



Daily Report

Tuesday, 19 January 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 19 January 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:32 P.M., 19 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

■ Additional Restrictions Grant and Local Restrictions Support Grant

Matt Rodda:

[\[138024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what happens to funding allocated to local authorities as part of the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) and Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) which is not distributed to businesses.

Paul Scully:

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

Local authorities should pay businesses in line with the restriction period to which the funding is allocated to ensure local economies are supported during restrictions. Any unspent funding allocated to local authorities under a mandatory grants scheme will be recovered after a reconciliation process. It is not expected that discretionary schemes, such as the ARG, will have any unallocated funding as we would expect local authorities to apportion this funding to businesses. We are working closely with local authorities to ensure funding gets out the door to businesses as quickly as possible and to avoid any unnecessary underspend.

Matt Rodda:

[\[138025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to increase funding allocations for local authorities which have distributed their allocated funds from the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) and Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) but have an additional need for emergency support.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to continuing to provide financial support via local authorities for business premises that are required to close due to restrictions that have been put in place to tackle Covid-19 and save lives.

BEIS will provide Local Authorities with the full costs of providing funding to eligible businesses that are required to close through Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed). Where the initial allocation of this grant to Local Authorities is insufficient, it will be topped up.

Discretionary grants – Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) and Additional Restrictions Grant - are formula based. With the announcement of a further period of national lockdown starting on 5th January a further £500m has been allocated to Local Authorities via the Additional Restrictions Grant to support businesses severely affected by the restrictions even though they are not required to close, including

those falling outside the business rates system such as market traders. This comes on top of £1.1bn already allocated in November 2020. It is expected that local authorities use this additional resource quickly to support businesses in their area.

Matt Rodda:

[\[138026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether local authorities receive funding for the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSRG) and Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) up front or are reimbursed.

Paul Scully:

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

As set out in the Government guidance, local authorities have received an initial allocation of 90% of the estimated grant funding amount for the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Addendum and Closed Business Lockdown Grant schemes. When this threshold of funding is reached, Government will pay local authorities the further agreed funding. The additional £500 million distributed through the Additional Restrictions Grant scheme was paid to local authorities in one lump sum payment, as with the previous ARG payment. 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.

■ Business: Recruitment

Sir David Amess:

[\[137868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what (a) funding and (b) incentives are available to support businesses to recruit new members of staff.

Paul Scully:

The Government has set out a plan for recovery that focusses on backing business, improving skills, and creating jobs. For example, the £30 billion Plan for Jobs provides new funding to ensure more people will get tailored support to help them find work. This includes launching the £2 billion Kickstart Scheme fund and investing £2.9 billion in the Restart programme over 3 years to support and encourage the UK's labour market. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is also doubling the number of jobcentre Work Coaches to provide intensive support for both young people and the newly unemployed.

Additional measures include committing £8 million for digital skills boot camps, increasing apprenticeship opportunities, expanding sector-based work academies programme (SWAPs), launching the Job Finding Support Service, and increasing the funding for the Flexible Support Fund by £150 million in Great Britain.

Businesses can also access tailored advice through our Freephone Business Support Helpline, online via the Business Support website or through their local Growth Hubs in England. Furthermore, the Recovery Advice for Business scheme, supported by the Government and hosted on the Enterprise Nation website, offers small firms access to free, one-to-one advice with an expert adviser to help them through the coronavirus pandemic and to prepare for long-term recovery. Further information can be found at: <https://www.enterprisenation.com/freesupport/>.

■ Contact Tracing: Computer Software

Caroline Lucas:

[135888]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish guidance for employers on employees' use of the NHS Test and Trace app at work; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The safer working [guidance](#) includes a section about supporting the NHS Test and Trace. Workplaces must display an official NHS QR code poster and have an alternative system in place for people who do not have a smartphone or do not want to use the NHS Covid-19 app.

■ Contracts: Payments

Graham Stringer:

[137127]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether top-up payments to be made to third parties are permissible, under the Contracts for Difference regime.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Low Carbon Contracts Company (LCCC) pays electricity generators that have signed a Contract for Difference (CfD) a flat, indexed, rate for the electricity that they produce over a 15-year period. The amount paid is the difference between the 'strike price' (a price for electricity, typically determined during a competitive auction process) and the 'reference price' (a measure of the average market price for electricity in the GB electricity market).

The CfD standard terms and conditions set out that payments to the generator will be made to the UK based account that the generator notifies the CfD Counterparty they want the payment to be made to.

Graham Stringer:

[137128]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it is permissible under the Contracts for Difference regime for top-up payments to be made to third parties outside the UK.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Low Carbon Contracts Company (LCCC) pays electricity generators that have signed a Contract for Difference (CfD) a flat, indexed, rate for the electricity that they

produce over a 15-year period. The amount paid is the difference between the 'strike price' (a price for electricity, typically determined during a competitive auction process) and the 'reference price' (a measure of the average market price for electricity in the GB electricity market).

The CfD standard terms and conditions set out that payments to the generator will be made to the UK based account to which the generator notifies the CfD Counterparty they want the payment to be made.

■ **Contracts: Tax Avoidance**

Graham Stringer:

[\[137129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to prevent tax avoidance by participants in the Contracts for Difference scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme is the Government's main mechanism for supporting low carbon electricity generation. The Low Carbon Contracts Company (LCCC) works with CfD generators to ensure that they deliver on their contractual commitments to build and operate low-carbon electricity generating stations. The LCCC pays CfD generators for the low-carbon electricity that they produce. As with any other commercial undertaking operating within the UK, it is for each electricity generator supported by the CfD scheme to pay its taxes in accordance with UK tax rules.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

John Spellar:

[\[137873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many doses of covid-19 vaccine were produced for the UK on 13 January 2021.

John Spellar:

[\[137874\]](#)

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

John Spellar:

[\[137875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what is the current daily vaccine vial filling capacity in the UK; and what was the output in the week beginning 11 January.

John Spellar:

[\[137877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many doses of covid vaccine are awaiting testing; and what is the current time taken between a batch of vaccine arriving at the testing facility and being forwarded to the vial filling plant.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Vaccines are the way out of this pandemic and vaccine supplies are part of our critical national infrastructure. Vaccines are a precious resource in very high demand across the world; therefore, for security reasons, it is not possible to provide detail about the size of our supplies and exact detail about future deliveries.

The Government has invested over £300 million in scaling up the UK's manufacturing capabilities, which includes investments in Wockhardt where the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is filled and finished. We continue to plan to meet our target of vaccinating all four priority groups, as identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, by the middle of February.

John Spellar:[\[137876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many vaccine vial filling plants are operating in the UK; and are the plants operating at (a) weekends and (b) on continuous shift patterns.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has invested over £300 million in scaling up the UK's manufacturing capabilities, which includes investments in Wockhardt where the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is filled and finished.

Questions regarding operational matters are for the companies themselves and we continue to plan to meet our target of vaccinating all four priority groups, as identified by the Joint Committee on Immunisation and Vaccination, by the middle of February.

■ Energy: Billing**Jon Trickett:**[\[134348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the average dual energy bill was for a household in (a) Hemsworth Parliamentary constituency and (b) Yorkshire and the Humber region in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Data on household electricity and gas energy bills are published as part of the Quarterly Energy Prices statistical series ([here](#)). The department collects this information at the regional level and does not hold it at the constituency level. Data on the average annual domestic electricity bills for UK regions are presented in table QEP 2.2.3 and average annual domestic gas bills for GB regions are presented in table QEP 2.3.3 ([here](#)).

■ Fuel Poverty**Jon Trickett:**[\[133674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to reduce fuel poverty in 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.

The energy price cap currently protects around 11 million households in Great Britain on standard variable and default tariffs. From January 2021 a further 4 million households with prepayment meters will also come under the protection of the cap after the prepayment meter price cap expires. The cap ensures that loyal energy customers are protected from poor value tariffs, saving consumers a total of around £1 billion on their bills annually.

■ **Fuel Poverty: Yorkshire and the Humber**

Jon Trickett:[\[134346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people in (a) Hemsworth Parliamentary constituency and (b) Yorkshire and the Humber region were living in fuel poverty in each year since 2010 and up to and including 2020.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The table below shows the estimated number of households living in fuel poverty for the requested areas:

YEAR	HEMSWORTH PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY	YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER REGION
2010	n/a	269,000
2011	4,100	271,000
2012	3,800	266,000
2013	3,600	244,000
2014	4,300	271,000
2015	4,300	282,000

YEAR	HEMSWORTH PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY	YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER REGION
2016	4,700	275,000
2017	4,200	244,000
2018	3,800	236,000

The latest available estimates are for 2018. Estimates for fuel poverty in 2010 have not been made at sub-regional level under the current Low Income High Costs metric.

Also note, estimates of fuel poverty at the sub-regional level are based on a small number households and are therefore subject to higher levels of uncertainty in particular when comparing changes over time.

The regional data in the table above was taken from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fuel-poverty-trends-2020> table 4.

The parliamentary constituency data in the table above was taken from <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-sub-regional-statistics>.

For example, the data for 2018 was found in table 5 of the following:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sub-regional-fuel-poverty-data-2020>.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Tulip Siddiq:

[137984]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to extend the Green Homes Grants: Local Authority Delivery Scheme (LAD) after March 2021.

