockdown due to covid-19 outbreaks.

**Helen Whately:**

We recognise how important it is to allow care home residents to meet their loved ones safely, especially for those at the end of their lives. In the face of a new variant of the virus, we have acted to protect those most at risk in care homes and ensure visits can go ahead safely in some form.

As set out in the national lockdown guidance, visits to care homes can continue to take place with arrangements such as outdoor visiting, substantial screens, visiting pods, or behind windows. Close-contact indoor visits are not currently allowed.

In the event of an outbreak, all movements in and out of a setting should be minimised as far as possible and limited to exceptional circumstances only, such as to visit a friend or a relative at the end of their life. Visits in exceptional circumstances including end of life should always be supported and enabled. This is about finding the right balance between the benefits of visiting on wellbeing and quality of life and the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to vulnerable residents.

We will publish updated guidance when the period of national lockdown ends.

**Bill Esterson:**[\[136510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to update the guidance on visiting care home residents following the administering of the (a) first and (b) second dose of the covid-19 vaccine to (i) care home residents and (ii) their visitors.

**Helen Whately:**

We recognise how important it is to allow care homes residents to meet their loved ones safely, especially for those at the end of their lives. We appreciate the particular challenges visiting restrictions pose for people with dementia, people with learning disabilities and autistic adults, amongst others, as well as for their loved ones.

Guidance documents are informed by expert advice before publication to ensure that they are based on the latest evidence. As the COVID-19 vaccine deployment continues, we will review and update the care homes visiting guidance in line with the latest evidence.

**■ Carers: Coronavirus****Rachael Maskell:**[\[133037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support he has made available to unpaid carers during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Rachael Maskell:**[\[133038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the mental health of unpaid young carers.

**Rachael Maskell:**[\[133039\]](#)

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 unpaid carers.

**Helen Whately:**

The Government recognises the vital role of all unpaid carers play during the pandemic, and we are working with carers organisations to assess and understand their needs and how best to support them.

We have:

- provided funding to Carers UK to extend their support phoneline;
- provided funding to Carers Trust to make onward grants to provide support to unpaid carers experiencing loneliness during the pandemic;
- produced a leaflet to help carers identify themselves on discharge from hospital;
- published guidance specifically for carers and young carers, which includes further information about sources of support including looking after their own health and wellbeing;
- funded the See, Hear, Respond service, delivered by Barnardo's to provides rapid support to children, young people and families who are affected by COVID-19 and includes a dedicated young carers hub with helpful resources;
- worked with the Social Care Institute for Excellence to publish guidance on reopening day services which we know provide important respite to carers; and
- ensured unpaid carers can continue to claim Carer's Allowance if they need to self-isolate and recognised time providing emotional support as part of the 35 hours a week Carers Allowance care threshold.

**■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing****Philip Davies:****[100316]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many staff or consultants involved in the NHS Test and Trace programme are being paid (a) up to £25,000, (b) between £25,001 and £50,000, (c) between £50,001 and £75,000, (d) between £75,001 and £100,000, (e) between £100,001 and £150,000, (f) between £150,001 and £200,000 and (g) over £200,000 per annum or the equivalent amount pro rata.

**Helen Whately:**

The names of senior civil servants and senior officials in departments, agencies and non-departmental public bodies earning £150,000 and above as of 30 September is published annually on GOV.UK. Information on staff below this level is not held in the format requested.

The pay rates of individual consultants engaged from each supplier is commercially sensitive.

**■ Coronavirus: Disease Control****Esther McVey:** [\[112048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of the UK population who had some level of resistance to covid-19 before the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

There is no current estimate of the level of resistance to COVID-19 across the United Kingdom population. Government-funded research is ongoing to understand immunity to the virus.

**Esther McVey:** [\[112050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the proportion of the UK population who remain susceptible to covid-19 infection.

**Helen Whately:**

The proportion of people in the United Kingdom who are susceptible to COVID-19 is unknown at present. Government-funded research is ongoing to understand immunity to the virus.

**Jon Trickett:** [\[133702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average case rate is per 100,000 that is required for a region to be moved from Tier 3 covid level restrictions to Tier 2.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Public Health England, the Joint Biosecurity Centre and NHS Test and Trace constantly monitor the levels of infection and other data on prevalence of the virus across the country to inform the local action committee decision-making process including allocation of tiers. Decisions on which area is allocated to which tier of COVID-19 level restrictions are primarily based on five key epidemiological indicators: - case detection rates in all age groups; - case detection rates in the over 60 year olds; - the rate at which cases are rising or falling; - positivity rate or the number of positive cases detected as a percentage of tests taken; and - pressure on the National Health Service, including current and projected occupancy.

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



**Emma Hardy:**

**[134535]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's guidance is on provision of informal childcare by people who are clinically extremely vulnerable providing during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

**Jo Churchill:**

As a result of the current national lockdown, all clinically extremely vulnerable individuals have been asked to follow shielding guidance to lower the risk of contracting COVID-19.

During this period 'childcare bubbles' are allowed to continue, which permits one household to link with one other household to provide informal childcare to anyone under 14 years old. However, whilst shielding is in place nationally those considered clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to take part in childcare bubbles, to limit their risk of infection.

## ■ **Coronavirus: Funerals**

**Luke Pollard:**

**[134552]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on whether funeral directors have a heightened risk of contracting covid-19 from the bodies of deceased covid-19 patients.

**Jo Churchill:**

Public Health England has published guidance for the care of the deceased with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 which includes guidance for funeral directors. This suggests that those handling bodies should be aware that there is likely to be a continuing risk of infection from body fluids and tissues where infection is suspected or confirmed. While the risk of infectious transmission is lower than for living patients, action should be taken to mitigate that risk. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased/guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19>

## ■ **Coronavirus: Hospital Beds**

**Harriett Baldwin:**

**[136512]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department collects on the length of time covid-19 patients spend in (a) regular and (b) intensive care hospital beds.

**Edward Argar:**

The information requested is not collected centrally.

**■ Coronavirus: Hospitals**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[135998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what catering and refreshment facilities have been made available for staff at each of the NHS Nightingale Hospitals.

**Edward Argar:**

The catering and refreshment facilities provided will differ depending on the size and location of the Nightingale hospital. For both staff and patients, the food and refreshments provided is consistent with existing NHS services as set out in current guidance and the NHS Standard Contract.

**■ Coronavirus: Laboratories**

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** [\[91130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) value and (b) cost is of the contracts to run the Lighthouse Laboratories; and what the planned duration is of those contracts.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 21 September 2020]:* Due to the commercially sensitive nature of these contracts, the Department is unable to provide specific details.

**■ Coronavirus: Leicestershire**

**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[134604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support community pharmacies in Leicestershire with the roll-out of covid-19 vaccinations.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Community pharmacies providing the COVID-19 vaccination, regardless of their location in England, will be eligible for support in the form of training, funding for the service including fee per vaccination, additional venue hire costs and pre-agreed one off set up costs and non-monetary support - for example, access to vaccines, consumables, personal protective equipment and other equipment to operate the site.

**■ Coronavirus: Schools**

**Apsana Begum:** [\[131502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support the Government is providing to people who are told to isolate by their children's school and who are not eligible to access the Test and Trace Support Payment.

**Helen Whately:**

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

members will also need to self-isolate and will be able to claim under the scheme, provided they meet the other eligibility criteria.

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

## ■ Coronavirus: Screening

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[124320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2020 to Question 71905 on Coronavirus: Screening, how many of the covid-19 tests mailed to care home residents with symptoms received a result of any kind.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 7 December 2020]:* The Department does not routinely publish information on the number of care home residents who have been tested for COVID-19 at present. However, we are exploring the feasibility of including this information as part of the NHS Test and Trace statistics publications in the near future.

**Fiona Bruce:**

[\[90110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the closure of a covid-19 testing centre is communicated to people travelling to attend a pre-booked test at that centre in (a) England and (b) Congleton constituency.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 21 September 2020]:* When we are alerted to a site closure /change we will send out a SMS message to all people who have a booked test via the portal. If a testing site reports that it must close due circumstances, we offer an alternative nearby testing centre if slots are available, or we will ask people to rebook their test.

**Stella Creasy:**

[\[96885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2020 to Question 89690 on Coronavirus: Screening, what the performance standards are that Lighthouse Labs is expected to meet under the terms of its contract relating to its involvement in the provision of covid-19 testing.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 5 October 2020]:* All our contracts with Lighthouse Laboratories are constantly monitored against set criteria to ensure that the supplier is meeting expectations. We are unable to provide specific details of these contracts as they are commercially sensitive.

**■ Coronavirus: Supported Housing****Sir Desmond Swayne:**[\[135787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will extend PCR covid-19 testing supported living homes for adults with learning difficulties on the same basis as is provided to residential care homes; and if he will make a statement.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 14 January 2021]:* In December 2020 we launched regular weekly PCR testing for staff and monthly for residents in the most high-risk extra care and supported living settings. Eligible settings must meet both of the following criteria - a closed community with substantial facilities shared between multiple people and where most residents receive the kind of personal care that is regulated by the Care Quality Commission, rather than help with cooking, cleaning and shopping. These criteria were set in consultation with the sector to identify settings most similar to care homes, and most at risk of an outbreak.

**■ Coronavirus: Vaccination****Steve Reed:**[\[121262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for the participation of local authorities in the roll-out of covid-19 vaccines.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

*[Holding answer 1 December 2020]:* Local authorities will play a vital role, working together with the National Health Service and local care providers, to ensure we make the best possible use of initial supplies of the vaccine. The NHS has identified Senior Responsible Officers to link local authorities and the social care system. The Government will continue to support councils and will ensure everyone who has been clinically prioritised to receive a vaccine will have access as soon as possible.

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**[\[128631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to ensure that healthcare workers have the covid-19 inoculation.

**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. In phase one of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, the JCVI has advised that prioritisation is specifically targeted to protect health and social care staff and systems, as well as to protect those individuals most at risk of mortality from COVID-19.

Healthcare workers have therefore been included in one of the top priority cohorts, as well as care home residents and staff and those over 80 years old.

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

[\[128632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the covid-19 inoculation will be compulsory for (a) healthcare workers and (b) the public.

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[128724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to make the covid-19 vaccination mandatory.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Whilst vaccinations are one of the most effective methods to protect the public from illness and possible death caused by viruses and disease, there are no plans to make COVID-19 vaccinations mandatory. The United Kingdom operates a system of informed consent.

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

[\[128633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the public receive the covid-19 inoculation once it is available to each demographic.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation has advised that the first phase of the COVID-19 vaccination programme should prioritise individuals most at risk of mortality and protect health and social care staff and systems. As a result, vaccines are currently being given to care home residents and staff, followed by people over 80 years old and health and social workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and risk.

To ensure the public can receive the vaccine, the National Health Service, alongside local health and social care partners, has developed three different delivery models appropriate to the varying infrastructure, population, and logistical requirements in place. This will allow the vaccine to become available to a wider population through hospital hubs, vaccination centres, and local vaccination services.

**Henry Smith:**

[\[128926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how clinically extremely vulnerable people will be identified for the purposes of covid-19 vaccination.

**Henry Smith:**

[\[128927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to invite clinically extremely vulnerable people for covid-19 vaccination.

**Henry Smith:**

[\[128929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to identify clinically extremely vulnerable people who are at high risk from covid-19 but who cannot receive vaccines for clinical reasons; and what steps he will take to notify those individuals.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The vaccine prioritisation is focussing on those most at risk of mortality and morbidity, beginning with care home residents and staff, people over 80 years old and frontline health and social care workers. People who are defined as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) are considered to be at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Many individuals considered as CEV are in the oldest age groups and so will be called for vaccination as part of their age cohort. However, for those that are not captured by their age group, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation also advises that, given the level of risk seen in the CEV group as a whole, the remainder of the group should be offered vaccine alongside those 70-74 years of age. People will receive an invitation to come forward to receive their vaccination, in the form of a letter either from their general practitioner (GP) or the national booking system. This will include all the information they need, including their National Health Service number.

Anyone who is in the CEV group and for whom the vaccine is contraindicated, will instead have a consultation with their GP or another clinician responsible for their care when it would be their time to be vaccinated.

**Sarah Owen:****[130231]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been vaccinated against covid-19 (a) by 14 December 2020 and (b) to date.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

*[Holding answer 11 January 2021]:* On Wednesday 16 December the Government released provisional figures which showed at least 137,897 people received the first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine by the end of Tuesday 15 December. Further information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-than-137000-people-in-uk-receive-first-dose-of-covid-vaccine-in-one-week>

Data published by NHS England shows that by the week ending 17 January 2021, 3,857,266 people had received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

The latest COVID-19 vaccination data is available here:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/>

**Jon Trickett:****[133696]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the locations are of the GP surgeries that are administering the covid-19 vaccine.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

As of 10 January 2021, 785 local vaccination services were available to administer the vaccine. The designated site names and regions of these services and their associated clinical commissioning groups can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/hospital-hubs-and-local-vaccination-services/>

**Julian Sturdy:**

**[133828]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of including teachers on the priority covid-19 vaccine list.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

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

If teachers are captured in phase one due to their age or clinical risk factors then they will be prioritised. However, as advised by the JCVI, we are not considering vaccinating teachers in phase one. Prioritisation decisions for the next phase of delivery are subject to the surveillance and monitoring of data and information from phase one, as well as further input from independent scientific experts such as the JCVI. Phase two of the deployment may include further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services, such as teachers.

**Alberto Costa:**

**[133926]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of approving pharmacists to administer the covid-19 vaccine.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

No such assessment has been made.

Pharmacists are healthcare professionals who undertake the training specified by NHS England and NHS Improvement as the commissioners of National Health Service pharmaceutical services, can administer the COVID-19 vaccine.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[134069]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on prioritising teachers, school staff and early year practitioners for the covid-19 vaccine.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

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



If teachers are captured in phase one due to their age or clinical risk factors then they will be prioritised. However, as advised by the JCVI, we are not considering vaccinating teachers in phase one at this stage. Prioritisation decisions for the next phase of delivery are subject to the surveillance and monitoring of data and information from phase one, as well as further input from independent scientific experts such as the JCVI. Phase two of the roll-out may include further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services, such as teachers.

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[134411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what role community pharmacies will have in the delivery of the covid-19 vaccine.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

*[Holding answer 13 January 2021]:* Community pharmacies will play a major role in the COVID-19 vaccination programme. Since 11 January 2021, some community pharmacies have started to offer the COVID-19 vaccination service, with more pharmacies joining the service over the coming weeks.

Some pharmacists and members of their team have been working with general practitioners to deliver the vaccine in many areas of the country as part of the Primary Care Network service.

The Department, NHS England and NHS Improvement, and the community pharmacy representative bodies will be working together to establish how community pharmacies' role could be expanded further in the vaccination programme.

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[134547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the Pfizer/BioNTech covid-19 vaccine if the second dose is administered 12 weeks after the first dose.

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[134548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the Pfizer/BioNTech covid-19 vaccine if the second dose is administered three weeks after the first dose.

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[134549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the evidence for the decision to administer the second dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech covid-19 vaccine 12 weeks after the first dose.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

*[Holding answer 13 January 2021]:* A recent study demonstrated a two-dose vaccine efficacy of 95% for the Pfizer/Biotech COVID-19 vaccine, with a second dose delivered between 19 and 42 days. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has reviewed evidence on the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and advised an interval of up to 12 weeks between doses. The

considerations of the JCVI on extended intervals has been published, and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prioritising-the-first-covid-19-vaccine-dose-jcvi-statement>

Using data available from clinical trials, Public Health England estimated that vaccine efficacy from the first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is approximately 89%. This is the efficacy calculated 15 to 21 days after the first dose. The estimate for 15 to 28 days is 91% which includes seven days after the second dose, but is prior to the time protection that may be expected from the second dose. There is no estimate of efficacy for a single dose beyond 21 days, but the JCVI's view is that protective immunity from the first dose likely lasts for a duration of 12 weeks.

**Alex Norris:**

**[136039]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to adapt the roll-out of the covid-19 vaccine programme to allow more local communities to receive the vaccine from their community pharmacy.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

*[Holding answer 14 January 2021]:* Community pharmacies play an important role in the COVID-19 vaccination programme. Since 11 January 2021, some community pharmacies have started to offer the COVID-19 vaccination service, with more pharmacies joining the service over the coming weeks.

Some pharmacists and members of their team have been working with general practitioners to deliver the vaccine in many areas of the country as part of the Primary Care Network service.

The Department, NHS England and NHS Improvement, and the community pharmacy representative bodies will be working together to establish how community pharmacies' role could be expanded further in the vaccination programme.

## ■ Dementia: Coronavirus

**Mark Menzies:**

**[109302]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support people with dementia (a) at home and (b) in residential care who are experiencing limited contact with friends and family as a result of covid-19 restrictions.

**Helen Whately:**

We appreciate the particular challenges visiting restrictions pose for people with dementia and for their loved ones.

Under national lockdown, people living in their own home are able to meet one other person outside for exercise, although not in a private garden, and, where applicable, meet inside with people within their support bubble. This applies to people with dementia.

Visits to care homes can continue to take place with arrangements such as outdoor visiting, substantial screens, visiting pods, or behind windows. Close-contact indoor visits are not currently allowed. In the event of an outbreak in a care home, the home

should immediately stop visiting (except in exceptional circumstances such as end of life) to protect vulnerable residents, staff and visitors.

## ■ Dementia: Drugs

**Helen Hayes:** [\[134006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the increase in the prescription of anti-psychotic medication in the care of people with dementia.

**Helen Whately:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement are consulting with areas to understand the patterns in prescribing during the pandemic. NHS England and NHS Improvement have also disseminated good practices and resources to support the management of COVID-19 for people with dementia through the NHS Futures Collaboration Platform, fortnightly forums and webinars with Dementia Clinical Networks across England. This includes resources to support non-pharmacological approaches to manage behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia in adhering to public health advice for social distancing.

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

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[137158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 128106 tabled on 15 December 2020 by the Hon Member for Islington South and Finsbury.

**Edward Argar:**

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

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

## ■ Doctors and Nurses: Armed Forces

**Marco Longhi:** [\[124322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) formally recognise the roles that armed forces nurses and doctors have played in hospitals during the covid-19 outbreak, (b) ensure that those individuals receive salary increases in recognition of their contribution.

**Helen Whately:**

The Government is incredibly grateful to all healthcare staff, including armed forces doctors and nurses for the part they are playing in hospitals and across the health and social care system during the pandemic.

The Spending Review announced that the Government will be taking three steps regarding public sector pay awards in 2021-22. First, taking account of the pay review bodies' advice, over a million nurses, doctors and others working in the NHS will receive a pay rise. Secondly, to protect jobs, pay rises in the rest of the public sector will be paused. Thirdly, to protect those on lower incomes, 2.1 million public sector workers who earn below the median wage of £24,000 will continue to receive a pay increase. Military personnel will still benefit from a progressive pay model that is not affected by the pay pause.

## ■ Health Professions: Pay

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

[\[113498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide funding from the public purse for (a) a one-off bonus and (b) an annual pay increase to health care workers in recognition of their efforts in responding to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

We are incredibly proud of all National Health Service staff and value their extraordinary commitment to providing world class care during these unprecedented times.

Over one million of 'non-medical' NHS staff, including nurses, continue to benefit from the three-year Agenda for Change (AfC) pay and contract reform deal, agreed in partnership with NHS trade unions and employer representatives. This is the final year of the deal and has seen year on year pay increases for all AfC staff including 16% increases for the lowest paid since 2017/18. For NHS medical staff not in existing multi-year pay and contract reform deals we accepted in full the Review Body for Doctors and Dentists Remuneration's (DDRB) recommendation for a uniform 2.8% pay uplift in July 2020.

For recommendations on pay for NHS staff for 2021/22, we intend to look to the independent Pay Review Bodies (PRB) and we expect to issue a remit letter to the PRBs in the coming weeks. The Government will carefully consider the NHS PRB and DDRB's recommendations when we receive them.

## ■ Health Professions: Radioisotopes

**Caroline Nokes:**

[\[113544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to include nuclear medicine technologists on the Health and Care Professions Council register.

**Helen Whately:**

The Government has no plans to extend statutory regulation to nuclear medicine technologists. The statutory regulation of healthcare professionals should only be used where the risks to public and patient protection cannot be addressed in other ways, such as through employer oversight or accredited voluntary registration.

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[134216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including Nuclear Medicine Technologists on the Health and Care Professions Council register.

**Helen Whately:**

The Government has no plans to extend statutory regulation to nuclear medicine technologists. The statutory regulation of healthcare professionals should only be used where the risks to public and patient protection cannot be addressed in other ways, such as through employer oversight or accredited voluntary registration.

**Ronnie Cowan:**

[\[135986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of adding nuclear medicine technologists to the Health and Care Professions Council register.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 14 January 2021]:* The Government has no plans to extend statutory regulation to nuclear medicine technologists. The statutory regulation of healthcare professionals should only be used where the risks to public and patient protection cannot be addressed in other ways, such as through employer oversight or accredited voluntary registration.

## ■ Health Services: Reciprocal Arrangements

**Paul Blomfield:**

[\[137184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the differences in coverage of (a) countries and (b) services are between the European Health Insurance Card scheme and the UK Global Health Insurance Card; and if he will make a statement.

**Edward Argar:**

The reciprocal healthcare coverage under the United Kingdom-European Union Trade and Cooperation Agreement for those on a temporary stay in an EU member state is the same, in terms of healthcare services which can be accessed by individuals, compared to the previous coverage under EU Regulations 883 and 987. However, under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, crew or passengers of a vessel or aircraft may now be covered for necessary healthcare on their arrival in an EU member state if the need arose whilst on a voyage, which is not the case under the EU Regulations.

## ■ Home Care Services: Coronavirus

**Sir Desmond Swayne:**

[\[134330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide non-CQC regulated homecare workers with weekly covid-19 home test kits; and when his Department plans to vaccinate those people.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 13 January 2021]:* On 23 November 2020, we began offering Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered domiciliary organisations access to weekly COVID-19 testing for their carers looking after people in their own homes. We will extend this offer shortly to other homecare workers, including non-CQC registered organisations and personal assistants. All frontline social care workers, including those who are not CQC registered, will have been offered the first dose of the vaccine by mid-February.

**Hospitals: Harrogate****Rachael Maskell:**[\[136572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to open the NHS Nightingale hospital in Harrogate to patients.

**Edward Argar:**

The NHS Nightingale hospital Yorkshire and Humber, based in Harrogate, remains available to provide support to local NHS services if needed based on local clinical advice. The National Health Service has monitored hospital capacity throughout the pandemic and will continue to do so, including using Nightingale hospitals as needed.

**Joint Biosecurity Centre****Andy Slaughter:**[\[123542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many consultants have been deployed by Boston Consulting Group at the new Joint Biosecurity Centre since 16 March 2020; what the day rate is for each consultant; and what the total cost to the public purse of employing those consultants has been.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 7 December 2020]:* The Joint Biosecurity Centre does not currently employ any consultants from Boston Consulting Group.

**Kidney Diseases: Medical Treatments****Olivia Blake:**[\[137347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people traveling in Europe who require it will continue to be able to access kidney dialysis treatment free of charge, following the UK's withdrawal from the European Health Insurance Card system.

**Edward Argar:**

The reciprocal healthcare coverage under the United Kingdom-European Union Trade and Cooperation Agreement for those on a temporary stay in an EU member state is the same, in terms of healthcare services which can be accessed by individuals, compared to the previous coverage under EU Regulations 883 and 987. However, under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, crew or passengers of a vessel or aircraft may now be covered for necessary healthcare on their arrival in

an EU member state if the need arose whilst on a voyage, which is not the case under the EU Regulations.

### ■ Learning Disability: Coronavirus

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[114236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made on the accessibility to (a) healthcare information and (b) support and advice for (i) people with learning disabilities and (ii) their carers during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

We recognise that COVID-19 presents serious risks and challenges for people with a learning disability and their carers. We have worked closely with the social care sector and public health experts to put in place appropriate guidance and support.

Public Health England has produced easy-read and accessible versions of guidance issued to the public. We strive to release accessible versions of guidance and information as quickly as possible. We have provided approximately £1.2 million to charities supporting people with a learning disability and autistic people to boost their online and helpline capacity. We have supported carers by provided funding to extend the Carers UK support phonenumber and publishing guidance for carers of adults and children with a learning disability, covering wellbeing, communication, social distancing and signposting to further resources.

### ■ Life Expectancy: North of England

**Jon Trickett:**

[\[133698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle falling life expectancy in a number of local authorities in the north of England.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Government are committed to ensuring people can enjoy at least five extra years of healthy, independent living by 2035. The NHS Long Term Plan contains a number of commitments, all major national programmes and every local area across England is required to set out specific measurable goals and mechanisms by which they will contribute to narrowing health inequalities over the next five and ten years.

### ■ Members: Correspondence

**John Penrose:**

[\[132834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to the letters of 16 March 2020, 30 April 2020 and 12 June 2020 and telephone calls of 13 August 2020 and 7 November 2020 from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on covid-19 and the science of indoor air quality, raised on behalf of his constituent Philip Loudon.



**Edward Argar:**

The Department replied to the hon. Member's query on 20 April 2020.

**John Penrose:**[\[135886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 23 September and 20 November 2020 on behalf of his constituent, James Sleigh on dementia research.

**Edward Argar:**

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

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

**Alison Thewliss:**[\[136548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond the e-mail of 30 September 2020 from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central on behalf of Allan Gordon, reference number ZA21117.

**Edward Argar:**

We replied to the hon. Member's email on 14 December 2020.

■ **Mental Health Services****Jon Trickett:**[\[135811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many referrals there were to NHS psychological therapies services in (a) January 2020, (b) February 2020, (c) March 2020, (d) April 2020, (e) May 2020, (f) June 2020, (g) July 2020, (h) August 2020, (i) September 2020, (j) October 2020, (k) November 2020, (l) December 2020 and (m) January 2021.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The following table shows the number of referrals received by NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services in each month from January to October 2020. Data for November 2020 to January 2021 is not yet available.

MONTH	REFERRALS RECEIVED
January 2020	163,182
February 2020	149,713
March 2020	108,330
April 2020	57,814
May 2020	78,544
June 2020	111,752

MONTH	REFERRALS RECEIVED
July 2020	128,988
August 2020	116,102
September 2020	132,237
October 2020	135,566

Source: NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Dataset, NHS Digital

### ■ NHS: Overseas Workers

**Rob Roberts:**

[\[136084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps with the Home Secretary to waive the fees for overseas NHS workers applying for (a) indefinite leave to remain and (b) British citizenship with a caveat that those fees would become payable should those workers subsequently leave the employment of the NHS.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 14 January 2021]:* We have made no specific assessment.

However, we value and welcome the contribution of all overseas staff to the National Health Service and have introduced the Health and Care Visa, exempting overseas staff from paying the Immigration Health Surcharge and offering free and automatic visa extensions for those that were due to expire between 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2021.

### ■ NHS: Oxygen

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[136574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the availability of oxygen to hospital trusts in (a) London and (b) England; and what contingency plans are in place to mitigate low oxygen supplies in hospital trusts.

**Helen Whately:**

The National Health Service has enough oxygen supplies to meet current demand in London and will continue to work with suppliers to manage any future needs. In England the supply chain has significant capacity to meet large surges in demand and delivery of oxygen to hospital tanks is not a limiting factor. There is no national shortage of oxygen.

NHS hospitals are carefully managing their oxygen flow and infrastructure to manage the current need and have deployed a number of contingency measures such as improved monitoring and maintenance of their oxygen systems to ensure they are operating at maximum efficiency. Before the winter, over 30 upgrade projects were completed to improve the long term oxygen and medical supply infrastructure within

hospitals. The NHS has invested £15 million to date and further improvements continue to be carried out.

#### ■ **NHS: Staff**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[113132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many previously retired NHS staff have worked in the NHS in each month since March 2020.

**Helen Whately:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement have provided the following information. As at July 2020, 15,245 former healthcare professionals had completed pre-employment checks, 8,755 former clinicians had been deployed to acute services for employment and 2,140 former clinicians had been employed across NHS 111, NHS Test and Trace, acute trusts and social care.

#### ■ **NHS: Standards**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[134479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of removing delivery targets for NHS services during the 2021 covid-19 national lockdown.

**Edward Argar:**

We are committed to supporting National Health Service providers and commissioners to release capacity to help the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has included NHS England and NHS Improvement have reduced the usual reporting that is required for official statistics. However, there are no plans to remove patient access standards as set out in the NHS Constitution for the purpose of responding to the pandemic.

#### ■ **NHS: Voluntary Work**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[89776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many assignments NHS volunteers have undertaken during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

As of 13 September 2020, NHS Volunteer Responders have undertaken 831,049 tasks since the start of the programme.

In addition to the NHS Volunteer Responders programme, National Health Service trusts also manage their own volunteers and further information on these volunteers is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/participation/get-involved/volunteering>

Data is not held centrally on the number of assignments completed for these volunteers.

## ■ Perinatal Mortality: West Midlands

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[133195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of (a) BAME and (b) other stillbirths in the West Midlands region.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

All maternity services have been asked to ensure that continuity of carer (CoC) is rolled out to women from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities and for women from the most deprived communities. The overall target for March 2021 is 35% of all women should be on a continuity pathway with at least as many women from the BAME communities and the most deprived communities receiving CoC as white women.

Every maternity service in the National Health Service is actively implementing elements of the Saving Babies' Lives Care Bundle which comprises four key elements of care to support providers, commissioners and healthcare professionals to take action to reduce stillbirths.

## ■ Podiatry

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[135864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing statutory regulation of (a) training and (b) professional standards for foot health practitioners.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 14 January 2021]:* The Government has no plans to extend statutory regulation to foot health practitioners. The statutory regulation of healthcare professionals should only be used where the risks to public and patient protection cannot be addressed in other ways, such as through employer oversight or accredited voluntary registration.

Foot health practitioners can register with the Alliance of Private Sector Practitioners, which is a voluntary register accredited by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA). The PSA sets standards for organisations holding voluntary registers for health and social care occupations and accredits those registers that meet the standards. Accreditation provides assurance that a voluntary register is well run - for example, by ensuring that registrants are required to meet high standards of personal behaviour, technical competence and, where relevant, business practice.

## ■ Royal College of Nursing: Fees and Charges

**Sarah Olney:**

**[136028]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to help ensure that fees paid to the Royal College of Nursing may be waived or reimbursed to nurses for this year in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 14 January 2021]:* Nurses are not required to be members of the Royal College of Nursing. As a trade union, membership is voluntary.

It is a decision for the Royal College of Nursing whether they wish to waive or reimburse fees paid to them by their members. Tax relief can be claimed by members of the Royal College of Nursing on their annual subscription and other costs. Further information can be found on the College's website at the following link:

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/membership/membership-fees/tax-relief>

## ■ Supported Housing: Coronavirus

**Helen Hayes:**

**[78774]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the availability of covid-19 testing in supported living settings.

**Helen Whately:**

In September 2020, we commenced a round of national testing to higher risk extra care and supported living settings. Following this, in December 2020, we launched regular PCR retesting in higher risk extra care and supported living: weekly testing for staff and monthly for residents.

In order to be eligible for testing, Extra Care and Supported Living settings should meet both of the following criteria:

- a closed community with substantial facilities shared between multiple people; and
- where most residents receive the kind of personal care that is Care Quality Commission regulated, rather than help with cooking, cleaning and shopping.

These criteria were set in consultation with the sector to identify settings most similar to care homes, and most at risk of an outbreak. As a result, settings meeting these criteria are ones where the risk of transmission and outbreak is high, and the impact on service users may be high given their vulnerability.

In December, we also launched a self-referral portal, which has supported us in identifying more settings meeting these criteria, reducing the burden on local authorities, and extending testing to more people.

## ■ Surgery: Coronavirus

**Sir Mike Penning:**

[\[136467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people awaiting major surgery do not experience severe delays as a result of hospitals treating an influx of covid-19 patients.

**Edward Argar:**

As hospitals treat COVID-19 patients, trusts continue to offer as many routine services as they can to restore services to the previous levels. To keep operations going, services are being redesigned and priority is given to patients based on clinical urgency and those who have been waiting the longest. Interruptions to routine services should only occur when they are absolutely unavoidable and these decisions are taken locally based on operational needs. In addition, the Nightingale hospitals continue to support services by offering extra capacity and bed numbers, which are being utilised upon the decision of local clinicians when needed.

## ■ Test and Trace Support Payment

**Justin Madders:**

[\[109434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the proportion of people in work who will be eligible for the self-isolation support payment.

**Helen Whately:**

The Test and Trace Support Payment is designed to provide financial support to individuals who have been asked to self-isolate and who, if unable to work from home, would lose income and suffer financial hardship as a result. Over four million people could be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment if they are told to self-isolate and will lose income as a result, because they cannot work from home.

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[127678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to allow people in receipt of qualifying benefits who have been advised to claim the Test and Trace Support Payment by (a) NHS hospitals and (b) schools, but not by NHS Test and Trace, to claim that support.

**Helen Whately:**

Anyone who receives notification of a positive test result, or identified as being in close contact with someone who has tested positive will be able to apply for the Test and Trace Support Payment (TTSP), if they meet the other eligibility criteria.

Individuals awaiting a test will need to have had their test, tested positive and received their notification from NHS Test and Trace confirming their test result before they can claim. Being advised by a hospital or school to claim TTSP does not in itself give entitlement to claim support payments.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[128984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of expanding the Test and Trace Support Payment to workers on all income levels.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 17 December 2020]:* The Test and Trace Support Payment has been introduced to help ensure that people on low incomes self-isolate when they test positive or are identified as a contact, and to encourage more people to get tested. Departmental officials are working closely with all 314 local authorities in England, who administer the scheme, to monitor its impact and assess its effectiveness.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[128985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people are eligible for the discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment in the event that part of their period of self-isolation commenced whilst they were receiving financial support under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 17 December 2020]:* The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is for people who will lose income because they are required to self-isolate and cannot work from home while doing so. In practice, most people who are furloughed will not be eligible for a Test and Trace Support Payment or a discretionary payment as they will not be losing income as a result of having to self-isolate. In cases where someone is only furloughed for part of their isolation period and will lose income because they cannot work from home during the remainder of the self-isolation period, they would be eligible for a Test and Trace Support Payment provided they met the other eligibility criteria.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Airguns: Regulation

**Kenny MacAskil:**

[\[136622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 134186 on Airguns: Regulation, when she plans to publish the responses to the initial consultation on airgun registration that was held in 2017.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government received over 50,000 responses to the air weapons review, which commenced in December 2017. A summary of the responses to the review was included in the firearms safety consultation, published on 24 November 2020. This consultation sets out proposals for new measures in relation to air weapons. The firearms safety consultation will close on 16 February, after which the Government will publish its response, including in relation to air weapons controls.



## ■ Animal Experiments

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[134543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals Great Britain 2018 published in July 2019, what type of tests made up the 24,284 regulatory tests conducted to satisfy the requirements of non-EU legislation; and what steps the Government is taking to reduce and replace the use of animals for that purpose.

**Victoria Atkins:**

With reference to the report entitled Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals Great Britain 2018, published in July 2019, the 24,284 regulatory tests conducted to satisfy the requirements of non-EU legislation were made up of batch safety and pyrogenicity tests, toxicity and other safety tests, and tests undertaken for quality control and efficacy/tolerance.

Prospective authorisation is required when any tests other than those required by UK regulators are requested. The Home Office only authorises procedures on animals after a rigorous assessment process, which is undertaken by the Home Office Inspectorate. The Home Office may review project licences, and require them to be amended, if suitable replacement, reduction or refinement alternatives become available during their lifetime.

## ■ Asylum: Employment

**Kirsten Oswald:**

[\[134474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 17 December 2020 to Question 127570 on Asylum: Employment, when she plans to publish a final report on the review of policy regarding asylum seeker right to work.

**Kirsten Oswald:**

[\[134475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 17 December 2020 to Question 127570 on Asylum: Employment, what consultation her Department is undertaking to inform the review of policy regarding asylum seeker right to work.

**Kirsten Oswald:**

[\[134476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 17 December 2020 to Question 127570 on Asylum: Employment, where on the Government website it is possible to view documents related to the review of policy on asylum seeker right to work.