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 £200million to Local Authorities over 2 phases: phase 1A delivery by March 2021 and phase 1B for delivery by September 2021. A further £300m will be allocated 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.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Dr James Davies:

[136002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the economic effect of covid-19 on supply chains in the hospitality industry.

Paul Scully:

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic the Government has worked closely with the hospitality sector, including businesses in the supply chain, to understand the impact of the pandemic on their businesses.

Businesses have been able to benefit from Government support, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Government-backed loans.

On 5 January, when the new National Lockdown began, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced an extra £4.6bn in business support including a £594 million discretionary fund to support impacted businesses.

Dr James Davies:

[136003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support businesses in the hospitality supply chain that have not received financial support from their local authority during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic the Government has worked closely with the hospitality sector, including businesses in the supply chain, to understand the impact of the pandemic on their businesses.

Businesses have been able to benefit from Government support, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Government-backed loans.

On 5 January, when the new National Lockdown began, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced an extra £4.6bn in business support including a £594 million discretionary fund to support impacted businesses.

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[136085]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with businesses operating in the hospitality sector on the level of economic support needed by that sector since the covid-19 lockdown was announced in January 2021.

Paul Scully:

I meet with representatives from across the hospitality sector on a weekly basis to discuss the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on their businesses and the Government's package of business support.

Abena Oppong-Asare:[\[136086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will work with businesses in the hospitality industry to establish a strategy to ensure businesses can recover after the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Paul Scully:

I recognise the important role the hospitality sector as an economic driver and as the heart of communities up and down the country. While the Government is committed to supporting the sector until the vaccines are rolled out and businesses can open without restrictions, I am also working with the sector as we plan for the longer-term recovery.

■ Innovation: Finance**Martyn Day:**[\[136084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of supporting the introduction of an Innovation Power Purchase Agreement to allow early stage technologies reach commercial readiness.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

BEIS officials continue to engage with wave and tidal stream developers to understand their cost-reduction trajectories, where those savings are likely to be found and, importantly in light of declining costs for other renewables, whether there may be a rationale for funding arrangements outside of the CFD.

The Marine Energy Council is also looking at alternative funding models for early tidal array deployment outside the Levy Control Framework, which they refer to as the Innovation Power Purchase Agreement (IPPA). However, given that the IPPA is based on a tax measure which is the responsibility of HMT, it would be for Treasury ministers to decide on the desirability of such an instrument.

BEIS also supports the progress of early-stage technologies to commercial readiness through the £505 million Energy Innovation Programme. The Programme includes:

- The Energy Entrepreneurs Fund (EEF) is a competitive grant funding scheme to support SMEs in the development and demonstration of state-of-the-art disruptive technologies, products and processes. Since 2012 the EEF has invested around £72 million of grant money in over 156 companies leveraging over £100m in private investment.
- £20 million investment in a new venture capital fund: the Clean Growth Fund. The HMG investment is matched pound for pound by private sector investment and the Fund Manager has ambition for the Clean Growth Fund to reach £100 million by autumn 2021.

■ New Businesses: Yorkshire and the Humber

Dan Jarvis:

[R] [\[137925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many start-up businesses in their first year of trading have (a) liquidated and (b) dissolved in the 2019-20 financial year in (a) Barnsley Central constituency, (b) the Sheffield City Region and (c) Yorkshire and the Humber.

Paul Scully:

Companies House is responsible for registering companies. Companies House's data does not extend to unregistered businesses and is therefore unable to identify start-up businesses. It is also unable to identify if a company is in the first year of trading.

■ Pets: Animal Housing

Conor McGinn:

[\[137970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the financial viability of dog kennels, catteries and other animal boarding facilities.

Paul Scully:

The Government understands the considerable difficulties faced by UK businesses due to the coronavirus pandemic. Animal boarding facilities have not been required to close at any point during the pandemic, as there remains a requirement to care for the pets of people hospitalised from Coronavirus and for key workers, and vulnerable people who may not be able to care for their pets. We have advised pet owners^[1] that they may leave their home to access animal boarding services. This should be by appointment only, and only if the boarding service does not offer a collection or drop-off service.

The Government has put in place a range of business support measures since March 2020. These include loans, small business grants through local authorities, mortgage holidays and VAT deferral. These measures have been updated in line with local and national restrictions. In November, at the beginning of the second national lockdown, Government made available £1.1bn in discretionary funding allocated to each local authority to support businesses via the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). This was topped up with a further £500m in January 2021.

Local authorities have significant discretion in the businesses they support and the amount of grant funding per business based on local priorities.

Given the new national restrictions, other amendments now include:

- extending the coronavirus job retention scheme to support the wage costs of employers until end of April 2021.
- Increasing the overall level of the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme grant to 80% of trading profits covering November to January for all parts of the UK.

- Extending the Bounce Back Loan Scheme application deadline to the end of March 2021, to further support eligible firms who need it during this ongoing period of difficulty.

We would always encourage businesses that have been unable to access support, or who are unsure about what support is available, to contact their nearest Business Growth Hub for advice. The Government has established a network of 38 of these hubs, one in each Local Enterprise Partnership area in England. Businesses of all sizes are able to access free, tailored guidance from expert advisers who make up the Hub teams. All contact details are online www.lepnetwork.net/local-growth-hub-contacts/.

The free Business Support Helpline offers advice to businesses across England (FREEPHONE 0800 998 1098) provides with free, impartial business support.

Firms based in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales can access business support through their devolved Governments.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-people-with-animals>

■ Renewable Energy: Scotland

Alan Brown:

[135990]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government will take to engage Scotland's renewable energy trade associations in the delivery of the policies set out in the Energy White Paper: Powering our net-zero future.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Department will continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders, including Scotland's renewable trade associations, as we deliver on the policies set out in the Energy White Paper.

■ Retail Trade: Insolvency

Jessica Morden:

[137894]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government plans to take in response to the recommendations of the Law Commission's report on prepayments in retail insolvency.

Paul Scully:

In December 2018, the Government set out in its response to the Law Commission prepayment report, 'Consumer Prepayments on Retailer Insolvency' that it intends to develop proposals to create a power to create sector specific legislation on pre-payments to enable action on Christmas savings clubs. The Government is considering the most practical route to formulate and implement this legislation.

■ Vaccination: Manufacturing Industries

Stephen Doughty:

[\[137941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many vaccine manufacturing facilities (a) for the production of raw materials, active ingredients, coupling and formulation and (b) for fill and finish there are in the UK; and how many of those facilities are being used for covid-19 vaccine production.

Stephen Doughty:

[\[137942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many bio-reactors used in vaccine production there are in the UK; and how many of those bio-reactors are being used for covid-19 vaccine production.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We have been monitoring the requirements across the supply chain from supplier through to patients for some time. All vaccine candidates' supply and onward deployment have clear supply chain plans across the value chain, including materials, manufacturing, transportation, storage, and distribution. Three of the UK's seven COVID-19 vaccines are being manufactured in the UK. The Government has worked closely with the manufacturers to ensure that we have sufficient capacity secured.

The Government has also invested over £300 million in securing and scaling up the UK's manufacturing capabilities to be able to respond to this pandemic.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Fund

Mike Amesbury:

[\[129170\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Elected Office Fund will be reopened.

Chloe Smith:

It is the Government's ambition to see more disabled people in public office.

The EnAble Fund for Elected Office opened in December 2018 and closed in March 2020. The Government has been clear that the responsibility for supporting disabled candidates sits with political parties.

An evaluation of the EnAble Fund is due to be published shortly.

■ Construction: Pay

Alexander Stafford:

[\[136666\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Department is taking to ensure that all sub-contractors working on taxpayer funded infrastructure projects are paid promptly and fairly by the main project contractors.

Julia Lopez:

The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (113) require government contractors to be paid within 30 days of receiving an invoice, and for these terms to be passed down the supply chain. Furthermore, the Government has introduced a measure to exclude suppliers who do not pay their whole supply chain promptly from major government work.

Businesses are encouraged to report instances of late or unfair payment in public sector contracts to the Public Procurement Review Service.

Cybercrime

Conor McGinn: [\[137971\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the £1.9 billion allocated by the Government to the National Cyber Security Strategy 2016-2021, how that funding has been (a) spent and (b) allocated in each year since the inception of that strategy.

Conor McGinn: [\[137972\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government is on course to reach the objectives set out in the National Cyber Security Strategy 2016-21.

Penny Mordaunt:

The National Cyber Security Strategy 2016-2021, supported by a £1.9 billion investment, is delivering transformational change, building new capabilities and intervening to protect the UK from cyber attacks.

For national security reasons we are unable to provide details of the National Cyber Security Programme budget, but we have made significant progress, as the Strategy explains, some of the ambitions go beyond its five year timescale. This is why the Spending Review provided further funding for the NCSP in 2021-22 and why we will be setting out a new long-term strategy for cyber security this year. [The National Cyber Security Strategy 2016 - 2021 Progress Report 2020](#) sets out further detail on the progress we have made since 2016 and the impact our interventions are having.

Local Government: Elections

Hywel Williams: [\[137140\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution's statement on 13 January, what is the definition of a high bar for a potential delay to the May 2021 elections.