**Chris Philp:**

Asylum seeker right to work is a complex issue. A review of the policy is ongoing, and we are considering the evidence put forward on the issue. The findings of the review will be announced once the work has been completed.

## ■ Asylum: Health Services

**Caroline Nokes:**

[\[130706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what contracts have been negotiated with CCGs in Hampshire on the provision of health care services to asylum seekers in supported accommodation.

**Chris Philp:**

Given pressure on the system during these unprecedented times, we have worked tirelessly with local authorities and other partners to provide asylum seekers, who would otherwise be destitute, with suitable accommodation, as we are required to do by law.

Following a review of available government property, the Ministry of Defence offered temporary use of some of its sites. This includes Barton Stacey and we are engaging with leaders and officials at Test Valley and Hampshire councils, local MPs, the police and health services – including the relevant Clinical Commissioning Group – as we continue to explore this as an option.

## ■ Asylum: Housing

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[130771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what most recent estimate she has made of the timescale for moving asylum seekers in Bristol from the hotel accommodation to which they were transferred back to appropriate accommodation.

**Chris Philp:**

The current global pandemic has presented us with significant challenges when it comes to the provision of asylum accommodation, including sourcing sufficient suitable accommodation to meet demand.

The use of hotels and wider government facilities are a short-term measure and we are working to move people to longer-term dispersal accommodation as soon as it becomes available.

Our accommodation providers are working with Local Authorities across the UK to identify additional dispersal accommodation as part of their recovery plans.

**Marco Longhi:**

[\[130854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much her Department spent on the provision of accommodation for asylum seekers in (a) hotels and (b) other forms of accommodation for the financial year 2020-21; and how many asylum seekers have been so housed as a result of that provision.

**Marco Longhi:**

[\[130855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much her Department has spent on agencies sourcing the provision of hotel and other accommodation for asylum seekers in the financial year 2020-21; what the durations are of her Department's

contracts with each of those agencies; what the renewal dates are of each of those contracts; and what the procurement processes were for each of those contracts.

**Marco Longhi:**

[\[130856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many hotel rooms her Department has procured for the placement of asylum seekers in each English region in (a) the financial year 2020-21 and (b) each of the previous five financial years.

**Marco Longhi:**

[\[130857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which body undertakes the inspection of the (a) quality and (b) safe provision of accommodation of asylum seekers; and what the frequency is of those inspections.

**Chris Philp:**

We expect the highest standards from our providers and the accommodation provided must be safe, habitable, fit for purpose and is required to comply with the Decent Homes Standard, in addition to standards outlined in relevant national or local housing legislation.

Providers are expected to conduct regular checks across the accommodation estate with the Home Office having access to their systems. Throughout the pandemic the ability to inspect accommodation has faced some challenges; ensuring that we protect the safety of our staff and the people we support adhering to PHE guidance; whilst maintaining safe, habitable, fit for purpose accommodation.

We receive regular intel from calls to our AIRE (Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility) providers Migrant Help. Service Users can raise issues relating to accommodation through the Issue Reporting service provided by Migrant Help.

The Asylum Accommodation and Support Services contracts (AASC) have a robust performance management system, against which providers are expected to deliver. Where performance falls short of the required standard, failures are recorded and can result in the award of points and, ultimately, service credits being applied.

Providers' performance is monitored closely by dedicated staff in each contract area, who are in daily contact with them. This is supplemented by a formal governance process which includes quarterly Strategic Review Management Boards and monthly Contract Management Groups. Service credits and subsequent improvement plans are discussed and monitored as part of this process.

The current global pandemic has presented us with significant challenges when it comes to the provision of asylum accommodation, including sourcing sufficient suitable accommodation to meet demand.

The use of hotels and wider government facilities are a short-term measure and we are working to move people to longer-term dispersal accommodation as soon as it becomes available.

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area, which includes those in hotel and wider

government facilities. These statistics can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#asylum-support>.

The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of these statistics which disaggregates the type of accommodation being used to accommodate asylum seekers.

As described above, accommodation for supported asylum seekers is arranged by private sector providers through contractual arrangements with the Home Office.

Details of these contracts can be found here

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search/Results>

Accommodation costs are considered to be commercially confidential, therefore the Home Office does not published this information, however total expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ho-annual-reports-and-accounts>

The AASC providers receive payments for providing services consistent with those requirements.

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[134217]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to improve living conditions at asylum seeker processing and detainment sites.

**Chris Philp:**

We expect the highest standards from our providers and the accommodation provided must be safe, habitable, fit for purpose and is required to comply with the Decent Homes Standard, in addition to standards outlined in relevant national or local housing legislation.

The asylum seekers being accommodated are not being held under detention powers and they will not be prevented from leaving. Asylum seekers are free to find accommodation through friends or relatives and may be provided with the allowance alone if deemed to be financially destitute.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the asylum system has faced significant pressures and it has become necessary to use additional temporary accommodation to ensure the Home Office can continue to meet all of its statutory obligations.

Following a review of available government property, the MoD permitted the Home Office temporary use of Napier Barracks in Kent and the Penally Training Camp in Pembrokeshire, which have been in operation for almost four months. They are fit for purpose, safe and equipped in line with existing contractual requirements for asylum accommodation. We continue to work closely with our provider and partners to identify opportunities for improvement, as we do across our entire accommodation estate.

**Shabana Mahmood:**

**[134400]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people residing in asylum accommodation were (a) children and (b) vulnerable on medical grounds in each of the last three years.

**Chris Philp:**

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area, which includes those in hotel and wider government facilities. These statistics can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#asylum-support>

Data is published on a quarterly basis, with the latest information published 26 November 2020. The next quarterly figures are due to be released in February 2021.

The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of these statistics which disaggregates the number of children and vulnerable people based on medical grounds. These figures are not available in a reportable format and to provide the information could only be done at disproportionate cost.

**Margaret Ferrier:**

**[134467]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of potential accommodation alternatives to housing asylum seekers in former army barracks.

**Margaret Ferrier:**

**[134468]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential health and safety risks to asylum seekers housed in former army barracks.

**Chris Philp:**

Increased asylum intake, alongside measures taken to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, has meant that the Home Office has had to deal with growing demand for asylum support and accommodation services.

In recent months we have faced additional challenges which have required us in some instances to use contingency accommodation, including hotels, to fulfil or statutory obligations to house destitute asylum seekers whilst their claims are examined.

In order to reduce the use of such contingency accommodation we have been working closely with local authorities and devolved administrations to identify opportunities to increase the amount of dispersal accommodation available and to assist those that are no longer eligible for asylum support to 'move-on' from asylum accommodation. This has been handled through a calm, considered and phased approach.

Following a review of available government property, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) agreed to temporarily hand over two of their sites: the Penally Training Camp in Pembrokeshire and the Napier Barracks in Kent.

These sites were immediately available to be used to house asylum seekers and are safe, secure, habitable, fit for purpose and correctly equipped in line with existing contractual requirements for asylum accommodation.

An independent rapid review was also recently conducted to assure ourselves of the health and safety of asylum seekers during the COVID-19 pandemic, the recommendations from which are being reviewed and will be shared in due course. We will also hold round tables with stakeholders to discuss the recommendations, actions taken and proposed next steps.

It remains our intention to move all individuals in contingency accommodation into suitable dispersed accommodation as soon as reasonably practical, however our immediate priority is to ensure that we continue to meet our legal duty to house destitute asylum seekers and ensure their safety and wellbeing.

**Helen Hayes:**

**[137249]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2020 to Question 131351 on Asylum: Greater London, what assessment she has made of trends in the number of deaths in asylum accommodation.

**Helen Hayes:**

**[137250]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 131351 on Asylum: Greater London, what monitoring her Department is undertaking of the (a) health and (b) mortality of residents in asylum accommodation during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office, through its undertaking its statutory duties towards asylum seekers and working with other agencies and organisations, takes a great many steps to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of those whom we support. In the event of the death of a service user we work with other agencies to establish the cause of death.

At present there are just over 60000 people in asylum accommodation, with 36 fatalities recorded in 2020. This is in line with or lower than the number of deaths that would be expected given the size of this cohort, based on mortality statistics for the wider UK population of broadly this age profile.

In the significant majority of cases, deaths are as a result of natural causes (e.g. a long-term illness) or as an unintended consequence of their own action (e.g. an accidental drug overdose).

We continue to work closely with a range of organisations to provide support to those that need it and, where necessary, will fully cooperate in any investigation into the cause of an individual's death.

Our providers continue to respond to the needs of at-risk service users to ensure their safety and wellbeing, including ensuring those in need are able to access appropriate medical treatment or wider NHS healthcare services.

Providers will notify the Home Office where safeguarding concerns are identified so that appropriate measures can be put in place to support the individual concerned.

## ■ Asylum: Military Bases

**Wendy Chamberlain:**

**[136619]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 130841, what progress she has made on timescales for the relocation of asylum seekers at the Penally Camp; and what assessment she has made of the safety of that camp.

**Chris Philp:**

The current global pandemic has presented us with significant challenges when it comes to the provision of asylum accommodation, including sourcing sufficient suitable accommodation to meet demand.

The use of hotels and wider government facilities are a short-term measure and we are working to move people to longer-term dispersal accommodation as soon as it becomes available.

Following a review of available government property, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) agreed to temporarily hand over two of their sites: the Penally Training Camp in Pembrokeshire and the Napier Barracks in Kent. These sites were immediately available to be used to house asylum seekers and are safe, secure, habitable, fit for purpose and correctly equipped in line with existing contractual requirements for asylum accommodation.

The Home Office have undertaken a number of assessments at the Penally Camp; Equality Impact, Fire, Evacuation controls/plans and Infection controls – including for Covid 19. A rapid review of asylum accommodation was undertaken with the assistance of Human Applications who conducted a ‘deep dive’ on our approach to initial accommodation during the coronavirus pandemic. We continue to work closely with the Welsh Health leads and if necessary, conduct an internal evaluation of asylum support provision in Penally with any recommendations being actioned accordingly.

It remains our intention to move all individuals in contingency accommodation into suitable dispersed accommodation as soon as reasonably practical, we are hoping to commence moves for small numbers of people out from week commencing 18<sup>th</sup> January, however our immediate priority is to ensure that we continue to meet our legal duty to house destitute asylum seekers and ensure their safety and wellbeing.



## ■ Bedfordshire Police: Coronavirus

**Sarah Owen:**

**[136623]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what additional resources her Department has allocated to Bedfordshire Police for the enforcement of covid-19 regulations.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government has been clear that it will provide police forces with the support they need to continue protecting the public and keeping communities safe through the coronavirus pandemic.

In October 2020, the Government announced an additional £30m funding for police forces in England and Wales to step up their enforcement of coronavirus rules. Bedfordshire Police has received £ 270,485 from this additional funding.

The department continues to work closely with the policing sector to monitor and make decisions on their current and future needs.

## ■ British Nationals Abroad: Marriage

**Daniel Zeichner:**

**[134465]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether new British National Overseas citizens on the new British National Overseas visa require a Superintendent Registrar Certificate to get married in the UK.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Hong Kong British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) route opens for applications from 31 January 2021.

BN(O) citizens and their partners with permission on the Hong Kong BN(O) route may give notice of their intention to get married or form a civil partnership, but a referral to Home Office immigration for investigation may take place.

Further information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/marriages-civil-partnerships>

## ■ Deportation: Coronavirus

**Stuart C McDonald:**

**[135962]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential public health risks of continuing with enforced removals while the UK is subject to covid-19 restrictions, particularly in light of new strains of that virus; and if she will make a statement.

**Chris Philp:**

We remain committed to removing foreign national offenders or those who violate our immigration rules and we have shown that we can continue to do this safely.

Immigration Enforcement are following the latest guidance from Public Health England. On all removal flights public health guidance is adhered to, those on flights are seen by a healthcare professional before they are returned and anyone who is

exhibiting symptoms would be removed from the flight and placed into medical isolation.

## ■ Deportation: Offenders

**Sir John Hayes:**

[136440]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign criminals have been deported in each of the last ten years; and whether it is her policy to increase the number of deportations.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office publishes data on Returns in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of Foreign National Offenders (FNOs) returned from the UK are published in tables Ret\_02 and Ret\_02q of the Returns '[summary tables](#)'. The latest data on returns relates to the year ending June 2020.

Deportation is used, where appropriate, against foreign national criminals and those whose deportation is otherwise considered to be conducive to the public good. Our priority will always be to keep the British public safe and the Government is clear that foreign nationals who abuse our hospitality by committing crimes should be in no doubt of our determination to deport them. Any foreign national who is convicted of a crime and given a prison sentence is considered for deportation at the earliest opportunity.

Every week we remove foreign criminals who have no right to be here from the UK to different countries. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we have continued to return and deport foreign national offenders and other immigration offenders where flight routes have been available to us, both on scheduled flights and charter flights.

Deportations of foreign national offenders have been negatively impacted by Covid, and we intend to resume historic levels as quickly as possible. It is our intention to deport all foreign criminals as required to by the 2007 Borders Act where we lawfully can, which would imply a further substantial increase in numbers.

## ■ Heathrow Airport: Coronavirus

**Chris Loder:**

[134160]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the maximum queue time for non-EEA passengers at Heathrow was during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown period while international travel was banned.

**Chris Philp:**

The latest Performance Data on Heathrow Queue times can be found on the link below:

[Heathrow Queue Performance](#)

## ■ Immigration: Offenders

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[136441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ban foreign criminals who have served more than one year in jail from entering the UK.

**Chris Philp:**

New Immigration Rules which came into force on 1 December 2020 provide for the mandatory refusal or cancellation of entry clearance or permission to enter or stay in the UK where a person has been convicted of a criminal offence, in the UK or overseas, for which they have received a custodial sentence of 12 months or more.

## ■ Migrant Workers: Physiotherapy

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[137330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the minimum salary requirement for settlement in the UK for physiotherapists in response to (a) high vacancy rates in NHS physiotherapy services and (b) the time being taken for the Government to take a decision on the Migration Advisory Committee recommendation to add physiotherapists to the Shortage Occupation List.

**Kevin Foster:**

Under the new Skilled Worker route, we have already reduced the salary requirements physiotherapists need to meet to gain settlement from £35,800 to the national pay scale for their occupation. This applies whether or not they are included on the Shortage Occupation List.

Whilst we have considered carefully the possible impacts of the new immigration system, additional variables such as the impact of Covid-19 on the UK Labour Market require closer examination. To avoid taking a piecemeal approach to implementing the Migration Advisory Committee's advice, we need to review the various influences on migration flows and the labour market, including introduction of a new immigration system, and whether this is in line with our anticipated outcomes, before considering which changes are required to the Shortage Occupation List.

## ■ Migrant Workers: Wind Power

**Karl Turner:**

[\[136504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's December 2020 update to the Offshore wind workers Immigration Rules concession 2017, if she will list the companies in the offshore wind farm sector that have taken steps to regularise the position of their workers since that concession was introduced.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Government has no plans to publish information on which companies are regularising the stay of their workers.

The information about the concession is published online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/offshore-wind-workers-immigration-rules-concession-2017>.

**Motor Vehicles: Theft****Colleen Fletcher:****[134459]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Transport, (b) representatives from the motor industry and (c) representatives of law enforcement agencies on keyless car thefts in (i) Coventry, (ii) the West Midlands and (iii) England.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government is aware of the issue of the use of electronic compromise to bypass security measures in order to steal vehicles or steal items from vehicles and recognises the negative impact such crime has on industry and the public, causing distress and disruption to victims, and raises concerns in owners over the safety of their vehicles.

Following a meeting I held earlier last year with law enforcement and motor industry representatives, we continue to work closely with the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for vehicle crime, through a National Vehicle Crime Working Group, to take forward a programme of work to tackle vehicle crime, overseen by the Government's Crime and Justice Taskforce.

**Organised Crime****Colleen Fletcher:****[134461]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle organised crime.

**Kit Malthouse:**

My Department is working tirelessly with government and law enforcement partners to crack down on the organised criminal groups exploiting the most vulnerable for their own gain. This includes:

- Operation Venetic: The National Crime Agency, policing and other agencies working together as part of the UK's biggest ever law enforcement operation, which has seen more than 746 arrests, and the seizure of £54 million in criminal cash and over two tonnes of Class A and B drugs.
- Introducing new measures to strengthen the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and ensure that large businesses and public bodies tackle modern slavery risks in supply chains.

- Alongside governments from the US, New Zealand, Canada and Australia, launching the Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
- Funding a £25 million county lines programme, resulting in nearly 140 deal lines being closed and the seizure of over 100 weapons, and cash and drugs worth over £3 million.

We are also considering the findings of Sir Craig Mackey's Independent Review of Serious and Organised Crime, alongside the outcome of the recent Spending Review and the constantly evolving threats we face. We will announce details, and key findings from the Serious and Organised Crime Review in due course.

## ■ Police: Coronavirus

**Catherine West:**

**[136579]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to protect police officers and police staff from covid-19; and whether they will be prioritised for the covid-19 vaccine.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government recognises that police officers and staff are playing a vital role helping to control the spread of coronavirus while continuing to keep criminals off our streets.

We continue to work extremely closely with police to ensure they receive the equipment they need, including Personal Protective Equipment, when they need it, in order to carry out their jobs safely.

Maintaining the health and wellbeing of police officers and staff during the pandemic is of critical importance. The College of Policing has developed guidance for them on a range of issues as part of the National Police Wellbeing Service:

<https://beta.college.police.uk/guidance/covid-19/looking-after-yourself>

On vaccines, the current priority list, produced by the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), targets those assessed to be at the greatest risk of dying from coronavirus. In line with this advice those being vaccinated first are people in care homes, the elderly, those with underlying health conditions and frontline health workers. Those over 50, and all adults in an exposure risk group, will then also be eligible for vaccination in the early phase of the programme. This already includes members of the police.

Under phase 2 of the Vaccine Delivery Plan the JCVI may include key public services and occupations with a high risk exposure to the virus like police officers who have frequent close contact with members of the public.

**■ Travellers: Caravan Sites****Stuart Anderson:****[136053]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to strengthen police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments at the earliest opportunity so that local authorities do not have to fund enforcement and alternative provision projects.

**Kit Malthouse:**

As we set out in the briefing accompanying the Queen's Speech in December 2019, it is our firm aim to bring forward legislation this session.

The Home Office launched a public consultation in November 2019 to seek views on how we could strengthen the police's powers to tackle unauthorised encampments. We will publish a response to that consultation in the usual way.

**■ UK Border Force: Staff****Stuart C McDonald:****[133893]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the additional UK border force staff that will be required to implement the UK EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

**Chris Philp:**

Border Force has the resources in place to meet anticipated overall operational requirements. Border Force recruited over 1,000 additional officers in preparation for the end of transition and continues to ensure maximum flexibility in their recruitment and deployment approach. Further staff will be in place in time for July 2021 when full customs import controls are implemented on movements of goods from the EU to Great Britain.

**■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel****Tommy Sheppard:****[136553]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 10 December 2020 to Question 126060, what oversight the Government will have of the actions and conduct of French reservists from the Gendarmerie and Police Nationale deployed to tackle migrant activity in the Channel; what systems have been established to investigate allegations of mistreatment or abuse of migrants by French police during their deployment; and what the role is of the Government in that process.

**Chris Philp:**

We work closely with France to prevent Channel crossings by irregular migrants. In November the UK and France agreed a package of £28.1m to support a range of activity as part of ongoing efforts.

We jointly monitor, with France, the impact of that funding through daily operational contact and regular strategic reviews.

French personnel are responsible to the French Government and are therefore required to comply with French law, policies and processes. The UK Government would not be directly involved in any investigation into allegations made against French officers.

France is party to both the ECHR and the Refugee Convention and the UK Government is confident that France is fully in compliance with its obligations under both Conventions.

## ■ Visas: Dependants

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[136523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the Adult Dependent Relative visa eligibility criteria, introduced in 2012, on pressure on NHS and Social Care services.

**Chris Philp:**

The family Immigration Rules were reformed in July 2012 to prevent burdens on the taxpayer, promote integration and tackle abuse, and thereby ensure family migration to the UK is on a properly sustainable basis which it is fair to migrants and the wider community.

We reformed the route for adult dependent relatives, given the significant NHS and social care costs which can be associated with these cases and to reduce pressure on the health system. Under the current Rules adult dependent relatives must demonstrate, as a result of age, illness or disability, they require a level of long-term personal care which can only be provided in the UK by their sponsor here and without recourse to public funds.

The Home Office continues to keep the Immigration Rules for adult dependant relatives under review and make adjustments in light of feedback on their operation and impact. However, our overall assessment is the rules represent a fairer deal for the taxpayer, are having the right impact and are helping to ensure public confidence in the immigration system and reduce pressure on our healthcare system.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Airports: Non-domestic Rates

**Mike Kane:**

[\[137221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish (a) the total amount of business rates paid and (b) how much relief has been granted for each commercial airport operator in the UK.

**Luke Hall:**

The Department does not collect data on business rates paid, or relief granted, by type of business.



**■ Building Safety Fund**

**Hilary Benn:** [\[136448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to applications to the Building Safety Fund, what information is shared with unsuccessful applicants to the fund to help them understand the technical reasons for that refusal; and if he will make a statement.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Unsuccessful registrants are told which of the criteria for the Building Safety Fund they have not been able to demonstrate. The requirements for eligibility, against which their registrations are assessed, are set out in the published prospectus. If registrants feel that the decision reached is not in line with the published criteria, an appeal form is available on the [Building Safety Fund page](#).

**■ Building Safety Fund: Leeds**

**Hilary Benn:** [\[136445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason the application to the Building Safety Fund in respect of the Saxton Drive building, Leeds LS9 was refused.

**Hilary Benn:** [\[136446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason the application to the Building Safety Fund in respect of Clarence House, The Boulevard, Leeds ,LS10 was refused.

**Hilary Benn:** [\[136447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason the application to the Building Safety Fund in respect of Cartier House, The Boulevard, Leeds LS10 was refused in part.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The assessment of eligibility for the Building Safety Fund includes an assessment of whether the building meets the height threshold for the fund and whether the combination of materials present in the external wall system meets the published criteria for funding. Where registrations are assessed as not eligible for the fund, it is because the information received on the registration form and any supporting information submitted does not provide the necessary evidence to demonstrate that the required criteria have been met.

**■ Business: Coronavirus**

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[137297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether Government guidance to local authorities will specify that essential businesses materially

impacted by covid-19-related restrictions are eligible for the lockdown discretionary grant fund announced on 5th January.

**Luke Hall:**

The Government has made an additional £500 million available via the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) announced by the Chancellor on 5 January. This builds on the £1.1 billion already allocated following the second lockdown in November 2020.

This further grant funding is designed to support businesses that are severely impacted by the new Covid-19 restrictions. Local authorities have discretion to use this funding to support businesses in the way they see fit, and to determine which businesses are eligible.

Where the restrictions require businesses to close, grants of up to £4,500 per six-week period of closure are available. Further one-off grants of up to £9,000 for closed businesses are also available.

■ **Coronavirus: Local Government**

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[136516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if the Government will take steps to increase the capacity of local authorities to help tackle the covid-19 outbreak.

**Luke Hall:**

The Government has worked closely with local authorities in our joint response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March 2020 we have committed over £10 billion in additional funding for local authorities to support the response to the virus. We will continue supporting local authorities in our fight against COVID for as long as it is needed.

■ **Estate Agents: Coronavirus**

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[\[137260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what scientific evidence his Department is using to guide the decision to allow estate agent offices to remain open to staff during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We have worked with both the estate agency sector and Public Health England to develop our guidance and make sure that agents are operating in a Covid-Secure way, as such businesses are required to do in order to remain open.

■ **Free Zones**

**Bridget Phillipson:**

[\[131250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, on what evidential basis the limit of 500 words was set for freeport bids regarding the economic rationale for tax site choice.

**Luke Hall:**

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN 131242 answered on 11 January.

**Bridget Phillipson:**[\[131256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the funding being made available for freeports announced in the Spending Review 2020 CP 330: section 6.60, how much of the funding originally allocated to the Towns Fund will be allocated to capital spending on freeports in England.

**Luke Hall:**

Successful Freeports bidders will have the opportunity to access a share of £175 million of seed capital funding. Allocations are subject to the submission and quality of successful business cases, but will be partly funded through the Towns Fund.

**■ Housing: Insulation****Andrew Gwynne:**[\[136463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the oral Answer of 12 January 2021, Official Report, what criteria the Government uses to assess whether a (a) developer, (b) investor or (c) building owner has the means to pay to cover remediation costs of dangerous cladding.

**Christopher Pincher:**

To tackle the most urgent building safety problems, we have made available £1.6 billion to remove unsafe cladding systems and appointed expert construction consultants to review ACM remediation timescales and to work to increase pace. There should be no excuse for delay.

Applicants to the Private Sector ACM Cladding Remediation Fund (PSCRF) and Building Safety Fund (BSF) are required to demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to recover the costs of replacing the unsafe cladding from those responsible.

At the application stage, we ask for information regarding such steps and may seek further information to satisfy ourselves of this position.

Where Applicants do successfully recover damages relating to the removal and replacement of unsafe cladding, the Government will expect Applicants to pay Government any amounts recovered which are referable to the removal of the unsafe cladding up to the amount of funding provided (minus any reasonable legal costs which have been incurred through pursuing cost recovery referable to the unsafe cladding).

MHCLG does not rule out seeking an assignment of relevant rights of action where it would be appropriate to do so.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[136464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answers of 11 January 2021 to Questions 131203, 132794 and 132795, what assessment he has made of the criteria where an EWS1 should not be required set out in section 2.1 of the RICS Draft UK Guidance Note Valuation of properties in multi-storey, multi-occupancy residential buildings with cladding, published on 8 January 2021.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department has seen the RICS draft guidance note, currently out for consultation, and are considering its potential implications. We await the results of the consultation which will help to make clearer the circumstances when EWS1 valuations are, and are not, to be requested.

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[137271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many residential properties in London under 18 metres his Department has identified as being constructed with ACM cladding.

**Christopher Pincher:**

This information is not held.

We are focusing public funding on remediating high rise buildings, as these are least likely to safely evacuate in the event of a cladding fire. This reflects the exceptional fire risk that certain cladding products pose at that height, as noted by Dame Judith Hackitt. It remains building owners' responsibility to address unsafe cladding on buildings of all heights. We have provided expert advice on the measures building owners should take to ensure their buildings are safe.

## ■ Neighbourhood Development Plans: Horden

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[136494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 133788 and with reference to the UK-wide investment framework in 2021, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the neighbourhood renewal plan prepared by Durham County Council in relation to housing in Horden.

**Luke Hall:**

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK for people and places. The Government will set out further details of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in a UK-wide investment framework soon.

A portion of the Fund will target places most in need across the UK, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities. It will support people and communities, opening up new opportunities and spurring regeneration and innovation. Its funding profile will be set out at the next Spending Review.

**■ Night Shelters: Coronavirus****Catherine West:****[136580]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support his Department is providing to homeless shelters to protect (a) staff and (b) residents from covid-19.

**Eddie Hughes:**

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 £10 million announced this month to protect rough sleepers and ensure their wider health needs are addressed. This additional support builds on the package of winter support announced last year – in total, we are spending over £700 million on tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in 2020/21.

Decisions to open shelters as part of this provision must be balanced on a detailed COVID-19 risk assessment. These settings should only be used where absolutely necessary to protect against any potential risk to the health of vulnerable individuals when other alternative options are unavailable, for example in very cold weather.

We have worked extensively with Public Health England to develop Operating Principles that will enable shelters to open as safely as possible, where absolutely necessary, while protecting staff and residents.

In redoubling our efforts to help ensure that even more rough sleepers are safely accommodated now, we are asking areas to actively use this opportunity to make sure that 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 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. We are also asking local authorities to consider whether those working in homelessness settings meet the criteria for frontline social workers who are directly working with people clinically vulnerable to COVID-19, a group which is on the JCVI priority list for vaccination.

**■ Reopening High Streets Safely Fund****Jo Gideon:****[130872]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of permitting Business Improvement Districts to operate as a delivery partner for Reopening High Streets Safely funding.

**Luke Hall:**

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have been a key tool in providing business led improvements to local areas since 2004. They remain an important part of our high street and town centre agenda, and the Government is committed to supporting them.

BIDs also have an important role to play in ensuring our high streets and town centre areas can open in a safe way in order to reinvigorate our local economies and get people back to work and the shops. This is why, through our £50 million Reopening High Streets Safely Fund (RHSSF), local authorities can procure BIDs as a contractor or supplier and pay for eligible services through RHSSF funding.

In order to reduce the administrative burden in delivering the fund, BIDs cannot be delivery partners for the RHSSF, however, local authorities are able deliver eligible RHSSF activity through delivery partner arrangements with other tiers of local government. We have provided further guidance on which organisations can operate as delivery partners under the RHSSF programme:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/925276/Reopening\\_High\\_Streets\\_Safely\\_Fund\\_FAQ\\_V6.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925276/Reopening_High_Streets_Safely_Fund_FAQ_V6.pdf).

**Kate Hollern:**

**[136536]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much and what proportion of the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund has been allocated to local authorities to date.

**Luke Hall:**

Our £50 million Reopening High Streets Safely Fund (RHSSF) is playing an important role in getting people back to work, supporting our businesses and helping to reinvigorate our local communities.

This funding has been allocated to 314 local authorities in England on a per capita basis with a minimum limit of £30,000. Places have been able to incur expenditure on eligible activity up to the amount of their full allocation from 1 June 2020. Once final contracts have been agreed, local authorities can claim funding from Government in arrears.

More information on the RHSSF criteria, including an Annex detailing local authority funding allocations, can be found in the Fund guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reopening-high-streets-safely-fundguidance>.

## ■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[135924]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the shared prosperity fund will equal existing financial support for (a) research infrastructure, (b) skills programmes and (c) research intensive businesses provided by European Structural and Investment Funds.

**Luke Hall:**

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) 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, and for people who face labour market barriers. Spending Review 2020 set out the main strategic elements of the UKSPF in the

Heads of Terms. The Government will publish a UK-wide investment framework in 2021 and confirm multiyear funding profiles at the next Spending Review.

■ **Waking Watch Relief Fund**

**Hilary Benn:**

[\[136449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether applicants for the installation of sounders to silent alarm systems that were installed in buildings prior to 17 December 2020 will be eligible to apply to the Waking Watch Fund for support.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Waking Watch Relief Fund is designed to incentivise the installation of a common alarm system in high rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding and reduce the dependency on expensive Waking Watch measures. The fund will cover the upfront capital costs of installing a common fire alarm system designed in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5839-1 for a Category L5 system, which is referred to in the National Fire Chief Council's revised guidance on Simultaneous Evacuation. The installation of sounders to silent alarm systems which were installed prior to 17 December 2020 to facilitate a move from a 'Stay Put' to 'Simultaneous Evacuation' Fire Safety Strategy would not be eligible for funding. We expect to publish the Waking Watch Relief Fund Prospectus, which will set out the full eligibility criteria for the fund, later this month.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Procter and Gamble: China**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[137210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department has held discussions with Procter and Gamble on increasing trade with China.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

The Department for International Trade has not held discussions with Procter and Gamble on the subject of increasing trade with China.

■ **Trade Agreements: Turkey**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[136471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what provisions exist in the UK's free trade agreement with Turkey to suspend that agreement in whole or in part in response to serious violations by either party of the terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948.



**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[136472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, for what reason she did not include an essential elements clause relating to human rights in the UK's free trade agreement with Turkey, absent any accompanying political arrangements.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

The United Kingdom's priority was to replicate the effects of existing trading arrangements between the EU and Turkey, as far as possible, into a bilateral arrangement by the end of the Transition Period.

HM Government is clear that trade does not come at the expense of rights and responsibilities. We have longstanding, deep relationships with Turkey and will continue to engage the Turkish government on these important issues.

#### ■ Trade Agreements: Vietnam

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[136468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what provisions exist in the free trade agreement with Vietnam to suspend that agreement in whole or in part in response to serious violations by either party of the terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[136469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, for what reason she did not include an essential elements clause relating to human rights in the UK's free trade agreement with Vietnam, absent any cross-references in that agreement to other legally binding agreements relating to human rights.

**Greg Hands:**

The United Kingdom has long promoted its values globally. We are clear that more trade does not have to come at the expense of our values. We have longstanding, deep relationships with Vietnam which will always allow HM Government to have open discussions on these issues.

The United Kingdom's priority was to seek to replicate the effects of existing EU trading arrangements with Vietnam, as far as possible, into a bilateral arrangement by the end of the Transition Period. This did not include replicating the separate EU-Vietnam Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Instead a refreshed UK-Vietnam Strategic Partnership Agreement was signed on 30 September 2020, reflecting our close partnership.

#### ■ Trade: Advisory Bodies

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[137160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 14 December 2020 to Question 127536, if she will publish a full list of the Thematic Working Groups established by the Government to include the (a) membership and (b) terms of reference of each group and (c) dates on which those groups have so far met.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

The Department has established a cohort of cross-government Thematic Working Groups (TWGs), of which eight are currently in operation: Continuity; Customs; Financial Services; Intellectual Property; Procurement; Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs); Sustainability; and Trade for Development. We are in the process of establishing two further TWGs covering: Cross-Cutting Services; and Technical Barriers to Trade.

The TWGs have met 15 times to date since they were established in October 2020. A review of these groups' membership is ongoing and expected to conclude shortly, together with a decision on whether membership and terms of reference will be published. The table below shows how many meetings the eight established groups have had and the dates on which they were held.

**JUSTICE****Courts****Helen Hayes:****[136575]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many outstanding cases in (a) Crown courts and (b) magistrates' courts (i) there are as of 12 January 2021 and (ii) there were on 12 January 2020.

**Chris Philp:**

We are unable to provide the full year-on-year comparison from January 2020 to January 2021 as we did not start to collate this information prior to March 2020. The number of outstanding cases in the Crown Court in September 2020 was 49,822, compared to 53,478 in September 2019. Our latest published statistics can be viewed on our [weekly management information page](#).

The magistrates' backlog continues to fall, and the number of cases being dealt with in the Crown Courts reached pre-pandemic levels in December. To drive this recovery further we are investing £110m in a range of measures to boost capacity, including recruiting 1,600 new staff and shortly opening several more Nightingale Courts. These efforts will be bolstered by an extra £337m the government is spending next year to deliver swifter justice and support to victims, while £76 million will further increase capacity in family courts and tribunals.

**Fines****Shabana Mahmood:****[134404]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department has targets in place on the maximum waiting period expected for someone in receipt of universal credit to receive a decision on court fine deductions payment plans if they are queried by the claimant.

**Chris Philp:**

No departmental targets exist in respect of reviewing requests to withdraw a deduction from benefit order. In most cases, a decision will be made immediately over the phone. Timescales may vary dependant on how and why a request is made, if supporting documentation is required to support a decision, and whether the matter needs to be referred back to Court.

**Juries: Coronavirus****Rosie Cooper:****[137161]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the safety of elderly and vulnerable members of the public who are summoned for jury service during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Chris Philp:**

HM Courts and Tribunals Service has well entrenched safeguards to ensure safety of all people in its buildings. This includes vulnerable people selected for jury service who are at particular risk if leaving their homes. From 23 March 2020, when Covid-related restrictions were first commenced, the Jury Central Summoning Bureau (JCSB) has been dealing sympathetically with requests to be excused from serving or deferring service to another date. Each application is considered on its own merit and where possible, the JCSB will look to deferral in the first instance, to enable the individual to undertake their civic responsibilities at a different time.

In addition, HMCTS staff are contacting every juror in the week before they attend court to provide them with the opportunity to discuss their personal circumstances.

When jurors (and any others) do come to court, HMCTS has in place a range of safety measures and controls, to ensure that they remain safe whilst in our buildings. These measures have been developed in line with and are validated against, relevant public health standards to ensure court and tribunal buildings are Covid secure. The measures have all been reviewed in light of continually developing circumstances. This has enabled HMCTS to deliver its vital public services, including jury trials, throughout the period affected by pandemic-related restrictions.

The framework of measures developed and implemented generally to ensure Covid-related risks are appropriately managed and controlled is set out in the [HMCTS Organisational Risk Assessment](#). Among the measures embedded across the court and tribunal estate are significantly enhanced cleaning regimes, the provision of washing facilities and sanitiser throughout buildings for users as well as staff and judiciary, social distancing measures implemented, and a requirement for face coverings in all public and communal areas. Juror-specific controls introduced have included the provision of screens in courtrooms and deliberation suites where local, site-specific risk assessments demonstrate the requirement to ensure and enhance their safety.