Chloe Smith:

Primary legislation states that the elections will go ahead in May 2021. Many of these elections have already been delayed by a year. Voters have a right to be heard and to decide who governs them.

Such a policy intention should rightly be reviewed in light of the changing public health situation and we are taking steps to assure ourselves that polls can be delivered. The Government is continuing to work closely with the electoral sector, public health bodies and political parties to identify and resolve challenges in the successful delivery of the polls this May. Indeed, proper preparedness is the very thing that opposition parties have called for – and this is precisely what we are undertaking.

As I stated to the House, I will ensure Hon. Members are kept updated once we have completed this work.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces

Stephen Morgan:

[\[136046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of integrated training strategies for the armed forces, allowing reservists to join regulars during operational tours.

James Heappey:

The Future Reserves 2020 Programme has delivered Reserve Forces that are better integrated with their Regular counterparts as an element of the Whole Force.

Reserves from all three Services regularly train with Regulars and use the same kit and equipment as them. Call-out Orders are routinely put in place to enable Reservists to be brought into permanent service (mobilised) as required to serve on operations alongside Regulars, either in individual roles or as formed units.

Maritime Reservists routinely join their Regular colleagues on operations, principally providing specialist skill sets such as Maritime Trade Operations. For example, Royal Marines Reserves are mobilised annually to support the Lead Commando Group and Royal Naval Reserves are routinely mobilised to the Offshore Patrol Squadron.

The Army has paired Reserve units with their Regular counterparts, and they train alongside them and deploy with them where necessary. Army Reserves were a vital part of the forces supporting the Government's response to COVID-19 and have been mobilised to assist in preparation for post-BREXIT transition as well as for other operations in the UK and overseas.

RAF Reservists are trained to be interoperable with their Regular counterparts and on completion of any pre-deployment training they are routinely deployed alongside them. As part of the Defence response to COVID-19, several hundred RAF Reservists were mobilised to support a range of tasks including as Liaison Officers to Other Government Departments, Planners and to support Mobile Testing and the Vaccination Task Force.

■ Armed Forces: Recruitment

Jim Shannon: [137208]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people were recruited to the (a) Army (b) RAF and (c) Royal Navy in each of the last five years.

James Heappey:

The requested information can be found in tables 4, 5a, and 5b of the Excel spreadsheet in the published Quarterly Service Personnel Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2020>

■ Army: Robots

Mr Kevan Jones: [135838]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what type of robots the Government plans to deploy 30,000 of in the British Army by 2030.

Jeremy Quin:

The British Army is transforming land capability through increasingly expansive use of technology, including Robotics and Autonomous Systems employed across all areas of operations. Explosive Ordnance Disposal robots and uncrewed ground and air systems, used for reconnaissance and surveillance, are already in service. The final number and composition of robots to be utilised throughout the British Army and their in-service dates have not yet been confirmed.

■ Bomb Disposal: Northern Ireland

Mr Gregory Campbell: [137889]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many occasions army bomb disposal units were called out in Northern Ireland in 2020; and on how many of those occasions it was established that devices were found to be not viable.

James Heappey:

For the year 2020, 264 Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) taskings were conducted in Northern Ireland by army bomb disposal units. 103 taskings related to "suspicious items", of which 70 devices were found to be not viable.

■ Defence: Expenditure

Mr Kevan Jones: [135844]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the evidential basis to support the Prime Minister's 19 November 2020 statement that the increase in defence spending will create 10,000 jobs every year.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) published statistics set out the number of jobs currently estimated to be supplied by existing Defence spend. The 10,000 jobs figure was compiled by estimating the number of direct jobs expected to be created or

supported with UK industry and commerce through MOD new investment decisions, averaged over the four year period.

■ **Israel: Coronavirus**

Jack Lopresti:

[\[136500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has received guidance from the Government of Israel on the involvement of military personnel in the covid-19 vaccination rollout programme.

James Heappey:

Her Majesty's Government has had sustained engagement with the Government of Israel on their vaccination programme. This has included Defence's Surgeon General regularly engaging with his Israeli counterpart. The Ministry of Defence however has not been in receipt of guidance from Israel specifically on the use of military personnel in vaccine roll out. We will remain in regular contact with the Government of Israel and health providers regarding efforts to tackle the virus.

■ **Military Aid: Coronavirus**

Ian Murray:

[\[137906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many troops are available to support the covid-19 vaccine rollout in Scotland.

James Heappey:

At present, 11 teams of 8 Service personnel have deployed to support the NHS Scotland Health Board in order to identify and operationalise vaccination centres across Scotland.

Defence stands ready to provide further support to the COVID-19 vaccine rollout in Scotland, as and when requested by the Scottish Government.

Ian Murray:

[\[137907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Scottish Government has made any request to the armed forces for support in the covid-19 vaccine rollout in Scotland.

James Heappey:

Yes. The Ministry of Defence has received a Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA) request from the Scottish Government for 88 Service Personnel to support the identification and operationalisation of vaccination sites across Scotland.

Ian Murray:

[\[137908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the capability is of each army medic team to support the covid-19 vaccine rollout.

James Heappey:

The initial tranche of Defence Vaccination Teams include 1 Doctor, 2 Registered Health Professionals and 3 Medics from across all three Services. On top of their professional training, teams will undergo NHS Region-specific induction packages to

ensure they are current with local policies and protocols. Further teams may be constructed differently depending on the setting within which they will operate and the clinical capabilities of those they are operating alongside.

■ **RAF Menwith Hill: Staff**

Alex Sobel:

[\[138040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people work at NSA/NRO Menwith Hill; and how many of those people are (a) US Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, (b) US contractors, (c) US civilians, (d) NSA, (e) NRO personnel, (f) US CIA, (g) British military, (h) RAF personnel, including the RAF Liaison Officer, (i) his Department's personnel, (j) GCHQ personnel, (k) British contractors, (l) British civilians and (m) Ministry of Defence Police.

James Heappey:

The number of personnel based at RAF Menwith Hill is set out in the table below:

(A) US ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE AND MARINES	20
(b) US contractors	320
(c) US civilians	270
(g, h, i) British military	10
(k) British contractors	70
(j, l, m) British civilians	400

The personnel figures released by the US government are correct as of August 2020 when this information was last collated. The US authorities do not release a detailed breakdown of US civilian personnel; therefore, the overall total of US civilians has been provided.

Figures have been amalgamated, and rounded to the nearest 10, where further granularity is not available, or where data may not be released for reasons of national security.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Arts: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[136630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of the arts, entertainment and recreation workforce (a) was been eligible for and (b) received support from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in each month since the introduction of that scheme.

Taiwo Owatemi:

[136631]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of employers in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector accessed the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in each month since the introduction of that scheme.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has been one of the key ways we have provided support, with the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (AER) sector receiving £1.974bn of support from the initiative so far (claims made to 31 October). The CJRS has now been further extended to 30 April 2021. From 1 November, the UK Government will pay 80% of employees' usual wages for the hours not worked, up to a cap of £2,500 per month.

The latest figures published by HMRC show that as at 31 October 2020, there were 660,900 eligible employments and 40,000 eligible employers for CJRS in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector.

As at 31 October, the proportion of the workforce eligible for furlough that were actually furloughed in AER sector was 24%. 45% of eligible employers in the AER sector were using the furlough scheme at the end of October.

As at 30 September, the take up rate of eligible employments was 28% in the AER sector, with 49% of eligible employers in the sector using the scheme.

As at 31 August, 40% of eligible employments were furloughed and 54% of eligible employers were using the scheme in the AER sector.

As at 31 July, 52% of eligible employments in the AER sector were furloughed, with a take up rate of 61% of eligible employers in the sector.

■ **BBC: Educational Broadcasting**

Damian Hinds:

[136490]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what data his Department holds on the (a) number of hours of school-age educational programmed content on the BBC and (b) amount of online content on BBC bitesize in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The department does not hold this information. The BBC may hold more information on this topic.

Page 115 of the BBC's Annual Report for 2019-20 sets out some information on how the BBC has performed on its public purpose to support learning for people of all ages. The report also states that the BBC offered 14 weeks of educational programmes and lessons during the summer term and that, by the end of the term, the BBC had published nearly 2,000 curriculum-led 'Bitesize Daily Lessons' online.

Further, on 5 January 2021, the BBC also announced its education offering for the UK's third national lockdown. The announcement included three hours of primary

school programming each week day on CBBC, and at least two hours of secondary school content each day on BBC 2. It also included an expansion of BBC bitesize online content for primary and secondary school pupils. The full announcement can be found on the BBC website here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/2020/bbc-launches-biggest-education-offer-ever>

I also refer the Hon Member to my answer to PQs 136489 and 136491 where I set out Ofcom's figures for the education provision by Public Service Broadcasters collectively.

■ Business: Digital Technology

Chi Onwurah:

[135930]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 18 December 2020 to Question 130068, what steps the Government is taking to encourage sign-up to the Digital Boost Platform among (a) SMEs and (b) charities.

Caroline Dinanage:

DCMS has supported the Digital Boost platform since its inception in June 2020. DCMS has encouraged sign-ups to the platform among SMEs and charities through the seven Local Digital Skills Partnerships, national industry partners, and other government departments. DCMS has also encouraged take-up through various communication channels, including social media and newsletters.