HMCTS has published, and regularly updates, a full suite of information on its [Covid-secure practices](#). Weekly updates are now sent direct to a range of key stakeholders,

social media tools are routinely used to try to reach ever-wider audiences, and in all court and tribunal venues, clear signage is displayed to promote and explain our safety measures.

We have invested considerable effort to assure ourselves as to compliance on the ground. We also have responsive complaints and escalation procedures in case they are necessary. We ask all users of the courts and tribunals – including but not limited to jurors – to take personal responsibility, for adhering to the simple and well-understood hands/face/space protocols prevalent across society generally. Tailored information and guidance on Covid safety is provided to jurors in this regard.

### ■ Legal Aid Scheme: Criminal Proceedings

**Karl Turner:** [R] [\[136505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many hardship payments have been claimed by legal aid providers to date; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of those payments in supporting advocates.

**Karl Turner:** [R] [\[136506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effect of low volumes of Crown Court completions on the viability of the criminal legal aid market.

**Karl Turner:** [R] [\[136507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what volume of civil legal aid work remains unbilled.

**Karl Turner:** [R] [\[136508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what volume of criminal legal aid work remains unbilled.

#### **Alex Chalk:**

Between 1 May 2020 to 8 January 2021, a total of 2,343 hardship claims were received, which includes those made by both litigators and advocates. The LAA made payment in respect of over 99% of these claims. In light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MoJ brought in Regulation changes which substantially lowered the thresholds at which a hardship claim can be submitted.

The LAA keeps the criminal legal aid market under constant review. We have contacted all providers where the majority of their income from publicly funded work is dependent upon the Crown Court. The small minority that reported that they had financial concerns are being monitored on a regular basis.

The long-term sustainability of the criminal legal aid market will be the focus of an independent review, to launch in January 2021. This is the latest step in the Criminal Legal Aid Review, which has already led to up to £51m per year in new payments for the sector that was announced in the summer. It forms part of wider work to ensure criminal defence remains an enduringly attractive career for practitioners.

In addition to the support schemes offered by the government, the LAA has introduced a number of measures to allow providers to be paid more quickly. All of the measures taken by the LAA are set out on our gov.uk page:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-legal-aid-agency-contingency-response#financial-relief-page>.

Across the LAA's civil funding schemes, namely family mediation, legal help, controlled legal representation, and civil representation, there were 277,829 live cases unbilled as at the 30 September 2020, which is the latest period for which these figures are available. The LAA statistics compiled and published on a quarterly basis, as yet the December 2020 figures are not yet finalised.

The LAA is unable to provide volumes on unbilled criminal legal aid work within the costs limit. This is because our systems do not have a 'final bill indicator' that would enable automated searches meaning we would be required to conduct case by case searches. Therefore, the information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

#### ■ Legal Aid Scheme: Special Guardianship Orders

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[136465]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress his Department has made on expanding the scope of legal aid to cover special guardianship orders in private family proceedings as set out in Legal Support Action Plan (February 2019); and if he will meet interested parties.

**Alex Chalk:**

In February 2019 as part of the Legal Support Action Plan, we committed to bringing special guardianship orders into scope of legal aid.

Work to progress this specific action has been delayed, most recently, due to the focus on the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the prioritisation of justice recovery.

We now intend to re-start the work - looking at the scope for extending legal aid to special guardians in private law proceedings. To ensure we approach this in the appropriate way, we plan to include consideration of further representations from expert stakeholders including the Cross-Party Parliamentary Taskforce on Kinship Care, the Family Rights Group and the Law Society.

#### ■ Prison Officers: Pay

**Grahame Morris:**

[136498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Prison Service Pay Review Body's Nineteenth Report on England and Wales 2020, Recommendation 3, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of increasing annual pay for Fair and Sustainable National Band 3 Prison Officers by £3,000.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The 20/21 PSPRB report included a recommendation, recommendation 3, to uplift the pay of Band 3 prison staff on F&S terms by £3,000. This recommendation was ultimately rejected by the government and this was announced on 10 December 2020. Nonetheless, this was the third year in a row that prison staff have benefitted from an award of at least 2% - which delivered an above inflation increase.

The Department estimates the total cost of increasing annual pay for all Fair and Sustainable Band 3 Prison Officers by £3,000 to be around £35.3m. However, the total cost of this £3,000 increase would be around £46.8m, as the £3,000 uplift would also be applied to non-operational prison service colleagues paid within the same band.

Prison Officers working in the 31 'Market Supplement' sites (primarily in London and the South East), already receive a supplement of £3,000 - £5,000 to support recruitment and retention.

**■ Prison Service: Resignations****Grahame Morris:**[\[136497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Prison Service Pay Review Body's Nineteenth Report on England and Wales 2020, section 3.35, what estimate he has made of the annual cost to the public purse of new recruits leaving the Prison Service after less than two years of service.

**Lucy Frazer:**

New recruits leaving the prison service after less than two years is detrimental to the running of our prisons. This represents both a financial and non-financial loss that is difficult to quantify, hence this is something my department do not calculate.

My efforts are instead focused on retaining our staff, by upholding a fair and competitive salary; investing in training and professionalisation; and maintaining and improving the safety and security of prisons, for example with tools like PAVA and body-worn cameras.

This year, staff wellbeing is ever more important. This remains a fundamental part of retaining our staff, particularly for new officers as they settle into their challenging roles. All staff have access to support, including 24/7 counselling, trauma support and occupational health assessments, which provide the critical pathways of support for both mental and physical health needs for staff.

**■ Probate****Dame Cheryl Gillan:**[\[137111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many applications for grant of probate his Department has outstanding at the most recent date for which that information is available.

**Dame Cheryl Gillan:**

[\[137112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what average time has been taken by his Department to issue a grant of probate after receipt of an application in the most recent period for which that information is available.

**Alex Chalk:**

Data showing the volume of applications for Grant of Probate that are outstanding includes both cases that have not yet been issued and also all cases which could not be processed by HMCTS, on initial receipt, due to missing or inaccurate information (cases which are 'stopped'):

#### **OUTSTANDING <sup>1</sup> GRANT OF PROBATE APPLICATION AT 27 DECEMBER 2020, ENGLAND AND WALES <sup>1,2,3,4</sup>**

##### **Probate**

	Volume of outstanding applications	Volume of stopped applications
27-Dec-20	20,759	18,824

1. The number of grant applications submitted but not yet withdrawn or issued. Dormant Applications have been excluded.
2. Stopped cases are a subset of the volumes of cases and include cases with a status of 'Case stopped re-issue', 'Case Stopped', 'Stopped'.
3. Data and management information and may differ from previously published data. are not subject to the same level of checks as official statistics. Data in line with published MI (14/1/2021).
4. Data has not been cross referenced with case files and are not subject to the same level of checks as official statistics.

The overall volume of outstanding cases has been steadily reducing in recent months.

The most recently published information regarding waiting times for a grant of probate covers July 2020 to September 2020 and is published on gov.uk via Family Court Statistics Quarterly (Table 26):

#### **AVERAGE TIME TO GRANT ISSUE FOR PROBATE GRANTS, ENGLAND AND WALES <sup>1,2,3</sup>**

	Application submission to grant issue Document receipt to grant issue <sup>3</sup>			
	Mean weeks	Median weeks	Mean weeks	Median weeks
July 2020 to September 2020	6.7	4.9	6	4.4



**AVERAGE TIME TO GRANT ISSUE FOR PROBATE GRANTS, ENGLAND AND WALES** <sup>1,2,3</sup>

Source HMCTS Core Case Data

1. HMCTS Core Case Data (CCD) came into effect at the end of March 2019, following a transition between data systems recording information regarding The Probate Service.
2. The average timeliness figures are produced by calculating the time from application/document receipt (which may be from an earlier period) to the grant issued made in that period.
3. Document receipt occurs after payment has been made and all accompanying paperwork has been received by HMCTS.

In 2020 the level of applications being made increased and the service faced unprecedented challenges due to the impact of Covid 19.

Despite this, and as a result of HMCTS increasing resources to meet demand, the average length of time taken for a Grant of Probate to be issued improved quarter on quarter throughout the year.

## ■ Trials

**Alex Norris:** [R] [\[131431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of defendants offending while awaiting delayed court dates.

**Chris Philp:**

We do not hold any data on offences committed by offenders.

**Alex Norris:** [R] [\[131432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many multi-handler trials were moved to another court in 2020; and which courts those trials were moved to and from.

**Chris Philp:**

Data relating to the volume, and movement, of multi-handler trials are not readily accessible from HM Courts & Tribunals Service IT systems and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost through manual examination of individual case records.

**Alex Norris:** [R] [\[131433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effect of the transfer of multi-handler trials on the length delays to outstanding cases in regions where those multi-handler trials were transferred to.

**Chris Philp:**

Listing is a judicial function and the decision as to whether a case is heard within the same region as the alleged offence, or within another region, is a judicial one.

In general terms the more defendants involved in a case the lengthier the trial is likely to be. Due to requirements for social distancing, multi-hander trials are particularly challenging where dock sizes are not able to accommodate the number of persons required to appear. The Crown Court is using a range of solutions to overcome these challenges, such as using multiple courtrooms to hear multi-hander jury trials or transferring the case to another court that can accommodate larger sized trials.

In addition to opening temporary Nightingale courts, we are ensuring we have additional capacity to alleviate the pressure on courts by increasing capacity in existing courtrooms to hear multi-hander trials. Around 70 courtrooms have been approved, subject to survey and value for money decisions, for modifications to increase capacity for listing multi-hander jury trials.

## LEADER OF THE HOUSE

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

**Sarah Owen:**

[136624]

To ask the Leader of the House, if he will publish the average time taken for the Department of Health and Social Care to answer written questions from hon. Members in (a) September 2020, (b) October 2020, (c) November 2020 and (d) December 2020.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:**

This information is not held by the Office of the Leader of the House of Commons. The Procedure Committee routinely publishes information regarding the performance of departments in answering written questions following the end of each parliamentary session, the last of which was published on 9 October 2020 for the 2017-19 and 2019 sessions. This is available at:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmproced/790/79002.htm>

I have written to all members of the Cabinet to remind them of the importance of timely and helpful responses to written questions. I encourage members who get an unsatisfactory or late response to write to me and I will take this up on their behalf.

### ■ Remote Divisions

**Caroline Lucas:**

[136483]

To ask the Leader of the House, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2021 to Question 133774 on Divisions: Electronic Voting, how many hon. Members were (a) unable to use the electronic method of voting and (b) used the back-up system provided for electronic voting during the two weeks that electronic voting was used in the House of Commons in 2020; what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the House of Lords on the operation of electronic voting in that chamber; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:**

I refer the hon. member to my previous answer (133774), it is the Government's view that the current arrangements for proxy voting are a better alternative to a system of

remote voting. Details regarding the operation and use of the electronic voting system is not a matter for the Government but one for the House.

I have regular meetings with the Leader of the House of Lords. However, what is considered suitable for the House of Lords is not always suitable for the House of Commons and as I have said before, it is essential to strike the balance between facilitating virtual participation and allowing scrutiny and legislation to continue.

## PRIME MINISTER

### ■ Angela Merkel

**Ruth Jones:** [\[134561\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he last spoke to Chancellor Merkel of Germany; and if he will make a statement.

**Boris Johnson:**

This information is available on the gov.uk website.

### ■ Donald Trump

**Ruth Jones:** [\[134560\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, what personal representations he has made to the President of the United States on the events on Capitol Hill on Wednesday 6 January 2021.

**Boris Johnson:**

I refer the Hon Member to the statement I made on Thursday 7 January during the coronavirus press conference.

## SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE FOR THE INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY

### ■ Members' Staff: Voluntary Work

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[136593\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 133126, for what reasons IPSA has not included the geographical restrictions of volunteer subsistence expenses within the wording of the (i) scheme as it relates to volunteers and (ii) IPSA model volunteer contract; what steps IPSA has taken to ensure that policy complies with section 5(1) of the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009; where previously IPSA has published its policy of geographical restrictions of volunteer subsistence costs; when and with whom IPSA consulted ahead of introducing that policy; what steps IPSA took to communicate that policy; on what dates that communication occurred; and whether IPSA has undertaken an assessment of the appropriateness of that policy position during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

IPSA has informed me that the arrangements for volunteer expenses were updated in March 2014 when the new model volunteer agreement was produced. This was communicated through the IPSA bulletin at the time and is available on the IPSA website. The Hon. Member is correct that there is no geographical stipulation in the volunteer expenses rules. There is a balance to strike when drawing up policy and guidance between on the one hand brevity and clarity and on the other detailing all possible scenarios. There will always be an element of judgement and interpretation when unusual situations such as the Covid19 pandemic occur.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[136594\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, on which dates in January 2021 the directors of IPSA (a) met and (b) plan to meet to discuss volunteer subsistence costs; and if IPSA will publish minutes relating to (i) those meetings and (ii) other senior IPSA management meetings in the past six months on volunteer subsistence costs.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

There have not been any specific director meetings on volunteer expenses but the policy team and the Chief Executive of IPSA considered carefully the issue of food costs for volunteers who are working from home. A guiding principle in the stewardship of the use of public funds is that reimbursement is appropriate where there is a work-related expense that is additional to usual living costs. In this case, volunteers working on the parliamentary estate or in a constituency office would be incurring additional expense by needing to purchase food. This is not the case when the volunteer is at home as they would not incur additional food costs whilst working for an MP.

**TRANSPORT****■ Bus Services: Coronavirus****Grahame Morris:**[\[136496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 132861, what documentation his Department has considered relating to requests for sector-specific support for the coach industry.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government continues to work closely with representatives of the coach sector to understand the challenges facing the coach sector and how these can be addressed.

Where appropriate, the Department for Transport has sought and/or considered information and data from representatives of the coach sector to inform its approach. For example, the Department invited operators of scheduled services to submit data regarding planned service levels over Christmas in order to develop a £3 million Christmas support package. The Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) also

provides frequent data on the wider coach sector to the Department, which is used to inform policy decisions.

### ■ Cultural Heritage: Road Signs and Markings

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[136462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answers of 11 January 2021 to Questions 131200 and 131201, if he will ask Highways England to mark England's historic county boundaries on the strategic roads network in line with the Government's guidance on Celebrating the historic counties of England dated 16 July 2019.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Pursuant to the Answers to Questions and 131200 and 131201, the Department has no plans to ask Highways England to implement historic county boundary signs on the Strategic Road Network (SRN).

### ■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus

**Sir Robert Neill:**

[\[135887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will reinstate emergency driving tests for critical workers.

**Rachel Maclean:**

To help stop the spread of coronavirus, routine driving tests have been suspended in all areas of England, Scotland and Wales.

In England and Wales, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) will respond to requests for driving tests from organisations on behalf of frontline mobile emergency workers, who require a driving licence to carry out duties in their employment role. This service is restricted to candidates working in health and social care, and public bodies providing a service in the national interest. The DVSA will contact eligible organisations.

Approved driving instructors and trainers can return to work only for the purpose of supporting a mobile emergency worker with a booked test.

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[137171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will extend driving theory test certificates expiring in 2020-21 by 12 months due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Rachel Maclean:**

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

Ensuring new drivers have current relevant knowledge and skills is a vital part of the training of new drivers, who are disproportionately represented in casualty statistics. Taking all this into consideration, the decision has been made not to extend theory

test certificates and learners will need to pass another theory test if their certificate expires.

## ■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

**Kerry McCarthy:**

**[136460]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support he is giving to councils to encourage them to apply for electric vehicle charging infrastructure funding.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Local authorities can take advantage of the On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS), which assists them with the cost of installing chargepoints on residential streets. The Government's On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme has so far supported over 90 local authorities to fund more than 3,300 chargepoints for residents who do not have off-street parking.

The Scheme is administered on the Department's behalf by the Energy Saving Trust, who offer expert advice and support to local authorities throughout the application process. The Energy Saving Trust, in partnership with the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles, also hosts a library of webinars and guidance documents focussing on the challenges that authorities face when installing charging infrastructure, while promoting the available funding.

Local authorities in England can also take advantage of the Energy Saving Trust's Local Government Support Programme, fully funded by the Department, which offers support to help authorities develop and deliver mobility strategies and programmes to increase adoption of ultra-low emission vehicles. This includes support with the roll out of charging infrastructure through applying for ORCS funding.

The Workplace Charging Scheme offers up to £350 off the installation of charging sockets at workplaces for staff and fleets. Local authorities and the wider public sector can claim up to 40 charging sockets each.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

**[136461]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the level of funding for electric vehicle infrastructure granted to English councils from (a) the ORCS, (b) the GULCS, (c) ULEV Taxi Infrastructure, (d) the JAQU CAF and (e) the CCAV FTZ in the period 2020-21.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Local authorities have an important role in working with the commercial chargepoint market and supporting the rollout of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles in their areas.

The Government has awarded over £5.63m under the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) in the period 2020/2021 and continues to offer assistance under the scheme from which local authorities can bid into to install chargepoints for those without off-street parking.

No funding for electric vehicle infrastructure was given to the GULCS, ULEV Taxi Infrastructure, JAQU CAFs or CCAV FTZs for the period 2020/2021.

## ■ Immigration: Coronavirus

**Stuart C McDonald:**

[137227]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it a requirement for carriers to (a) notify passengers of the need to complete passenger locator forms prior to arrival in the UK, (b) make such forms available to passengers and (c) provide other information on quarantine requirements during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

**Robert Courts:**

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Public Health Information for Passengers Travelling to England) Regulations 2020 were laid on 8 June 2020. These regulations require carriers to ensure that passengers who arrive at a port on a relevant service are provided with information about coronavirus, and related duties and public health guidance.

Guidance for these regulations can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-requirements-to-provide-public-health-information-to-passengers-travelling-to-england>

**Stuart C McDonald:**

[137228]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, who will be responsible for ensuring passengers arriving in the UK have had a negative test for covid-19 prior to departure; and what training and guidance has been provided to enable those checks to operate effectively and accurately.

**Robert Courts:**

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Pre-Departure Testing and Operator Liability) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 require transport operators to ensure that all passengers aged 11 and over travelling from outside the Common Travel Area to England have proof of a negative test result before permitting them to board. They will need to check the test result notification of each passenger ahead of boarding.

Guidance for operators has been circulated which sets out the requirements in detail.

## ■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

**Alexander Stafford:**

[136667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to promote UK manufactured steel use across their Tier 1 contractors.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[136668]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to promote UK manufactured steel use in infrastructure projects.



**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[136669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that procurement spend on steel remains within the UK steel supply chain.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department is working closely with the UK steel industry to ensure UK steel manufacturers and fabricators have clear visibility of future opportunities to supply steel products for our major transport infrastructure projects and understand how they can bid for future work, including by facilitating engagement between UK steel producers and our Tier 1 contractors.

## ■ Motorcycles: Training

**James Wild:**

[\[136074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential legislative changes necessary in order to extend the 2 year Compulsory Basic Training period before a full test or taking CBT again is required.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) helps to ensure riders can ride safely on their own while they prepare to take the full moped or motorcycle test. It is the expectation motorcycle riders will go on and take their full test within two years. If they do not take the motorcycle test within this timeframe, they will need to renew their CBT.

The Government has no current plans to extend the validity period for CBT pass certificates. Riders will need to pass another course if their certificate expires, in order to continue riding.

## ■ Shipping: Taiwan

**Ian Mearns:**

[\[137182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the increased shipping costs for businesses in the UK importing products from Taiwan using shipping containers, and what steps he is taking to reduce the cost to those businesses.

**Robert Courts:**

We have not conducted an assessment on imports from Taiwan. Government has been working closely with the freight sector and wider business to mitigate the impact on UK supply chains of this global container issue.

## ■ Transport: Exhaust Emissions

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[134458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reduce transport emissions in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government is committed to going further, faster to tackle climate change, which is why we are developing a bold and ambitious Transport Decarbonisation Plan to

achieve net zero emissions across all modes of transport. This will set out our plans for reducing emissions at local and national level. Tackling emissions at a local level will make an important contribution to the decarbonisation of transport.

In addition to national policies to reduce emissions, government has already provided funding support for measures to reduce emissions across transport locally, including for electric vehicle charging infrastructure, increasing active travel, and supporting low emission buses. Building on previous funding, the Department recently announced that Coventry is – alongside Oxford – one of two areas progressed to Phase 2 of the All Electric Bus Town or City Competition. Subject to a successful business case, Coventry could be awarded up to £50 million to replace its entire bus fleet with electric buses and the infrastructure needed to support them.

## ■ Travel: Coronavirus

**Taiwo Owatemi:**

**[136628]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure commuters are adhering to the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown restrictions and avoiding non-essential travel.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Everyone must stay at home and only leave their home and travel for limited reasons permitted in law, for example, a medical appointment or work that cannot be done from home. You must also not travel at all if you are experiencing coronavirus symptoms, self-isolating or sharing a household or support bubble with somebody with symptoms.

To manage the new restrictions, the police are stepping up their visibility and will continue to engage with the public. On the railway network, additional British Transport Police officers have been deployed to ensure those who need to take essential journeys can travel safely.

Where people are not complying with the rules to stay at home unless for one of the reasons set out in the regulations, the police will explain and encourage them to follow the rules and issue a direction or a fixed penalty notice of £200 for the first offence, if needed.

Where passengers do need to use the public transport network for a permitted reason, our safer travel guidance sets out the steps they should take, including wearing a face covering unless exempt and maintaining social distancing.

**TREASURY**■ **Beer: Excise Duties****Julian Sturdy:**[\[134423\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of levying a separate, lower level of duty on cask ale to protect it as an important national product.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government has consulted industry and other stakeholders on the possibility of charging different alcohol duty rates in different places as part of its Alcohol Duty Review. As noted in the call for evidence document, while beneficial to recipients, such a differential would add complexity and cost to the existing duty arrangements. The Government is now analysing the feedback received and will respond in due course.

■ **Beer: Small Businesses****Peter Gibson:**[\[136614\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent steps he has taken to support small breweries during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises that breweries have been acutely disrupted by recent necessary restrictions to hospitality businesses.

On the 5 January the Chancellor announced that £594 million is being made available for Local Authorities and the Devolved Administrations to support businesses ineligible for grants for closed businesses, but who might be impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. This funding comes in addition to the £1.1 billion discretionary grant for Local Authorities previously announced. Local Authorities have discretion to determine how much funding to provide to businesses and have the flexibility to target local businesses that are important to their local economies.

Breweries have and will continue to benefit directly from Government support schemes, and indirectly from the support offered to the pubs and restaurants they supply, protecting jobs in the industry. The Government has acted to deliver support through:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which has supported over 9 million jobs across the UK, including supporting jobs in sectors and their supply chains, that have been directly impacted by restrictions. The CJRS has been extended until the end of April 2021.
- A VAT deferral 'New Payment Scheme' whereby businesses which deferred their VAT due between March and June until March 2021 will have the option of making 11 payments spread throughout the year rather than one lump sum.

- Access to affordable, Government backed finance through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBLS) for larger firms and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBL) for small and micro enterprises, which have been extended until the end of March.
- 'Pay as You Grow' options for businesses who have taken out loans through BBLs or CBILS, providing businesses with a longer repayment period and allowing further flexibility on repayments.

## ■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

**Tracey Crouch:**

**[135896]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will delay the start of repayments under the Bounce Bank Loan scheme.

**John Glen:**

Under the Bounce Back Loan scheme, no repayments are due from the borrower for the first 12 months of the loan, giving businesses the breathing space they need during this difficult time. In addition, the Government covers the first 12 months of interest payments charged to the business by the lender.

In order to give businesses further support and flexibility in making their repayments, the Chancellor has announced "Pay as You Grow" (PAYG) options. PAYG will give businesses the option to repay their Bounce Back loan over ten years. This will reduce their average monthly repayments on the loan by almost half. Businesses will also have the option to move temporarily to interest-only payments for periods of up to six months (an option which they can use up to three times), or to pause their repayments entirely for up to six months (an option they can use once and only after having made six payments).

Together, the 12-month payment holiday and interest-free period for borrowers, along with the PAYG options, provide a generous support package giving businesses the time to get back on their feet.

**Nickie Aiken:**

**[136611]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing direct access to funding for the Bounce Back Loan to (a) non-bank organisations and (b) electronic money institutions whose clients may be unable to access the Bounce Back Loan through other lenders.

**John Glen:**

There are 29 accredited lenders under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) including challenger banks and non-bank lenders (NBLs) who have played a vital role in providing 1.4 million businesses with financial support worth over £42 billion throughout the Covid crisis.

The Government position remains that it does not provide capital to financial institutions, who must source their own funding. Last year, the Treasury issued a Call

for Evidence in order to explore a possible private-sector led funding model that would support accredited NBLs to access finance to participate in the BBLs. Based on the feedback we received, including the significant commercial challenges highlighted by both non-bank lenders and the banks, the Government decided not to pursue this funding solution any further. Notwithstanding that decision, we have made changes to allow the transfer and assignment of the Government guarantee for all government-guaranteed loan schemes loans, which is something that NBLs have requested, to support their ability to access funding from commercial partners.

## ■ British Nationals Abroad: EU Countries

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[134406\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the tax implications of the UK leaving the EU for UK citizens whose sole residence is in the EU and who need to sell properties to return to the UK; and if he will make a statement.

**Jesse Norman:**

UK citizens living abroad who are selling overseas properties will face no changes in tax due in the UK as a result of the UK's departure from the EU.

As always, individuals residing overseas who dispose of overseas property may be subject to tax in their country of residence, or the country in which the property is based.

Anyone selling an overseas property should consult the tax authority or advisers in that country for information on any tax due in that country.

## ■ Business: Bank Services

**Kim Johnson:**

[\[136087\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he plans to take to ensure that the banking sector does not cease to offer business bank accounts to support people who have lost their jobs being able to set up in business or as self-employed.

**John Glen:**

Decisions about what products are offered to individual businesses remain commercial decisions for banks and building societies. It would be inappropriate for the Government to intervene in these decisions. But the Government has always been clear that lenders should open to new customers where it is operationally possible for them to do so.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been unprecedented demand for banking services, this accompanied with working restrictions due to social distancing has meant banks have faced significant capacity pressures which has limited their ability to meet demand. Banks are doing all they can to meet this demand in these difficult circumstances.

A number of banks remain open to new business customers, and I would encourage businesses struggling to access banking services to explore the full range of alternative finance providers.

## ■ Child Tax Credit

**Mick Whitley:**

[137313]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of increasing child tax credit.

**Steve Barclay:**

Child Tax Credit was increased in line with CPI in April 2020, and will be further increased as part of the annual uprating exercise in April 2021 to ensure it keeps its value relative to the cost of living.

Alongside these increases, the Government has put in place a comprehensive package of measures to support families on low incomes through the current crisis. This includes income support schemes, support for renters, help with utilities, a £500 million local authority hardship fund, a £7.4 billion package of additional welfare measures, the £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme to ensure families get extra support this winter, and the £220 million Holiday Activities and Food programme to give children access to nutritious meals and engaging activities.

## ■ Children: Day Care

**Rosie Cooper:**

[137162]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Government's tax-free childcare scheme.

**Steve Barclay:**

Tax-Free Childcare provides working parents with 20% support on childcare costs up to £10,000. Eligible working families with children under 12 (or under 17 if disabled) will receive up to £2,000 per child per year (or £4,000 per child per year for disabled children) towards their childcare bills.

While there was been a decrease in the use of TFC at the start of the pandemic, usage rapidly climbed back to pre-Covid levels. 227,000 families used Tax-Free Childcare for 263,000 children in September 2020 ( <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tax-free-childcare-statistics-september-2020> ), this compares with 172,000 families using childcare for 205,000 children in September 2019 ( <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tax-free-childcare-statistics-september-2019> ). The government spent £26.5m on top-up for families in September 2020, compared to £19.0m in September 2019.

In addition, Tax-Free Childcare is fairer than its predecessor, Employer Supported Childcare (including Childcare Vouchers). Tax-Free Childcare broadens access to childcare support for more working families, including parents whose employer doesn't offer vouchers and the self-employed who can't use vouchers. TFC also

provides support per child rather than per parent, meaning lone parent households get the same support as those with more than one parent.

## ■ **Cleaning Services: Coronavirus**

**Matt Vickers:**

**[136659]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether indoor cleaning companies will be given financial compensation for bookings that have been cancelled due to covid-19 restrictions.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises the disruption that the necessary restrictions to protect public health have had on businesses across the UK. That is why we have provided one of the most comprehensive packages of support globally.

Indoor cleaning companies and other businesses who cannot trade or have suffered reduced demand can access the government backed loan schemes, which are open until 31 March 2021, and both the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme remain open until the 30 April 2021. The Government has also provided a total of £1.6 billion of discretionary funding to local authorities in England to enable them to provide grants to local businesses who have been affected by restrictions.

The Government is continuing to collect evidence on the impact of the pandemic on businesses to ensure the support provided is appropriate.

## ■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

**Justin Madders:**

**[134488]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many employees have been furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme who are employed (a) full time, (b) part-time, (c) by an agency, (d) on a flexible basis and (e) on a zero-hour contract since that scheme was introduced.

**Jesse Norman:**

It is not possible to provide an answer to the question in the time available.

HMRC have published statistics on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), the latest release being published on 17 December 2020. These statistics include information on the number of employments supported since the scheme started in March 2020. The statistics can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-coronavirus-covid-19-statistics>.

**Clive Lewis:**

**[137246]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the 30 October 2020 cut-off date for furlough under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on people who started new jobs after that date.



**Daisy Cooper:****[137321]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will amend the deadline for eligibility for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme from 24 September 2020 to 4 January 2021, to reflect the latest announcement on covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was extended on 31 October. For an employee to be eligible for the extension, their employer must have made a PAYE Real Time Information (RTI) submission to HMRC, notifying a payment of earnings for that employee, between 20 March and 30 October 2020. The 30 October cut-off date is necessary and allows as many people as possible to be included by going right up to the day before the announcement, balancing the risk of fraud that existed as soon as the scheme became public. Extending the cut-off date further would have significantly increased the risk of abuse, because claims could not be confidently verified against the risk of fraud by using the data after this point.

The Government understands that the new restrictions are challenging for some businesses. The Chancellor has announced further support, including a new one-off grant of up to £9,000 to support businesses in England which are legally required to close. This comes in addition to the existing monthly grants for closed businesses of up to £3,000 per month. Local authorities will also receive an additional £500m, to a total of £1.6bn, of discretionary funding to allow them to support their local businesses.

The CJRS is not the only support available for employees. The Government has boosted the generosity of the welfare system by £7.4bn in 2020-21 including through a temporary £20 a week increase in the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element.

## ■ Credit Unions

**Gareth Thomas:****[136430]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to allow credit unions to offer (a) insurance services and (b) credit card services.

**John Glen:**

The Government recognises the vital role credit unions play in the financial wellbeing of their communities, providing an ethical home for their members' savings, and affordable loans to those who may otherwise have to resort to high-cost lenders.

The Chancellor announced at Budget 2020 that the Government intends to bring forward changes to the Credit Unions Act to allow credit unions to offer a wider range of products and services. The Government is engaging with sector representatives and carefully assessing options before bringing forward legislation to ensure that we are delivering reforms which meet members' needs and support the development of the credit union sector.

## ■ Directors: Coronavirus

**Sir Mike Penning:**

[136466]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the level of financial pressure experienced during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a directors income support scheme based on company trading profits.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government recognises that many taxpayers have faced extremely difficult circumstances throughout this crisis.

The Government welcomes constructive proposals from stakeholders to improve the design of the SEISS, including the suggestion for a Directors Income Support Scheme (DISS) from the Federation of Small Businesses, ForgottenLtd, Re Legal Consulting Ltd, and ACCA UK. This proposal aims to provide a new system for company directors, based on reported profits. The Government has considered this proposal in detail and given feedback to its sponsors.

Company owner managers could be eligible for other elements of the support available, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (in respect of their salary but not their dividends), Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, increased levels of Universal Credit, mortgage holidays, and other business support grants.

More information about the full range of business support measures is available at: [www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/](http://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/).

## ■ Eat Out to Help Out Scheme: Luton North

**Sarah Owen:**

[137325]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish an evaluation of the (a) financial and (b) public health effects in the Luton North constituency of the Eat Out to Help Out scheme.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

HMRC published official statistics on the Eat Out to Help Out scheme on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020. Regional statistics will be published in due course.

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.

## ■ Economic Situation: Coronavirus

**Anneliese Dodds:**

[\[136603\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his oral contribution of 11 January 2021, Official Report column 26, if he will publish the evidence from the Office for Budget Responsibility and Office for National Statistics which found that the UK's economic performance is in line with comparable countries when corrected for measurement of public sector output.

**John Glen:**

The UK, along with the rest of the world, continues to face significant economic disruption in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic – no major economy avoided a dramatic fall in GDP earlier in the year.

International comparisons of economic performance are challenging, particularly given the different approaches that countries take to measuring the contribution of public services to GDP. The Office for National Statistics stated in the December Quarterly National Accounts that *“international comparisons should be made with care if the estimates being compared are based on different approaches to measuring the volume of non-market output”*.

Further, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) set out in their November Economic and Fiscal Outlook that *“some countries, including the UK, use direct measures of some public sector output but others assume that it is given by the associated inputs. If the latter approach were still used in the UK, then the fall in GDP the second quarter would have been around 4 percentage points smaller.”*

This represents around a fifth of the overall reported fall in UK GDP in the first half of 2020 and, if adjusted for, would leave the UK's performance over this period closer in line with other advanced economies.

## ■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

**Dr Alan Whitehead:**

[\[136429\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will place in the Library the contract the Government has with Zouk Capital for the management of the UK Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund.

**Jesse Norman:**

The UK Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund was launched in August 2019, and Zouk Capital LLP was appointed to manage £200m of Treasury funds and raise matching funds from private investors. The contract between the Government and Zouk Capital is confidential.

**Dr Alan Whitehead:**

[\[137114\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what performance metrics his Department uses to assess the UK Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund.

**Jesse Norman:**

The UK Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund (CIIF) was launched in August 2019, and Zouk Capital LLP was appointed to manage £200 million of Treasury funds and raise matching funds from private investors.

The aim of using this model of a commercially managed fund is to catalyse private sector investment into the electric vehicle charging sector in order to accelerate the roll-out of publicly accessible charging infrastructure. Treasury funds are provided on a pari passu basis with private sector investors, with the intention of all limited partners, including Treasury, earning a commercial return. Zouk has made two investments so far, and despite the challenges of the pandemic, has maintained its momentum of fund raising. So far, it is therefore meeting the objectives of catalysing private sector investment and accelerating the roll-out of publicly accessible charging infrastructure.

**■ Energy: VAT****Mr Steve Baker:**[\[134419\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the VAT rate to zero for existing dwellings when making energy efficient improvements as part of any climate change strategy.

**Jesse Norman:**

The installation of various environmentally friendly home improvement materials, such as insulation and draft stripping, is already eligible for relief from VAT, subject to certain conditions.

Although the Government keeps all taxes under review, there are no plans to change the VAT treatment of home improvements at present.

**■ Fire Prevention: VAT****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[134379\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of exempting (a) fire alarms and (b) other fire safety products from VAT.

**Jesse Norman:**

The supply of fire safety equipment, under qualifying circumstances, is already eligible for VAT relief when provided alongside the construction and renovation of residential or charitable buildings.

Although all taxes are kept under review, the Government has no plans to expand these reliefs further.

## ■ Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade: Coronavirus

**Lee Anderson:**

[\[134579\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to encourage consumer spending in (a) non-essential retail and (b) the hospitality sector once covid-19 restrictions on those sectors are lifted.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government understands that this is a very challenging time for the UK's retail and hospitality sector and recognises that these sectors have been significantly impacted by the pandemic.

The Government will continue to monitor developments, engage with the sector and keep under review the case for further interventions, to support business growth and employment in the retail and hospitality sectors. The best way we can support consumers and businesses is by reopening businesses when it is safe to do so.