■ Culture Recovery Fund: Worcestershire

Sajid Javid:

[135893]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress his Department has made on delivering support for the culture and heritage sector through the Culture Recovery Fund in (a) Worcestershire and (b) Bromsgrove district.

Caroline Dinanage:

Through the Culture Recovery Fund, 2 awards have been made in the Local Authority of Bromsgrove to date, totalling £267,948. These are:

- Avoncroft Museum (£183,943)
- Tardebigge Locks - Canal and River Trust (£84,005)

Across the constituencies of Worcester, West-Worcestershire, East-Worcestershire, Bromsgrove, Wyre Forest, and Redditch (which approximates Worcestershire), 22 awards have been made so far, totalling £4,132,799

Please note awards from the first round of Culture Recovery Fund are still being processed, and a second round of grant funding is currently open. Please see the website of the relevant delivery bodies for further detail (Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund/Historic England, and the British Film Institute).

■ Digital Technology: Small Businesses

Chi Onwurah:

[135931]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 18 December 2020 to Question 128963 on Digital Technology: Small Businesses, what steps are being taken to provide the 796 small businesses and charities with a mentoring session that are yet to receive it.

Caroline Dinenage:

As of 12th January, 674 mentoring sessions have taken place since the platform's rebuilding in late September. To date, 218 mentoring requests have been unfulfilled due to a lack of volunteers in the requested skill. Where matches have not been made, Digital Boost is working closely with their corporate partners to call for more volunteers where there are subject shortages and are also putting on workshops.

1448 small businesses and charities have signed up to the platform as of 12th January. Those remaining small businesses and charities who have not requested a mentoring session have free access to Digital Boost's courses, content and workshops.

■ Educational Broadcasting: Television

Damian Hinds:

[136489]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what data and information his Department holds on trends in the level of (a) original programming hours and (b) broadcast hours produced as (i) Programmes for schools and colleges and (ii) other educational content for school-age children by (A) the BBC, (B) ITV and (C) other broadcasters.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The department does not hold this information.

Ofcom data indicates that in 2018, public service broadcasters (PSBs, in this context the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5) collectively broadcast 125 hours of content in 2018 meeting the description of "formal education". Of this, 65 hours were considered original content.

This output was supplemented by content available on-demand, online, on podcasts and radio, as well as less formal educational content such as documentaries and broader children's content.

Between 2010 and 2018, the total amount of educational content broadcast by PSBs fell considerably (2010: 725 hours). Over the same period, the amount of original educational content broadcast by PSBs remained relatively constant (2010: 70 hours), albeit with considerable year-to-year fluctuation. Data covering 2019 and 2020 is not yet available.

Ofcom data suggests that commercial multi channels broadcast 40 hours of original content classified as 'other' in 2018 (2014: 0 hours). This classification includes formal education.

Further information can be found on Ofcom's website.

Damian Hinds:

[136491]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what information his Department holds on trends in the level of (a) original programming hours and (b) broadcast hours of (i) programmes for schools and colleges and (ii) other educational content for school-age children on (A) the BBC, (B) ITV and (C) other broadcasters.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The department does not hold this information.

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Ofcom data suggests that commercial multi channels broadcast 40 hours of original content classified as 'other' in 2018 (2014: 0 hours). This classification includes formal education.

Further information can be found on Ofcom's website.

■ Food Banks: Coronavirus

Daniel Zeichner:

[135960]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport what assessment his Department has made of the effect of covid-19 infection rates on the (a) number of UK foodbank volunteers and (b) ability of foodbanks to provide emergency food aid to people in need.

Daniel Zeichner:

[136544]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps are being taken to reduce the risk of covid-19 infection for food bank (a) teams and (b) users.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Government has put into place measures to stop the spread of coronavirus, protect the NHS, and save lives. Current guidance states that you must not leave, or be outside of your home except where necessary. Exceptions have been made to go to work or provide voluntary or charitable services, if this cannot reasonably be done

from home. This only applies in England. There is separate guidance on coronavirus for [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).

In order to reduce the risks relating to coronavirus, volunteers, including those working at food banks, should follow guidance on [social distancing](#) (hands, face, space) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing> and working in a [COVID-secure](#) environment <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>. Specific [guidance for volunteer-involving organisations and groups](#) on how they can involve volunteers safely in their work during the pandemic is available on GOV.UK here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/enabling-safe-and-effective-volunteering-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

The government has not made a specific assessment of the effect of COVID-19 infections at UK foodbanks.

The Department for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport has made a total of £22.7m available to 911 organisations supporting food supply from the £750m voluntary, community and social enterprise sector support package. This will support the ability of foodbanks to provide emergency food aid to people in need.

■ **Football: Coronavirus**

Justin Madders:

[134487]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with the National League Board on (a) the distribution of funds to National League Football clubs to assist with covering lost gate revenue due to the covid-19 outbreak and (b) publishing the findings of the Independent Review Panel on club funding.

Nigel Huddleston:

The government brokered a promotional deal between the National League and Camelot in September 2020. This led to an invaluable injection of £10m support to help clubs in completing their 2020/21 season. Whilst the distribution of this funding is a matter for the National League, the government was clear in supporting the deal that it expected the proceeds to be allocated sensibly to support clubs for as long as possible. The Secretary of State has had no conversations with the National League Board on either the actual distribution of funds or the findings of the Independent Review Panel.

Separately, in November 2020 the government announced a £300m Sports Winter Survival Package. This funding aims to support major spectator sports severely impacted by covid restrictions to help them survive through the winter period. The needs of the lower tiers of the National League are being considered in relation to this support package by Sport England, who are administering the fund. Final funding decisions are being taken by an independent board.

■ Golf: Coronavirus**Justin Madders:**[\[134482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the latest scientific evidence supporting the closure of golf courses during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown period.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity, including golf, are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus.

The purpose of the restrictions is to reduce the time people spend outside of their homes and the number of interactions they have to an absolute minimum. The severity of the current situation means that we have been required to close all sports facilities. This is a decision that no government would want to take and we will remove the restrictions, as a priority, as soon as the public health situation allows.

The restrictions are designed to get the R rate under control through limiting social contact and reducing transmissions. All decisions made by the Government relating to the pandemic have been based on advice and guidance from health and scientific experts. These regulations were voted on by the House on 6 January.

You can continue to exercise alone, with one other person or with your household or support bubble. This should be limited to once per day, in a public outdoor place and you should not travel outside your local area. You should maintain social distancing.

■ Gyms: Coronavirus**Dan Jarvis:**[\[136522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to encourage gym usage once public health restrictions are lifted.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus. That's why we have made sure that people can exercise throughout the national and local tiered restrictions. We will continue to promote exercise throughout the pandemic and encourage the usage of sports facilities including gyms when they are able to open again.

Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many sport clubs have benefited from. On top of wider economic support, the Government has announced a £100m support fund for local authority leisure centres to ensure these important facilities remain available once public health restrictions are lifted.

■ Musicians: EU Countries

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[136656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the removal of visa free travel on British musicians within the EU.

Oliver Dowden:

The Government recognises the importance of touring for UK musicians and other cultural and creative practitioners, and their support staff.

Leaving the EU has always meant that there would be changes to how touring artists operate in the EU. DCMS has engaged with the sector extensively throughout negotiations and since the announcement of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement to understand the diverse circumstances of companies, organisations and individual practitioners and how they may need to adapt as they plan activity across the European Union.

Going forward we will continue to work closely with the sector, including with representative organisations, to ensure businesses and individuals have the advice and guidance they need to meet new requirements. Touring artists should always check individual member state requirements as these differ across different countries. In some cases, visas and work permits may not be required.

We know that while leaving the EU will bring changes and new processes to touring and working in the EU, it will also bring new opportunities. In all circumstances, we expect UK musicians' work to continue to be an export that is as highly valued in the European Union as it is across the world.

■ Musicians: Visas

Paul Blomfield:

[\[137196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on improving the movement rights of musicians and performers to work in the EU.

Oliver Dowden:

Ministers have regular discussions with their Cabinet Colleagues on a wide range of issues, including cross-border labour mobility with the EU for musicians and other creative professionals.

The Government recognises the importance of touring for UK musicians and other cultural and creative practitioners, and their support staff. Officials from across government engaged with the performing arts sector extensively throughout negotiations. That engagement has continued since the announcement of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement to ensure they are aware of new requirements. Going forward, we will continue our close dialogue with the creative and cultural sectors to ensure they have the support they need to thrive.

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[138096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the UK negotiating team rejected an offer from the EU to enable visa-free travel for musicians across the UK and EU.

Caroline Dinanage:

I refer the honourable member to the Secretary of State's answer to Written Question 135862 on 14th January.

■ **Swimming: Coronavirus**

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[134509\]](#)

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

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity including swimming are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus.

The purpose of the restrictions is to reduce the time people spend outside of their homes and the number of interactions they have to an absolute minimum. The severity of the current situation means that we have been required to close all sports facilities. This is a decision that no government would want to take and we will remove the restrictions, as a priority, as soon as the public health situation allows.

The restrictions are designed to get the R rate under control through limiting social contact and reducing transmissions. All decisions made by the Government relating to the pandemic have been based on advice and guidance from health and scientific experts. These regulations were voted on by the House on 6 January.