The Government has already acted to deliver support to these sectors through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) which has been extended until April; and is protecting businesses with cash grants, Government backed finance through loan schemes, 'Pay as You Grow' long-term repayments options, a VAT cut, a VAT deferral for up to 12 months, a 12-month business rates holiday; and a moratorium on evictions to protect commercial tenants.

## ■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

**Sir Alan Campbell:**

[\[134360\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will undertake an immediate review of all covid-19 related support available to the hospitality sector in order to implement changes to the structure and format of support to allow suppliers to benefit alongside venues.

**Sir Alan Campbell:**

[\[134361\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will increase access to funding for the supply chain of the hospitality sector during the covid-19 outbreak potentially through invoice factoring to ease cash flow as suppliers commit resources to hospitality restart.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises that businesses within the hospitality supply chain have been acutely disrupted by recent necessary restrictions to hospitality businesses. The Government has acted to deliver support to these businesses, and ease cash flow problems for businesses through:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which has supported over 9 million jobs across the UK, including supporting jobs in sectors and their supply chains that have been directly impacted by restrictions. The CJRS has been extended until the end of April 2021.
- Local Authorities (in England) have been given an additional £500 million of discretionary funding to support local businesses. This builds on the £1.1 billion

discretionary funding which Local Authorities in England have already received. Local Authorities have discretion to determine how much funding to provide to businesses and have the flexibility to target local businesses that are important to their local economies.

- A 12-month business rates holiday for all eligible retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in England, saving around 350,000 ratepayers a combined £10bn.
- A VAT deferral 'New Payment Scheme' whereby businesses which deferred their VAT due between March and June until March 2021 will have the option of making 11 payments spread throughout the year rather than one lump sum.

In addition to this wide-ranging package of support, we have also ensured businesses can access affordable, Government backed finance through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBLS) for larger firms and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBL) for small and micro enterprises. Under both CBILS and BBLs, invoice finance facilities in addition to term loans, overdrafts, and asset financing facilities are available to eligible businesses. Businesses will also be given until the end of March to access the BBLs, CBILS, and the CLBLS. 'Pay as You Grow' options are also available for businesses which have taken out loans through BBLs or CBILS, giving a longer repayment period and allowing further flexibility on repayments.

These businesses have and will continue to benefit directly from Government support schemes, and indirectly from the support offered to the pubs and restaurants they supply, protecting jobs in the industry. In the meantime, the Government will continue to engage with the sector and keep under review the case for further interventions, including measures to ease cash flow problems.

**Emma Hardy:**

**[134534]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support the hospitality industry during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown period.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

On 5 January the Chancellor announced one-off top up grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses worth up to £9,000 per property to help businesses through to the Spring.

The cash is provided on a per-property basis to support businesses through the latest restrictions, and is expected to benefit over 600,000 business properties, worth £4 billion in total across all nations of the UK. This grant comes in addition to the Local Restriction Support Grants worth up to £3,000 a month for closed businesses.

A further £594 million is also being made available for Local Authorities and the Devolved Administrations to support other businesses not eligible for the grants, that might be affected by the restrictions. This funding also comes in addition to £1.1 billion further discretionary grant funding for Local Authorities.

The Government is also delivering support to the hospitality sector through:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which has supported 1.4 million jobs across the hospitality sector and has been extended until the end of April 2021.
- An additional £1,000 Christmas grant for 'wet-led pubs' who missed out on business during the busy Christmas period.
- A VAT deferral 'New Payment Scheme' whereby businesses which deferred their VAT due between March and June until March 2021 will have the option of making 11 payments spread throughout the year rather than one lump sum.
- Access to affordable, Government-backed finance through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBLS) for larger firms, along with the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBL) for small and micro enterprises.
- A 12-month business rates holiday for all eligible retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in England, saving around 350,000 ratepayers a combined £10 billion.

The Government is continuing to collect evidence on the impact of the pandemic on the hospitality industry and work with businesses and representative groups to ensure that support provided is right for this industry and the economy as a whole.

#### ■ Off-payroll Working: Coronavirus

**Marco Longhi:**

[\[134619\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the IR35 reforms for twelve months in light of the effect on businesses of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has been clear that the reform of the off-payroll working rules will be introduced on 6 April 2021. The Government remains committed to introducing this policy in order to address the unfairness of non-compliance with the existing off-payroll working rules. Organisations should continue to prepare for the implementation of the reform. Since the reform was delayed in April 2020, Parliament has passed legislation enacting the reform from April 2021.

Many businesses have already made significant preparations to ensure they are ready for the reform and HMRC are committed to supporting businesses and individuals in the run up to and beyond the reform being implemented. HMRC are providing webinars, workshops and one-to-one calls as well as publishing updated guidance and factsheets to enable businesses to prepare.

#### ■ Personal Care Services: Coronavirus

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[134380\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to provide additional financial support to (a) beauty and (b) hair salons during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.



**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on businesses and workers in the beauty industry across the UK.

We are providing additional funding worth £4.6 billion across the UK to support businesses during the new national lockdown. All businesses in England which are legally required to close as a result of this lockdown will receive one-off grants of up to £9,000. We are also providing all English local authorities with an additional £500m of discretionary business grant funding. This extra support comes on top of existing monthly grant support for closed businesses.

We have taken additional steps to support businesses requiring access to finance by extending four of the temporary government-backed loan schemes to 31st January and introducing flexibility on some of their repayments. To protect jobs and businesses, including those in the beauty sector, we have also extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) for all parts of the UK until the end of April 2021.

As measures to control the virus change, it is right that government support should also evolve. Because of this, we continue to take a flexible approach and keep all impacts and policies under review.

**■ Revenue and Customs: Yorkshire and the Humber****Jon Trickett:****[134351]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many HMRC tax offices there were in Yorkshire and the Humber region in (a) 2010 and (b) 2020.

**Jesse Norman:**

In January 2010, HMRC had 34 staffed offices and stand-alone enquiry centres in Yorkshire and the Humber region.

On 19 October 2020, an updated list of HMRC office closures, current staffed offices and regional centre opening dates, on a region by region basis, was committed to the House of Commons Library. This list has been deposited as paper reference DEP 2020-0609: [http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020-0609/HMRC\\_Office\\_closures\\_and\\_regional\\_centre\\_opening\\_dates.pdf](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020-0609/HMRC_Office_closures_and_regional_centre_opening_dates.pdf).

**■ Self-employed: Coronavirus****Neale Hanvey:****[137329]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the recommendation of the Treasury Committee in its report Economic impact of coronavirus: Gaps in support that the Government undertake an urgent review to see how it can extend support to the newly self-employed who are unable to benefit from the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has acknowledged the recommendations of the Treasury Select Committee report, the Economic impact of coronavirus: Gaps in Support.

The Committee states in its report that it recognises the challenges of offering support to those who need it while implementing the safeguards required to mitigate the very real risk of fraudulent claims for support.

The practical issues that prevented the Government from being able to include the newly self-employed in 2019-20 in the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) still remain. The latest year for which HMRC have tax returns for all self-employed individuals is 2018/19.

**■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme****Alison Thewliss:**[\[136549\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether people who have submitted tax returns for 2019-20 will be eligible to apply for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme from 31 January 2021.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government will continue to look for ways to improve the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). It continues to consider the matter carefully and work closely with stakeholders to explore how best to support different groups. The Government will set out further details on the fourth SEISS grant in due course.

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

**Catherine West:**[\[136576\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to (a) close the gaps in the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme identified by the Institute for Fiscal Studies in the fourth round of the scheme for February-April 2021 and (b) pay arrears in respect of rounds one to three inclusive for creative (i) professionals and (ii) other self-employed people who have been ineligible from support under the scheme since March 2020.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) has provided and will continue to provide generous support to self-employed people who meet the eligibility criteria.

The Government recognises that taxpayers have faced immense challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government has prioritised delivering support to as many people as possible while guarding against the risk of fraud or abuse.

The design of the SEISS, including the eligibility requirements that an individual's trading profits must be no more than £50,000 and at least equal to their non-trading income, means it is targeted at those who most need it, and who are most reliant on their self-employment income.

The first SEISS grant supported 2.7 million individuals with claims totalling £7.8 billion. A further £5.9 billion has been claimed through the second grant and, as of 13 December, £4.8 billion through the third SEISS grant.

The fourth grant will cover February to April 2021. The Government will set out further details in due course

The SEISS continues to be just one element of a comprehensive package of support for the self-employed which includes Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

The Government recognises the value of the cultural sector and creative professionals and has announced a £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund to protect the cultural sectors through the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, more than £790m of grants and loans have been allocated to over 3,000 cultural organisations in England. Organisations supported include galleries, theatres, museums, orchestras, music venues, comedy clubs and festivals. This funding will help to support jobs and organisations across the country.

**Catherine West:**

**[136577]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will ensure that the fourth grant of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme covering February-April 2021 remains at 80 per cent of an individual's average monthly trading profits.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) has provided and will continue to provide generous support to self-employed people who meet the eligibility criteria. The third grant, combined with up to £14,070 worth of support for each individual from the first and second grants, makes the SEISS one of the most generous schemes for the self-employed in the world.

The first SEISS grant supported 2.7 million individuals with claims totalling £7.8 billion. A further £5.9 billion has been claimed through the second grant and, as of 13 December, £4.8 billion through the third SEISS grant.

The fourth grant will cover February to April 2021. The Government will set out further details, including the level of the fourth grant, in due course.

**■ Service Industries: Coronavirus****Nadia Whittome:****[136676]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he will take to support (a) employers and (b) furloughed employees in the events and hospitality industry who are in financial difficulty.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on sectors like events and hospitality.

We have already announced considerable and unprecedented support for businesses and individuals through the national restrictions.

Businesses forced to close can claim grants of up to £3,000 per month (worth over £1 billion per month) through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed). Any business in England forced to close due to national or local restrictions can claim grants, via their local authority, of up to £3,000 per month, per business premises, depending on rateable value.

In addition, on 5th January, the Government announced an extra £4.6 billion to protect jobs and support affected businesses as restrictions get tougher. Businesses forced to close can claim a one-off grant of up to £9,000. This is in addition to the monthly closed grant amounts above. Local authorities (in England) will also be given an additional £500 million discretionary funding to support their local businesses. This builds on the £1.1 billion discretionary funding (worth £20 per head of population) which local authorities in England have already received to support their local economies and help businesses impacted

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has been extended until the end of April. This provides a substantial grant for employers to cover 80% of the wages of their employees. As of 13 December, CJRS has supported 9.9 million jobs at the cost of roughly £46.4bn.

Furthermore, individuals who are furloughed, become unemployed, or anyone who sees a fall in their earnings, may become eligible for support through the welfare system, notably, Universal Credit. We have announced significant temporary extra support worth £7.4bn in 2020-21 for families who rely on the safety net of the welfare system. This includes a £20 per week increase to the 2020-21 UC standard allowance, a suspension of the Minimum Income Floor for self-employed UC claimants, and an increase in UC and Housing Benefit Local Housing Allowance rates so they cover the lowest third of local rents

We will continue to monitor the impact of government support on public services, businesses, individuals and sectors, including the events and hospitality sector, as we respond to this pandemic. But we must recognise that it will not be possible to preserve every job or business indefinitely, nor stand in the way of the economy adapting and people finding new jobs or starting new businesses.

## ■ Soft Drinks: Taxation

**Tim Loughton:**

**[137115]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish a list of the organisations that have received funding from the Sugar Tax Levy; and what steps he is taking to promote applications for funding from that Levy.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Revenue from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy is not formally linked to any specific spending, nor do we take applications for funding. Departmental spend to tackle obesity and promote children's health is allocated through Spending Reviews.

## ■ Stamp Duty Land Tax: Coronavirus

**Jane Stevenson:**

**[137311]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the July 2020 stamp duty holiday on the housing market; and if he will make a statement.

**Jesse Norman:**

The SDLT holiday was designed to create an immediate boost in housing transactions. In April 2020, during the peak of the first lockdown, transactions fell by more than 50% on the month before.

The number of property transactions has increased each month since then and, according to the latest data from HMRC, in November 2020 there were 13% more transactions than in November 2019.

Officials are monitoring the housing market closely.

## ■ Taxation: Self-assessment

**Dan Jarvis:**

**[136524]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to extend the period that people can defer their self-assessment tax return payments to HMRC in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government announced in March 2020 that they would defer Self-Assessment (SA) Payments on Account (POA) that were due to be paid by 31st July 2020 to 31st January 2021. This measure enabled the easing of cash-flow pressures on those SA taxpayers who were due to pay their POA by 31st July in a difficult period in the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are established procedures in place should any taxpayer wish to reduce their POA for the coming tax year which are due on 31st January 2021 and 31st July 2021. Guidance on how a taxpayer can reduce their POA can be found at:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/self-assessment-claim-to-reduce-payments-on-account-sa303](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/self-assessment-claim-to-reduce-payments-on-account-sa303).

SA taxpayers can also apply online for a Time to Pay arrangement (TTP). This offers additional support to help spread the cost of a taxpayer's tax bill into monthly payments. Guidance on TTP arrangements can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/difficulties-paying-hmrc>.

## ■ UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement

**Paul Blomfield:**

[137197]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to publish an impact assessment of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement each quarter for 2021, with reference to (a) sectors of the economy and (b) all regions and nations of the UK.

**John Glen:**

The Government does not intend to produce an Impact Assessment. We have consistently said that it would be impossible for a single model, number or scenario to capture that complexity or represent the varying impacts that will be felt across different parts of the economy.

The Government has secured a deal that will benefit families and businesses across the UK, we can now take full advantage of the opportunities available to us.

## ■ VAT: Coronavirus

**Ruth Jones:**

[134554]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to enable businesses to stagger payments of VAT that were deferred due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

As part of the Winter Economy Plan, the Government announced further support for taxpayers who deferred their VAT between 20 March 2020 and 30 June 2020. The VAT deferral new payment scheme will allow taxpayers to spread what they owe over smaller monthly payments. The scheme will open in February. Further information can be found on GOV.UK.

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

### ■ Equality

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[137304]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, in 2010, whether the Government plans to enact the Equality Act's socio-economic duty.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

There are no plans to implement the socio-economic duty for English and cross-border bodies. Such a general "due regard" duty has the potential to become a tick-box exercise, complied with to minimise the risk of legal challenge rather than to promote real change in social mobility.

## ■ Equality: Databases

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[137306\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to her oral contribution of 13 January 2021, Official Report, on the launch of an equality data project which will look at the life paths of individuals across the UK and deliver hard data about the barriers that people face, what data types he plans to collate.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Equality Data Programme will include aggregated, and individual-level, data across a range of themes. We will focus on the themes that matter to individuals' lives such as the economy, health, education, justice and living standards. We will consider data on a wide range of personal characteristics, including socioeconomic status and geography.

## ■ Equality: Impact Assessments

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[137302\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to her oral contribution of 25 November 2020, Official Report, column 814, whether there have been Equality Impact Assessments which have not been published.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

In compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), Whitehall Departments routinely undertake equality assessments of policy and operational changes.

The documentation produced as part of these assessments is often informally referred to as an 'equality impact assessment' but production of an equality impact assessment is not a legal requirement, and different documentary formats may be appropriate depending on the function in question.

There is no statutory requirement to publish assessments and there are certainly assessments that are not published. Decisions on publication are a matter for the public body concerned, given the particular circumstances.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

## ■ Cold Weather Payments

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[137319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending cold weather payments to cover all UK postcodes.

**Guy Opperman:**

Cold Weather Payment schemes already cover all UK postcodes, helping vulnerable people in receipt of certain income-related benefits to meet the additional costs of heating during periods of severe cold weather between 1<sup>st</sup> November and 31<sup>st</sup> March.



In both the department's Cold Weather Payment scheme covering Great Britain and Northern Ireland's separate scheme, an automatic payment of £25 is made when the average temperature has been recorded as, or is forecast to be, zero degrees centigrade or below, over seven consecutive days at the weather station linked to an eligible person's postcode.

## ■ Food Banks: Yorkshire and the Humber

**Jon Trickett:**

[\[134345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many food banks there were in Yorkshire and the Humber region in (a) 2010 and (b) 2020.

**Will Quince:**

There are no official statistics on the number of food banks, which are independent, charitable organisations

Throughout this pandemic, this Government has delivered an unprecedented package of support to protect jobs and businesses and, for those in most need, injected billions into the welfare system. The new Covid Winter Grant Scheme builds on that support with an additional £170m for local authorities in England, to support families with children and other vulnerable people with the cost of food and essential utilities this winter and beyond.

## ■ Kickstart Scheme

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[134612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the Kickstart scheme on supported internships.

**Mims Davies:**

We have been working closely with Department for Education colleagues who deliver the Internship programme to support those young people with special educational needs. We are confident that Kickstart is complementary to other programmes underway, including supported internships. Employers applying for Kickstart funding must demonstrate that any job they plan to offer through Kickstart is additional and would not have otherwise existed or been previously planned. Young people are referred to the Kickstart scheme by their Work Coach, who are able to make the best judgement as to the appropriate work programme for them.

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[136049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason companies have been limited to employ one Kickstart member of staff per three existing employees.

**Mims Davies:**

The ratio of existing employees to potential Kickstart participants is one element that is examined when an application for funding from the Department for Work and Pensions' Kickstart scheme is assessed. Organisations taking on young people through the Kickstart Scheme need to be able to provide support to help the

participant have a good experience from the Scheme. A ratio of less than three members of staff to each participant person does not result in an automatic rejection but is one of a number of factors we take into account when reaching a determination about the quality of job placement being proposed.

We have recently improved the assessment process to allow more nuanced approach when considering applications. Whilst maintaining a high standard for Kickstart places, these changes mean that more applications are now successful

**Justin Madders:**

[\[137230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 11 December 2020 to Question 122760 on the Kickstart scheme, how many organisations in each region have applied to be representatives of the Kickstart scheme since that scheme was launched on 2 September 2020.

**Mims Davies:**

As of 11/01/21, we have received 6,232 applications for funding from the Kickstart Scheme. We are not currently able to break this figure down by region, an organisation may also submit multiple applications for funding.

#### ■ **Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations**

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**

[\[136531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether all applicants for personal independence payment, whose assessments are currently telephone-based, are offered the option of recorded assessments.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

Audio recording of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) telephone assessments is live in all areas. Claimants are required to make a request to the Assessment Provider in order to have their PIP assessment recorded, thereby opting-in to the recording of their assessment being undertaken.

#### ■ **Social Security Benefits: Canada**

**Chris Elmore:**

[\[134520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has responded to the Canadian Government's request for a reciprocal social security arrangement covering uprating; and if she will make a statement.

**Chris Elmore:**

[\[134521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she last discussed a reciprocal social security agreement with the Government of Canada.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Department for Work and Pensions has not had any recent discussions on this issue with the Government of Canada. The Department plans to respond shortly to the request from Canada for a reciprocal social security agreement

**■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus****Seema Malhotra:** [\[137215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the eligibility criteria of the benefit cap grace period.

**Mims Davies:**

There are no plans to amend the eligibility of the benefit cap grace period. Helping claimants back into work, including through delivery of our Plan for Jobs, remains a primary focus, as returning to employment will significantly increase the likelihood of a household not being affected by the cap.

**■ Universal Credit****Neil Gray:** [\[134448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2020 to Question 116496, on Universal Credit: Coronavirus, what the revised timeframe is for the universal credit managed migration pilot in Harrogate.

**Neil Gray:** [\[134449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the minimum number of people is that will be involved in the universal credit managed migration pilot in Harrogate before it ends.

**Will Quince:**

The Pilot remains suspended as the Department continues to focus on delivering its part of the Government's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Universal Credit (Managed Migration Pilot and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2019 allow the Department to pilot moving claimants to Universal Credit from legacy benefits. Prior to its suspension, the emphasis of the pilot was not to focus on the number of people moved, but to assist with developing the design of the Move to UC service and its processes, to provide the best possible support for claimants who are moved to Universal Credit.

**Justin Madders:** [\[134489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 7 October 2020 to Question 96942, what recent assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of security for online universal credit journals.

**Will Quince:**

Since my answer of 7 October 2020 to Question 96942, no specific assessments have been made. The Department continuously tests the security and integrity of the digital systems which deliver Universal Credit, including online journals.

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[134539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of removing the disparity in the level of private pension deductions from universal credit with those made from earned income.

**Will Quince:**

No assessment has been made. There are no plans to align the treatment of pension income with that for earned income when calculating Universal Credit entitlement.

■ **Universal Credit: Coronavirus**

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[136550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of suspending in-work conditionality requirements for universal credit recipients as a result of the economic effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the job market.

**Mims Davies:**

Claimants who are in work with earnings above the Administrative Earnings Threshold are not currently expected to undertake any mandatory work-related activity in Universal Credit.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

## BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

## ■ Use of the Industrial Development Act 1982 for Coronavirus related assistance

**Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully):** [\[HCWS715\]](#)

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Hon. Members to bring to their attention spend under the Industrial Development Act 1982. In addition to the obligation to report on spend under the Industrial Development Act annually, the Coronavirus Act 2020 created a new quarterly reporting requirement for spend which has been designated as addressing the effects of coronavirus. This statement fulfils that purpose.

The statement also includes a report of the movement in contingent liability during the quarter. Hon. Members will wish to note that measures such as Local Authority grants, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, and tax measures such as the suspension of Business Rates are not provided under the Industrial Development Act 1982 and hence are not included below.

This report covers the second quarter of 2020, from 1 April to 30 June 2020, in accordance with the Coronavirus Act. The Q1 Written Ministerial Statement was published on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

***Spend under the Coronavirus Act 2020***

Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, there is a requirement to lay before Parliament details of the amount of assistance designated as Coronavirus related provided in each relevant quarter.

In the period from 1 April to 30 June 2020, the following expenditures were incurred:

ACTUAL EXPENDITURE OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT FROM 1 APRIL 2020 TO 30 JUNE 2020	
	£47,637,000

All expenditure of assistance provided by Her Majesty's Government from 25 March 2020	£47,637,000
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***Expenditure by Department***

ACTUAL EXPENDITURE OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY:	
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	£47,600,000
Competition Appeal Tribunal	£37,000

***Contingent liability under the Coronavirus Act 2020***

CONTINGENT LIABILITY OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FROM 1 APRIL

2020 TO 30 JUNE 2020	£30,383,783,770
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All contingent liability of assistance provided by the Secretary of State from 25 March 2020	£30,456,183,770
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**EDUCATION****■ Awarding Qualifications in 2021****The Minister of State for School Standards (Nick Gibb):****[[HCWS714](#)]**

On Friday 15 January, Ofqual and the Department for Education published a joint consultation outlining detailed proposals for alternative arrangements for awarding general, vocational and technical qualifications in summer 2021.

This consultation, outlined in ‘[consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021](#)’ and ‘[consultation on alternative arrangements for the award of VTQs and other general qualifications in 2021](#)’, will be open for two weeks ending on 29 January. Responses can be completed using the online response forms on gov.uk for [GCSE, AS and A levels](#) and for [vocational and technical qualifications](#).

In his statement to the House on 6 January, the Secretary of State confirmed proposals that students taking GCSE, AS and A levels this summer should be awarded grades based on an assessment by their teachers. Teacher’s judgement will be based on a range of evidence; Ofqual and the department will consult on the evidence needed to inform teachers’ assessments of their students’ grades, including providing externally set papers to support their assessments. Teachers will be provided with training and guidance to support them.

We recognise that students who are not studying within a school or college, for example because they are home educated, must be able to be issued with a grade. We are seeking views on the proposals that would enable them to do so.

The consultation also proposes that exam boards should both provide information for schools and colleges to inform their own quality assurance, and that the exam boards themselves should undertake checks of schools’ and colleges’ processes and the evidence for the grades submitted. We propose that all students will have a route to appeal their grades.

The approach set out in the consultation for vocational and technical qualifications which are taken instead of or alongside GCSEs, AS and A levels, is consistent with approach for these qualifications. For other general qualifications, such as Core Maths, Pre-U and

the International Baccalaureate, the consultation also proposes the awarding approach should be similar to GCSEs, AS and A levels.

The consultation proposes that those vocational and technical qualifications with practical exams and assessments which are required to demonstrate occupational competence for employment and apprenticeships, should continue to take place where they can be delivered in line with public health guidelines, including remotely.

'On-demand' assessments of shorter, focused qualifications such as Functional Skills that can be delivered in line with public health guidelines, including remotely, should be permitted to continue to proceed.

The consultation seeks the views of students, parents and carers, teachers, school and college leaders before decisions are made on final arrangements. We will also take into account the views of further and higher education and employers, to ensure that young people can move onto the next stage of their lives.

## ■ Children's Social Care Update

**The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):**

**[[HCWS717](#)]**

This Government is committed to levelling up across the country. In order to do this, it is absolutely vital that we start with children and families – particularly the most vulnerable – so that we can realise the benefits of establishing firm and loving foundations, both to individuals and to society for generations to come.

Further to my Written Ministerial Statement of 12 February 2020, I am making this statement to launch the independent review of children's social care, which was committed to in the government's manifesto. I am pleased to inform Honourable and Right Honourable members that the review will be carried out by Josh MacAlister, who is the Founder and Chief Executive of the children's social work charity Frontline. Josh brings both an understanding of the challenges facing the system that supports vulnerable children and families and experience of developing and implementing innovative solutions.

The review will start from children's experiences and look at the whole system of support, safeguarding, protection and care and the children's journey into and out of that system, including relevant aspects of preventative service that are provided to children and families as part of early help. It will engage with children, young people, adults and families with direct experience of children's social care, in order to ensure those individuals' views and lived experience are fully embedded in the review's work. The review will aim to improve children and young people's lives and outcomes and address major challenges facing the system.

I am placing copies of the terms of reference in the libraries of the House, and it is also available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) alongside other documents that have accompanied the launch of the review.



**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE****■ Update on Overseas Territories**

**Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Dominic Raab):** [\[HCWS716\]](#)

The UK is extremely concerned about the state of good governance in the British Virgin Islands (BVI).

A consistent and deeply troubling array of concerns have been put to the Governor by local institutions and the community. The Governor has set out these concerns to me, they include, but are not limited to:

- Allegations of political interference and coercion in relation to appointments in the public service and statutory boards, the criminal justice system and individual criminal cases;
- Claims that people in public service, media and community leaders have been intimidated to such a degree that they describe living in a climate of fear;
- Allegations that funds set aside for struggling families during the pandemic may have been re-allocated to political allies;
- Concerns around spending on Government contracts without any proper procurement process;
- Misuse of taxpayers' money on infrastructure and transport projects.

Against this backdrop, we are also concerned about the potential vulnerability of the islands to serious organised crime. The scale of this was made clear in November 2020, with the seizure of more than two tonnes of cocaine, worth just under £190 million.

Successive attempts have been made to address these concerns through local institutions, many of which have done commendable work to bring them to light. However, the scope and seriousness of the concerns are now beyond local capacity to address.

The UK Government is responsible for ensuring the security and good governance of BVI. We have a constitutional and moral duty to protect the interests of the people of BVI. We cannot ignore such serious allegations.

With this in mind, on Monday 18 January, the Governor of BVI, supported by the UK Government, announced an independent Commission of Inquiry.

The Commission will inquire into whether there is information to substantiate claims that corruption, abuse of position and serious impropriety has taken place in public office in recent years, and it will make recommendations. The Commission will be led by the Right Honourable Sir Gary Hickinbottom, who will have the powers of a High Court Judge within the territory with respect to gathering evidence. The BVI Commission of Inquiry Ordinance makes provisions for the scope of the inquiry to be adjusted or extended should it prove necessary.

The Government expect the Commissioner to deliver his report to the Governor within six months. At this point, we hope that the UK and BVI will be able to consider the recommendations together in a constructive manner that best serves the people of BVI.

This Government's aim is to build stronger governance for the people of BVI and uphold our commitment to our Overseas Territories and their people.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Community Pharmacy Vaccinations

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment)**  
**(Nadhim Zahawi):** [\[HCWS718\]](#)

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Honourable and Right Honourable members to bring to their attention two contingent liabilities. One relating to clinical negligence liabilities incurred by pharmacy led Covid-19 vaccination sites between 1 January and 30 June 2021. And one relating to a targeted and time-limited state-backed indemnity to care homes, registered or intending to register as "Designated Settings", which are unable to obtain sufficient insurance cover.

On the first, you will be aware that we have initiated the Covid-19 vaccination programme to deliver the vaccine across England. As this programme continues to roll out, we are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I) to stand up sites in every community.

NHSE/I intend to administer the Covid-19 vaccine through Trusts, General Practice and community pharmacy-led settings to ensure adequate vaccination centre coverage across England. Healthcare professionals need clinical negligence indemnity for delivering Covid-19 vaccines. This is provided through the existing state schemes in England for NHS Trusts and GP Practices.

However, community pharmacy are not covered by state indemnity and are obliged to obtain their own commercial insurance. Following engagement with community pharmacy representatives, our assessment was that the insurance market would not be able to comprehensively provide cover for this risk at such short notice, and we agreed the state indemnity.

Without adequate indemnity cover, pharmacies would be unable to commit to the programme. Their participation is crucial as they have been selected to fill geographical gaps in cover or where NHS capacity is such that they are unable to participate. Therefore, DHSC has provided a time limited clinical negligence indemnity to community pharmacy to 30 June 2021, to enable them to engage at pace with this programme. The provision of such an indemnity enables pharmacy contractors to start to run services, whilst the Department and NHS England and Improvement continue to work with the community pharmacy sector on a longer-term approach to insuring community pharmacy for Covid-19 vaccinations. We had originally intended to time limit this to the end of March but with the decision to extend the period between vaccine doses, have decided to run the indemnity until the end of June.

All claims of clinical negligence will be managed through the provider of the current state backed schemes – NHS Resolution - in line with the existing schemes.

The need for the indemnity was extremely urgent as pharmacy led centres could not begin to vaccinate patients until this was in place and indeed vaccinations have begun at six centres as of 14 January 2021. Delaying would have postponed the roll out of this vital aspect of the vaccination programme, restricting access to the vaccine in some areas of the county. We concluded that such a delay was not acceptable, and I hope it is clear why this was indeed a case of special urgency. Therefore, the normal 14 sitting days for consideration has on this occasion not been possible.

I would also like to update the House on the DHSC's scheme to provide a targeted and time-limited state-backed indemnity to care homes, registered or intending to register as "Designated Settings", which are unable to obtain sufficient insurance cover.

The Government is committed to ensuring the best care possible for people with Covid-19. For people admitted to hospital who need social care support, we have worked closely with Local Authorities and the Care Quality Commission to register certain adult social care homes as Designated Settings. I welcome the response of the care sector to the demand for such care. It is our priority to ensure that people are discharged safely from hospital to the most appropriate setting, and that they receive the care and support they need.

I acknowledge the role of the insurance industry in continuing to provide cover, where possible, for this activity. However, we know that obtaining sufficient insurance to accept COVID positive patients and sign up to become a Designated Setting has been a barrier for some care home providers wishing to join the scheme. The designated setting scheme is for people who are medically fit for discharge from hospital (i.e., they do not require to be in an acute NHS bed) but whose ongoing care & support needs are such that they require full-time residential or nursing care. A large proportion of these people will already have been living in a care home.

The scheme forms part of wider policy on hospital discharge set out in [Hospital discharge service: policy and operating model](#) (August 2020) – which enshrines a principle of "Home First", whereby at least 95% of discharges from hospital should be to a person's own (private) home.

This is limiting the ability of a small number of Local Authorities to operationalise Designated Settings capacity, and in other areas is limiting the expansion of such capacity in response to rising demand.

Given the severity and immediacy of the pressures facing the NHS, we want to take all possible steps to remove obstacles to sufficient local Designated Settings provision. This includes ensuring that where the creation of Designated Settings has created barriers to insurance, the Government will introduce a targeted and time-limited indemnity offer to fill gaps in commercial cover.

The indemnity will cover clinical negligence, employer's and public liability where a care provider seeking to become a Designated Setting is unable to secure sufficient

commercial insurance, or where an existing provider has been operating without sufficient cover. Employer's and public liability will be covered by a new indemnity scheme; clinical negligence will be covered by the Clinical negligence Scheme for Trusts, an existing state scheme. The indemnity arrangements will be supervised by DHSC and administered by NHS Resolution. The indemnity will cover Designated Settings until the end of March 2021, with a review point in mid-February.

I regret that in this circumstance, due to the need to take this action urgently to support timely discharge from the NHS at this stage of the pandemic, the normal 14 sitting days for consideration has not been possible. A departmental Minute has been laid in the House of Commons providing more detail on this contingent liability.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Planning and Heritage Update

**Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick):** [\[HCWS713\]](#)

Protecting our nation's heritage

I would like to update the House about the role of the planning system in relation to the protection of historic statues, plaques, memorials and monuments. I am concerned that, over the last few months, some such heritage assets may have been removed without proper debate, consultation with the public and due process.

Indeed, the removal of a statue in Bristol was an act of criminal damage. We should never tolerate criminal acts and mob rule.

This Government is committed to ensuring our nation's heritage is appropriately protected. It is important that all decisions on removing historic statues, plaques (which are part of a building and whose alteration or removal materially affects the external appearance of the building), memorials and monuments - even for a temporary period - are taken in accordance with the law and following the correct process. Decisions to remove any such heritage assets owned by a local authority should be taken in accordance with its constitution, following consultation with the local community and interested parties, and the rationale for a decision to remove should be transparent.

The planning system plays a crucial role conserving and enhancing our heritage. Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, listed building consent from the local planning authority is required for the removal or alteration of a statue, plaque, memorial or monument which is designated as a listed building, or which forms part of a listed building, where it affects the special historic or architectural character of the listed building.

Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework already states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset. Paragraph 195 also requires that where development will lead to substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be

demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.

I would also like to remind local planning authorities of the current requirements to notify Historic England and the national amenity societies of applications involving the demolition of a listed building. In those cases, where local planning authorities are minded to grant consent for the removal of a listed statue, plaque, memorial or monument despite an extant objection from Historic England or one of the national amenity societies, they are required to notify the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government who will then consider whether to call in the application or not. Where an extant objection is in relation to a listed building consent application made by Historic England or a local authority itself, the local planning authority must refer it to the Secretary of State for determination.

At present, these notification requirements do not apply in relation to Grade II listed buildings where the removal of a statue, plaque, memorial or monument constitutes an alteration to a listed building rather than demolition. I intend to exercise my powers to direct local planning authorities that these types of application are subject to the same notification requirements as for applications involving the demolition of a listed building.

It is also important that the removal of historic statues, plaques, memorials and monuments which are not listed are subject to proper process. These heritage assets can often be well known local landmarks, but unless they meet certain size thresholds, their removal will not be currently classified as development for planning purposes and so not subject to planning control.

I am today therefore setting out my intention to make the removal of any historic unlisted statue, plaque, memorial or monument subject to an explicit requirement to obtain planning permission. I also intend to require local planning authorities to adhere to similar notification requirements as for listed building consent applications involving listed statues, plaques, memorials and monuments. This will require Directions and changes to secondary legislation including the permitted development right for the demolition of buildings.

In considering any applications to remove a historic statue, plaque, memorial or monument (whether a listed building or not), local planning authorities should have regard to the government's clear policy on heritage (summarised as 'retain and explain') as set out by the Minister for Digital Infrastructure to Parliament on 25 September 2020. This statement now forms part of national planning policy and should be applied accordingly.

Historic statues, plaques, memorials and monuments should not be removed before a decision on the application is made.

I would also draw local planning authorities' attention to the advice Historic England has published to support decision making involving heritage whose story or meaning has become challenged ( *Checklist to help local authorities to deal with contested heritage listed building decisions* ). As they note, "Our stance on historic statues and sites which have become contested is to retain and explain them; to provide thoughtful, long lasting

and powerful reinterpretation that responds to their contested history and tells the full story.”

The new legislation and Directions referred to in this Statement will come into effect in the Spring.

I would like to make clear that, as the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, I have wide discretion to ‘call in’ planning applications or recover appeals for my own determination, not least because of the controversy attached to such decisions. I will not hesitate to use those powers in relation to applications and appeals involving historic statues, plaques, memorials or monuments where I consider such action is necessary to reflect the Government’s planning policies as set out above.

In conclusion, this Government believes it is always right to examine Britain’s history, but the knee-jerk removal of statues does harm rather than good. Our aim should be to use heritage to educate people about all aspects of Britain’s past rather than censoring our shared British history.