You can continue to exercise alone, with one other person or with your household or support bubble. This should be limited to once per day, in a public outdoor place and you should not travel outside your local area. You should maintain social distancing.

■ **Telecommunications (Security) Bill**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[136514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the provisions for designated vendors in the Telecommunications (Security) Bill supersede the existing provisions for high risk vendors as identified by the National Cyber Security Centre.

Matt Warman:

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) provides advice to public communications providers on the risks presented by high risk vendors and on the measures that the NCSC recommends they adopt as a result. The NCSC will continue to provide advice to industry, as well as to government, after the Telecommunications (Security) Bill comes into force.

The Government does not currently have the power to impose binding controls on public communications providers' use of high risk vendors. The Bill will provide the Government with such powers.

In 2020 the Government made a series of announcements, in relation to the use of high risk vendors in the UK's telecoms networks. Subject to consultation with affected vendors and telecoms providers, the Bill will enable the Government to implement those announcements in law.

■ **Tennis: Coronavirus**

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[134513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the scientific advice for the decision to extend the national restrictions commencing on 5 January 2021 to outdoor tennis facilities.

Nigel Huddleston:

The purpose of the restrictions is to reduce the time people spend outside of their homes and the number of interactions they have to an absolute minimum. The severity of the current situation means that we have been required to close all sports facilities. This is a decision that no government would want to take and we will remove the restrictions, as a priority, as soon as the public health situation allows.

The restrictions are designed to get the R rate under control through limiting social contact and reducing transmissions. All decisions made by the Government relating to the pandemic have been based on advice and guidance from health and scientific experts. These regulations were voted on by the House on 6 January.

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EDUCATION

■ **16 to 19 Tuition Fund**

Robert Halfon:

[\[135903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will allow providers in receipt of 16 to 19 tuition fund allocations in academic year 2020-21 to use that funding to support tuition activity in academic year 2021-22.

Robert Halfon:

[\[135904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what catch-up funding his Department plans to allocate to providers of education to 16 to 19-year-olds during the 2021-22 academic year.

Robert Halfon:

[\[135905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what catch-up provision his Department will put in place to support 16 to 19-year-olds during the 2021-22 academic year.

Robert Halfon:

[\[135906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to extend the National Tutoring Programme for students from disadvantaged backgrounds in post-16 education to the 2021-22 academic year.

Robert Halfon:

[\[135907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding his Department will allocate to support catch-up provision for the academic year 2021-22 for students who are currently in year 11.

Gillian Keegan:

The additional funding for the 16 to 19 tuition fund, of up to £96 million for the 2020/21 academic year, enables schools, colleges and other 16-19 providers to provide small group tuition for disadvantaged students whose learning has been disrupted as a result of COVID-19. This tuition can take place either in the classroom or virtually and includes both English and maths, among other courses. It is important for young people to be able to catch up now so one to one and small group sessions will continue virtually.

The 16-19 tuition fund forms part of catch up package worth £1 billion, including a 'Catch up Premium' worth a total of £650 million to support schools to make up for lost teaching time and the £350 million National Tutoring Programme is an ambitious scheme that will provide additional, targeted tuition support for disadvantaged pupils and students who need the most help to catch-up.

We are looking carefully at what additional support for 16-19 year olds may be needed for the 2021/22 academic year and will keep this under review.

■ Air Pollution: Health Education

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[135817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that the importance of (a) air quality and (b) the associated health effects of air pollution are being taught in schools.

Nick Gibb:

There is scope within the geography and science curriculums, and within PSHE, for teachers and schools to teach these topics.

In geography, the purpose of study is to equip pupils with knowledge about diverse places, people, resources and natural and human environments, and at Key Stage 3, pupils should be taught to "understand how human and physical processes interact to influence and change landscapes, environments and the climate" and also the topic of "population and urbanisation". This is further built upon at GCSE.

In science, pupils in primary schools are taught topics such as changing environments, plants, and different sorts of materials, which will enable them to understand about pollution later on. In the biology content at Key Stage 3, pupils should be taught about “Relationships in an ecosystem” and “how organisms affect, and are affected by, their environment, including the accumulation of toxic materials”. At GCSE, teaching in the sciences continues with the process of building upon and deepening scientific knowledge and the understanding of ideas developed in earlier key stages in the subject disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics. Within chemistry, pupils should be taught about “potential effects of, and mitigation of, increased levels of carbon dioxide and methane on the Earth’s climate; and common atmospheric pollutants: sulphur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen, particulates and their sources”.

The Government wants to support all young people to be happy, healthy and safe and has introduced compulsory health education in all primary and secondary state funded schools. The focus of health education is on teaching the characteristics of good physical health and mental wellbeing. The Department has published a package of support to help all teachers increase their confidence and quality of teaching, including in relation to teaching health and prevention and physical health and fitness. The support is available on a one stop page for teachers on GOV.UK and includes access to training delivered through regional Teaching School networks: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health>.

■ Assessments: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq:

[137986]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that external candidates who have entered into exams for 2020-21 that have been cancelled can receive qualifications.

Nick Gibb:

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, the Department has decided that exams cannot be held in a way which is fair. We have, therefore, announced that GCSE, AS and A level exams will not go ahead this summer as planned.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has asked the Chief Regulator at Ofqual to find a clear and accessible route for private candidates, and those not in school this year, to be assessed and receive a grade. The Department and Ofqual have launched a two-week consultation on how to fairly award all pupils a grade that supports them to progress to the next stage of their lives, including consulting specifically on four different approaches for private candidates to receive a grade.

The consultation can be accessed from the Ofqual website and will be open until 29 January 2021. The Department and Ofqual strongly encourage all our stakeholders, including private candidates and their parents, to respond. 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.

■ Care Leavers

Dan Jarvis:

[134431]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department plans to provide to children leaving local authority care for the financial year 2020-21.

Vicky Ford:

All local authority duties to care leavers will continue to be provided, including ensuring that a Personal Adviser is appointed to support them to make the transition from care to independence. Local authorities are also required to provide support to help care leavers to engage in education, employment, or training and to secure suitable accommodation, as set out in the Children Act and other legislation. In 2018, we extended support from a Personal Adviser to all care leavers, to age 25.

In addition to the support that local authorities provide, central Government has funded a range of measures, including in 2020/21, to improve care leavers' outcomes, including:

- extra funding for 47 local authorities to provide intensive support to care leavers who are most at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping;
- commissioning three care leaver Social Impact Bonds, which support care leavers to secure sustainable education, employment and training;
- established the Civil Service care leaver internship scheme, which this year offered over 250 paid internships for care leavers across Government;
- established a Cross-Government Ministerial Board to drive better outcomes for care leavers; and have
- launched the Care Leaver Covenant, which provides a way for organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors to show their commitment to care leavers through providing concrete offers of support.

In addition, we recognised that the lockdown period would be particularly challenging for care leavers as many of them live alone without families to support them emotionally or financially. In response we have:

- asked local authorities not to move young people out of care during that time and provided discretionary funding to care leavers at risk of hardship;
- prioritised care leavers to receive laptops and routers that we have distributed to local authorities;
- provided extra funding to 3 care leaver charities – through the DCMS charities funding pot to enable them to keep in more regular contact with care leavers; and
- introduced a number of wider measures across Government which will be of particular benefit to care leavers, including the £20 increase in Universal Credit.

■ Children: Air Pollution

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[135816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that school children are not affected by poor air quality; and what steps his Department has taken to deploy air quality monitors in primary schools.

Nick Gibb:

Local authorities are responsible for air quality in their area and must ensure that it meets the standards set in local air quality action plans. If there was concern about the air quality in a school building, it would fall to the body responsible for the school to check that and establish what measures need to be taken to improve air quality, including whether to deploy air quality monitors in primary schools.

In 2018, the Department published Building Bulletin 101 (BB101), which is guidance for school design on ventilation, thermal comfort and indoor air quality. This guidance sets out the World Health Organisation's air quality guidelines and Air Quality Standards Regulation 2010 for indoor air quality. BB101 requires the indoor environment of new or refurbished school buildings to be monitored by recording temperature and levels of carbon dioxide.

The Department is collaborating with other government departments and a number of academic institutions on air quality projects. The findings from these projects will, in due course, inform our guidance and standards for school buildings.

■ Children: Carers

Catherine West:

[\[137990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent guidance his Department has published on the status of young carers during the covid-19 outbreak; what steps his Department is taking to help support the identification of pupils who are young carers; and what steps he is taking to ensure that support is accessible to young carers.

Catherine West:

[\[137991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what training is provided to teachers and school staff to identify and support pupils who are young carers; and whether such training is mandatory.

Catherine West:

[\[137993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department is providing to young carers while schools are closed during the covid-19 lockdown.

Vicky Ford:

The Department for Education will do whatever it can to make sure no child – whatever their background or location – falls behind as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. We know that young carers may be particularly vulnerable during this time, and ensuring that vulnerable children and young people remain protected is our top priority.

Educational settings remain open and safe for vulnerable children and young people. The definition of vulnerable children and young people includes those who have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who are therefore in need of continued education provision – including young carers amongst others. Local authority duties to assess the needs of young carers, under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, remain unchanged.

The government has provided over £11 million to the See, Hear, Respond programme, to support vulnerable children and young people whose usual support networks have been impacted by the outbreak, including young carers as a target group. The programme provides a range of support, including online counselling and helping children and young people stay connected with school.

The government announced £1 billion of catch-up funding to support children and young people. This includes a £650 million catch-up premium for the 2020/2021 academic year to ensure that schools have the support they need to help all pupils make up for lost teaching time and a £350 million National Tutoring Programme to support those children and young people who need it the most.

Additionally, the ongoing £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return training programme, offered to every school and college in England, is helping support pupil wellbeing, resilience and recovery in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak. The training supports staff working in schools and colleges to respond to the additional pressures some children and young people may be feeling as a direct result of the COVID-19 outbreak. This is in addition to requirements set out in statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' for school designated safeguarding leads to undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills to carry out their role, including a good understanding and alertness to the needs of young carers. This guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>.

The government has continued to support unpaid carers by providing funding to Carers UK to: extend their support phonenumber; provide funding to the Carers Trust to make onward grants to provide support to unpaid carers experiencing loneliness during the COVID-19 outbreak; work with the Social Care Institute for Excellence to publish guidance on reopening day services which we know provide important respite to carers; ensure 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 Carer's Allowance care threshold.

The government has published guidance for both schools and local authorities on how best to support families and protect vulnerable children during the COVID-19 outbreak, alongside guidance for young people with caring responsibilities. The guidance includes information on how and where they can get help and support, including encouraging them to speak to someone they trust at their school or college, like a teacher or school nurse, about their caring responsibilities and how this might affect them.

■ Children: Computers

Robert Halfon:

[135909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children do not have access to a laptop or tablet for the purpose of remote learning in England, as of 11 January 2021.

Nick Gibb:

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

Based on survey data, we know that schools already owned over 1.9 million laptops, and nearly one million tablets, before the start of the COVID-19 outbreak. The Government is providing significant additional support alongside other local initiatives. Ofcom's UK-wide estimate is 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.

The laptops and tablets are an injection of support to help schools, academy trusts and local authorities to provide access to remote education and online social care. Schools, academy trusts and local authorities are responsible for distributing the laptops and tablets and are best placed to know which children and young people need access to a device.

■ Children: Domestic Violence

Rachael Maskell:

[135996]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure a child-focused approach to safeguarding children is taken in homes with domestic violence.

Nick Gibb:

Domestic abuse can have a devastating and longstanding impact on children and young people's health, wellbeing and development. Therefore, this government is committed to passing the landmark Domestic Abuse Bill, which includes the first ever statutory definition of domestic abuse, recognises children as victims of domestic abuse and introduces an independent Domestic Abuse Commissioner, who will be required to consider the impact of domestic abuse on children and the services available to them.

Our statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard children, Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2018), is clear that 'a child centred approach is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child; whatever the form of abuse or neglect, practitioners should put the needs of children first when determining what action to take'. This includes families where children are experiencing domestic abuse.

We are strengthening social care delivery through our children's social care reform programme of initial education, continued professional development and professional

regulation. Under the post qualifying standards, all social workers should be able to identify the impact of domestic abuse and act to protect vulnerable children.

This year, we have also invested £6.5 million to place social workers in schools to help teachers to identify signs of children at risk of exploitation or neglect. We have also provided more than £12 million for 14 children's social care innovation projects across the country to continue delivery and extend their evaluation to capture further learning. These projects aim to support children and young people at increased risk of harm, including domestic abuse programmes.

For children experiencing domestic abuse during the COVID-19 outbreak, attending an education setting plays a key safeguarding role. We have, therefore, asked schools to remain open for children who are vulnerable, as well as for those children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response. The government is also providing support for school staff who are concerned about children experiencing domestic abuse, through the Operation Encompass Teachers' National Helpline, which remains available to all staff in educational settings during term-time and the current lockdown restrictions.

■ **Children: Hearing Impairment**

Lilian Greenwood:

[133799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that education settings have supply of clear face coverings to support communication with deaf students during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings, including those who are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate, or those who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment or disability. No one should be excluded from education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering. Guidance on individuals who are exempt from wearing face coverings can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>.

■ **Educational Institutions: Coronavirus**

Wes Streeting:

[137977]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how data on (a) covid-19 infection rates and (b) staff absence for covid-19 related reasons among staff in education settings is collected by his Department.

Nick Gibb:

The Department receives COVID-19 infection data directly from the National COVID-19 Response Centre within the Department for Health and Social Care on a daily basis. In addition to this, the Department continually monitors a number of public

sources of COVID-19 analysis, including, but not limited to, the Office for National Statistics COVID-19 Infection Survey, the Office for National Statistics Schools Infection Survey, the Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission study at Imperial College London, and the weekly national Influenza and COVID-19 Surveillance Reports published by Public Health England.

The Department also maintains a strong working relationship with SAGE, SPI-M, SPI-B and the Children's Task and Finish Group on children, schools and transmission, which assist in informing the Department's understanding of the spread of COVID-19 within the community and within key groups of interest.

Ofsted collects and publishes information from early years providers on confirmed cases of COVID-19 known to them among staff and children. The latest data was published on Monday 11 January and provides the number of notifications for weeks commencing 14 and 21 December.

The Office for Students collects, on behalf of the Department, information from higher education providers on confirmed cases of COVID-19 known to them among staff and students, as well as headcounts for each. From this information we estimate infection rates in the Higher Education sector.

The Department also asks the majority of schools and colleges to complete the daily education settings online form, wherein they are asked to provide the number of teachers including head teachers, teaching assistants and other staff attending the school onsite as well as the number of those absent due to COVID-19 reasons from onsite and remote teaching/working: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-complete-the-educational-setting-status-form>.

Please note, the online form is not the primary source of data on infection, incidence and COVID-19 cases overall. Rather, this data is used so we can understand capacity issues at both regional and national level.

Further data on overall infection rates, incidence rates and number of COVID-19 cases is owned elsewhere in Government such as by Public Health England, and can be found within the following links:

https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/?_ga=2.91108568.335840232.1603021384-1347302696.1578321854.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports>.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurveyspilot/16october2020>.

■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[137901]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether it is his Department's policy that free school meals should not cover the February 2021 half-term.

Vicky Ford:

During the period of national lockdown, schools should continue to provide meal options for all pupils who are in school. Meals should be available free of charge to all infant pupils and pupils who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals who are in school. Schools should also continue to provide free school meal support to pupils who are eligible for benefits related free school meals and who are learning at home. Schools are free to decide the best approach for their free school meal pupils. They can provide lunch parcels, locally arranged vouchers, or they can use the national voucher scheme which re-opened on Monday 18 January 2021.

As was the case over Christmas, vulnerable children and families can continue to receive support for food and other essentials over February half-term via councils through the £170 million COVID Winter Grant Scheme launched last year. Local authorities understand which groups need support and are best placed to ensure appropriate holiday support is provided. This is why the £170 million COVID Winter Grant Scheme will be distributed by them, rather than schools, who will continue providing support for disadvantaged children during term-time. Families who need support should speak to their local authority.

■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments**Naz Shah:**[\[135968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the guidance on teacher assessments has been made available to teachers of A-Levels and GCSEs.

Naz Shah:[\[135972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the teacher assessments due to take place in summer 2021 will take into account the effect on students of education missed during 2020 as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

In light of the increase in COVID-19 rates, the Government has made the decision to limit attendance at schools and colleges to reduce the number of contacts between households. As a result, examinations will not go ahead in the summer as planned.

The Department and Ofqual have launched a two week consultation on how to fairly award all pupils a grade that supports them to progress to the next stage of their lives. The consultation can be accessed from the Ofqual website and will be open until 29 January 2021. We strongly encourage all our stakeholders, including students and their parents, to respond.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has confirmed he wishes teachers to assess the standard at which pupils are performing and thus the grade they should receive. The consultation proposes that teachers will be supported in doing so through training, guidance, and papers to inform assessments. Guidance materials will be made available after the consultation has closed and the detail of the approach is agreed. The consultation also proposes and seeks views on approaches to assessment which will allow teachers to assess pupils' performance on content

they have had an opportunity to study, despite the disruption, whilst continuing to ensure they have sufficient breadth of knowledge to enable them to successfully progress.

The Department recognises the challenges faced by schools, teachers, and pupils, and knows that disruption has been felt differently across the country and between schools and colleges in the same area, and between pupils within individual institutions. In order to support schools to make up for lost learning, the Government has provided a £1 billion catch-up programme. This includes a £650 million catch-up premium for all schools in recognition of the fact that all pupils will have been impacted by disruption to their education. Additionally, the £350 million National Tutoring Programme is an ambitious scheme that will provide additional, targeted tuition support for disadvantaged pupils who need the most help to catch up.

■ GCE A-level: Standards

Jon Trickett:

[\[133693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to address regional inequalities in the UK for A-Level attainment.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is committed to levelling up school standards and opportunities for all children, including those studying A levels. The Department does this through a mixture of policies that support disadvantaged pupils wherever they live in the country, as well as through extra support for places that fall behind.

Through the 16-19 funding formula, we provide additional funding to support disadvantaged students from economically deprived areas as well as students who have low prior attainment in maths and English. In the 2020/21 academic year, we allocated over £500 million of disadvantage funding (almost 10% of core programme funding).

For the 2020/21 academic year, we have also made up to £96 million available specifically for colleges, sixth forms and other 16-19 providers, to provide small group tutoring activity for disadvantaged 16-19 students whose studies have been disrupted through the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The evidence is clear that early intervention is the best way to address educational inequalities that appear at A level and beyond. The Department is spending £2.4 billion this year through the pupil premium to tackle educational inequality in the school system, as well as investing in a number of reforms to improve the quality of teaching. The Early Career Framework reforms and support for newly qualified teachers is the biggest teaching reform in a generation. In autumn 2020, the Department launched the early roll-out of the Early Career Framework reforms for eligible schools in the North East, Greater Manchester, Bradford and Doncaster. Meanwhile, the Department's Opportunity Areas and One North East programmes are helping to raise standards in areas of the country that face particular challenges.

■ Home Education

Chi Onwurah: [135934]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department plans to publish their response to the 2018 Home Education oversight consultation.

Nick Gibb:

In the spring of 2019, a consultation was held on proposals for a mandatory register of children not attending state or registered independent schools to help local authorities carry out their responsibilities in relation to children not in school. The consultation closed in June 2019. Responses to the consultation have been considered and a formal government response document setting out next steps is expected in due course.

The 2018 consultation and call for evidence into Elective Home Education closed in July 2018. It had two parts: a consultation on revised versions of the Department's guidance on the existing legal basis for the oversight of home education; and a call for evidence on the issues of registration, monitoring, and also support for the families of children educated at home.

The first part resulted in the publication of finalised local authority and parents' versions of guidance on 2 April 2019:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elective-home-education>.

The second part resulted in the consultation that ran in 2019.

■ National Skills Fund

Helen Hayes: [134016]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to increase funding in retrofit skills as part of the Government's National Skills Fund.

Catherine West: [134029]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to increase funding in retrofit skills as part of the Government's National Skills Fund.

Gillian Keegan:

The new Green Jobs Taskforce, which was launched on 12 November 2020, has been set up to help the UK build back greener and deliver the skilled workforce needed to reach net zero emissions by 2050. This is a joint initiative between the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Education. Working with employers and relevant stakeholders, the Taskforce will develop an action plan to support 2 million good-quality, green jobs and the skills needed by 2030, supporting the UK to transition to a net zero economy and deliver a green recovery.

The Taskforce, which also includes members from the construction and retrofit sectors such as the Construction Industry Training Board and Retrofit Works, will represent views of businesses, employees and the skills sector. Involvement in this

work will not be limited only to Taskforce members, and there will be opportunities for a wider set of stakeholders, including the private sector, to contribute.

Investment from the National Skills Fund will support the government's commitment to green jobs. Starting this year, the government is investing £2.5 billion (£3 billion, when including Barnett funding for devolved administrations) in the National Skills Fund. This is a significant investment and has the potential to deliver new opportunities to generations of adults who may have been previously left behind.

From the National Skills Fund, we are investing £95 million over the current spending review period to support any adult aged 24 and over who want to achieve their first full level 3 qualification – equivalent to 2 A levels, or a technical certificate or diploma – to access nearly 400 fully funded courses. The offer includes a range of qualifications that are valuable across the economy in multiple sectors (for example, digital skills, accountancy and engineering skills).

There are specific qualifications included on the course list which will contribute to developing retrofitting skills (for example, a diploma in Installing Electrotechnical Systems and Equipment or a diploma in Engineering Construction Lifting, Positioning and Installing Structures, Plant and Equipment).

Through the National Skills Fund we have also introduced the Skills Bootcamps, which are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving adults aged 19 and over the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer.

From April 2021 we are investing a further £43 million through the National Skills Fund to support this expansion of Skills Bootcamps in England. This will enable us to assist employers across England to fill their in-demand vacancies and we anticipate training upwards of 25,000 individuals. The Bootcamps were initially focused on digital skills but are now being expanded to also cover technical skills training, including engineering and construction.

The training undertaken by adults completing relevant Skills Bootcamps courses can help adults gain the skills required to work towards further training and employment in retrofitting. Furthermore, education providers and employers can put forward bids as part of our technical skills bootcamps to establish a bootcamp with the aim of training people in retrofit skills.

These level 3 and Skills Bootcamps offers will be followed by other investments from the National Skills Fund over the course of this Parliament. The government plans to consult on the National Skills Fund in spring 2021 to ensure that we develop a fund that helps adults learn valuable skills and prepares them for the economy of the future.

■ Nurseries and Primary Education: Coronavirus**Tulip Siddiq:****[137985]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the evidential basis was for the decision to provide covid-19 test kits to primary schools and local authority-run nurseries but not to private, voluntary and independent early years providers.

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 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 schools and nurseries by identifying asymptomatic positive cases. Those who test positive will then self-isolate, helping to reduce transmission of the virus.

■ Nurseries: Coronavirus**Karin Smyth:****[135981]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to implement covid-19 lateral flow testing for staff working in the maintained and private nursery sector.

Vicky Ford:

Rapid, regular testing for people without symptoms of COVID-19 has been made available across the country from week commencing 11 Jan with the eligibility of the community testing programme expanded to cover all 317 local authorities.

The best way currently for those in private early years settings and childminders to access asymptomatic testing is via the community testing programme. Local authorities have been encouraged to target testing at critical workers such as early years staff during the national lockdown. We continue to look at more direct approaches.

We are rolling out our asymptomatic testing programme to primary schools, who will receive testing kits for staff this week. This includes schools-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools. The asymptomatic testing programme will offer all primary school, schools-based nursery and maintained nursery school staff home Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kits for routine testing.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[135993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason nursery providers are not included in his Department's lateral flow testing programme to support covid-19 testing to detect asymptomatic cases; and if he will make it his policy to include nursery providers in that programme.

Vicky Ford:

Rapid, regular testing for people without symptoms of COVID-19 has been made available across the country from week commencing 11 Jan with the eligibility of the community testing programme expanded to cover all 317 local authorities.

The best way currently for those in private early years settings and childminders to access asymptomatic testing is via the community testing programme. Local authorities have been encouraged to target testing at critical workers such as early years staff during the national lockdown. We continue to look at more direct approaches.

We are rolling out our asymptomatic testing programme to primary schools, who will receive testing kits for staff this week. This includes schools-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools. The asymptomatic testing programme will offer all primary school, schools-based nursery and maintained nursery school staff home Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kits for routine testing.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[135821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that people working in (a) early years and (b) other childcare settings are a priority for covid-19 vaccination.

Nick Gibb:

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

The JCVI advises that the first priorities for the COVID-19 vaccination should be the prevention of mortality and the maintenance of the health and social care systems. As the risk of mortality from COVID-19 increases with age, prioritisation is primarily based on age. This prioritisation captures almost all preventable deaths from COVID-19.

In the next phase of the vaccine rollout, the JCVI have asked that the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) consider occupational vaccination in collaboration with other government departments. The Department for Education is working with DHSC and Public Health England to ensure that the education and childcare workforce is considered for prioritisation in the roll out of the vaccine.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[135822]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support the Government will provide to (a) early years and (b) other childcare settings that have to close for safety reasons during the covid-19 outbreak; and what data his Department has collected on whether parents are withdrawing children from early years settings due to safety concerns.

Vicky Ford:

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

On 17 December 2020, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced that both the CJRS and SEISS will be extended to April 2021. We have also updated the CJRS guidance for early years so that all providers who have seen a drop in their overall income are able to furlough any staff (who were on payroll on or before 30 October) and who are not required for delivering the government's funded entitlements: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care>.

Where early years providers are struggling financially, they may be eligible to access support for the Additional Restrictions Grant (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-youre-eligible-for-the-coronavirus-additional-restrictions-grant>) if not eligible for the Local Restrictions Support Grant schemes (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-youre-eligible-for-the-coronavirus-local-restrictions-support-grant-for-open-businesses>).

We have worked in consultation with the early years sector in developing advice to support settings. Advice from Public Health England remains that the risk of transmission and infection is low if early years settings follow the system of controls, which reduce risks and create inherently safer environments.

The department is working closely with the Department for Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure rapid asymptomatic testing for all early years staff, to support the announcement made by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, on 4 January 2021 for early years settings to remain fully open during the current lockdown.

We regularly commission parent polls, conducted via Ipsos MORI, to assess parental intentions with regard to the use of early years childcare, the latest published parent poll stats from wave 5 in September 2020 are published here: <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/childcare-and-home-learning-families-0-4-year-olds-during-covid-19-0>. Our most recent poll was conducted during the second

lockdown in November and early December 2020. A further parent poll is due to be conducted in coming weeks. We will publish the results of these in due course.

We also stay in regular contact with the early years sector and regularly and closely monitor attendance within settings. We will keep under constant review whether further action is needed.

Sir Roger Gale:

[910858]

What support his Department is providing to help safeguard (a) staff and (b) children in early years settings during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

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

Settings must comply with health and safety law, which requires them to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. Settings should thoroughly review their health and safety risk assessment and draw up plans on re-opening, in the event that they have to close. Settings should have active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are effective, working as planned, and updated appropriately, for example when any issues are identified, or when there are changes in public health advice.

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

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

We are 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. The fastest way testing can currently be delivered is through the community rapid asymptomatic testing being run by local authorities.

We are rolling out our asymptomatic testing programme to primary schools, schools-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools. 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 education settings by identifying asymptomatic positive cases. Those who test positive will then self-isolate, helping to reduce transmission of the virus.

Furthermore, with regard to vaccinations, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that the first priorities for the COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of mortality and the maintenance of the health and social care systems. As the risk of mortality from COVID-19 increases with age, prioritisation is primarily based on age.

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

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

■ **Pre-school Education: Remote Education**

Tulip Siddiq:

[137987]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether children receiving remote learning from their early years provider during the covid-19 lockdown will be counted in the January 2021 census as registered at that provider for the purposes of calculating local authority early years entitlement funding.

Vicky Ford:

On 4 January, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister announced that early years provision would remain open for children during the national lockdown in England. The early years entitlements exist to provide high quality education and care for pre-school children. Early education enables very young children to develop the core building blocks of communication and social skills. The government does not consider remote learning to be an effective way of delivering high quality early education for very young children, and nor can young children be cared for online.

For the purposes of the Early Years Census 2021, local authorities have been asked to count the hours of children who have been offered a place in early years provision and who are reasonably expected to attend the provision. This means children who, were it not for the impact of coronavirus on either their own personal circumstances or on the operation of their Early Years setting, would be attending Early Years provision. This does not include children who have been offered remote learning as an alternative to a place in early years provision.

■ Primary Education: Coronavirus

Steve McCabe:

[135800]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that primary school staff are able to access lateral flow testing.

Nick Gibb:

Rapid, regular testing for people without symptoms of COVID-19 will be made available to primary staff by the end of January with kits being delivered from 18 January. All primary school staff will be offered home test kits for routine testing. These kits contain Lateral Flow Device tests which enable self-swabbing. They are designed for use at home so staff can complete the test before coming in to work.

■ Pupils: Travel

Chi Onwurah:

[135933]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent guidance his Department has issued to (a) parents and (b) teachers regarding recommended traveling distances between home and school for pupils.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not issue guidance to parents and teachers about recommended travelling distances between home and school for pupils.

Children of compulsory school age who attend their nearest suitable school and live more than the statutory walking distance from it are eligible for free home to school transport. The statutory walking distance is 2 miles for children under the age of 8 and 3 miles for children aged 8 and over.

The statutory guidance for local authorities on home to school travel and transport recommends that, for children receiving free home to school transport, the maximum each way journey time should be 45 minutes for a child of primary school and 75 minutes for a child of secondary school age, wherever possible. The guidance is available here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance.

■ Remote Education

Rachael Maskell:

[135992]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking with local authorities to ensure that they have sufficient supplies of mobile broadband dongles to distribute to pupils so that they can participate in remote education during the covid-19 lockdown that has been in place since 5 January 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services.

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

We have also partnered with the UK's leading mobile network operators to provide free data to disadvantaged families, which will support access to education resources, including Oak National Academy, and other websites. Schools are able to request free mobile data uplifts via the Get Help with Technology service: <https://get-help-with-tech.education.gov.uk/>.

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

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

Gill Furniss:

[137998]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has of the adequacy of support for parents delivering home learning.

Nick Gibb:

Given the critical importance of ensuring that all children and young people continue to learn during the national lockdown, we have updated the remote education guidance for schools and colleges to clarify and strengthen expectations while on-site attendance is restricted, drawing on our evolving understanding of best practice in remote education. Further information on this is available here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf.

Schools are expected to offer pupils online lessons and a set number of hours of remote education, having increased from the Department's previous minimum expectations. This includes time for independent study and either recorded or live direct teaching. Schools are also now expected to have a system in place for checking daily whether pupils are engaging actively with their work and education. The Department has also asked schools and colleges to publish information about their remote education provision on their websites. This should be done by 18 January 2021 for colleges and 25 January 2021 for schools.

The Department recognises that different expectations are appropriate for younger and older age groups when undergoing remote education. We expect schools to consider the remote education expectations in relation to pupils' age, stage of development or special educational needs. The number of hours of remote education we expect schools to deliver also varies according to pupil stage.

The Department also recognises that younger children in Key Stage One or Reception often require high levels of parental involvement to support their engagement with remote education, which makes digital provision a particular

challenge for this age group. We therefore do not expect that solely digital means will be used to teach these pupils remotely.

The Department is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. We have already provided over 54,000 4G wireless routers, with free data for the academic year, and have also partnered with some of the UK's leading mobile network operators to provide free data to disadvantaged families, further supporting remote education where it is needed.

The Department has made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy, both for the summer term of the 2019/20 academic year, and for the 2020/21 academic year, to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects, for Reception up to Year Eleven. Specialist content for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is also available.

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

A range of resources are available to help support children's wellbeing at present. Public Health England has provided advice and guidance for parents and professionals on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, including suggested key actions to take, such as supporting safe ways to connect with friends. This is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>. Resources are also available through the Every Mind Matters campaign and Rise Above, which aim to build resilience and support good mental health in young people aged ten to sixteen specifically. These can be accessed here: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/> and <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools/topics/rise-above/overview>.

■ Remote Education: Disability

Alexander Stafford:

[136103]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will provide additional support to schools to ensure equivalent quality of home learning for disabled children as in a school environment.

Vicky Ford:

During the period of national lockdown, primary, secondary, alternative provision and special schools will remain open to vulnerable children and young people, including those with an education, health and care plan (EHCP). We have updated the remote education guidance for schools and colleges, including guidance for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), to clarify and strengthen expectations

while on-site attendance is restricted, drawing on our evolving understanding of best practice in remote education:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952443/210114_School_national_restrictions_guidance_FINAL_14012021.pdf.

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

Schools should follow the age-related guidance on remote education for primary schools and secondary schools. 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.

Many pupils with disabilities will also have special educational needs. The legal duty on schools to use their best endeavours to meet the special educational needs of their pupils remains unchanged, whether they are attending school or at home for any period. In addition, where a pupil has an EHCP, it remains the legal duty of the local authority to secure the special educational provision specified in the plan.

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.

To ensure pupils with SEND are supported effectively, we have provided additional funding to one of our Demonstrators National Star College to provide specialist training in assistive technologies to teachers, leaders and special educational needs coordinators in all state funded schools in England. This training will help to secure remote education arrangements for pupils with special educational needs with 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 schools looking for help to improve the quality of their remote provision in line with the expectations, the department has published a sector-led good practice guide. The guide provides practical advice and suggestions for school leaders as part of the support package on Get Help with Remote Education:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-remote-education>.

■ Schools: Census

Karin Smyth:

[135982]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the steps schools need to take to conduct the January 2021 school census during the covid-19 England national lockdown.

Nick Gibb:

Following the recent announcement made on 4 January 2021 by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, and as part of our ongoing work to help manage the burden on educational and care settings, the Department has reviewed all data collections (including the school census) to ensure that they remain both necessary and feasible at this time. This review has included consultation with a subset of external representatives from the sector.

As the scope of the school census is all children on the school's admission register, rather than those physically in attendance on census day or census week, the majority of data schools need to return should be information they already hold. As such, the requirements on schools for the school census collection are not directly impacted by the national lockdown. However, where relevant, we have updated and clarified the guidance for the small subset of data collected which refer to the situation on census day (namely information on class activity and take up of free school lunches by infant pupils).

The data collection will remain open for schools to make a return for at least 8 weeks until 17 March 2021. We also have a dedicated service available to support, and work with, schools having any difficulties.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Steve McCabe:

[135797]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industry on ensuring employers do not put pressure on employees to send their children to school during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Nick Gibb:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, regularly meets cabinet colleagues about a range of issues.

Under the current national restrictions, the Department has made it clear that vulnerable children and children of critical workers can attend school and college in person. However, parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.

The Department published updated guidance for parents on 8 January 2021, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the->

coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?utm_source=back-school-campaign-aug-2020&utm_medium=offline&utm_campaign=backtoschool.

The Department has also published a media blog, which is available at: <https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/01/08/am-i-a-critical-worker-or-are-they-vulnerable-or-without-internet-access-or-broadband/>.

Where vulnerable children and children of critical workers do not attend school, we expect schools to provide them with remote education, as for the majority of their pupils. Pupils who are self-isolating should not attend school. Clinically extremely vulnerable pupils are also advised not to attend school. Where a parent wishes their child to be absent, we expect schools to authorise the absence during this national lockdown period. Absence will not be penalised.

Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 and EU transition response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>. Children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school if required. This includes parents who may be working from home.

Early years provision should continue to remain open and should continue to allow all children to attend full time, or their usual timetable hours.

Steve McCabe:

[135799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether it is his policy that schools remain open to vulnerable and key worker children in the February half-term and Easter holidays.

Nick Gibb:

Ensuring sufficiency of childcare provision for critical worker parents and carers and vulnerable children remains a Government priority. The Department is considering plans for half term and will provide more information shortly.

Naz Shah:

[135971]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to update Public Health England guidance in response to the new covid-19 variant; and when that guidance will be available to schools.

Nick Gibb:

All evidence suggests that the new variant of concern is more transmissible than previous cases and is now the dominant strain across the country.

However, the data suggests that this effect is broadly uniform across age groups. The new variant does not appear disproportionately more transmissible among children than adults, nor is there any evidence that the new variant is more transmissible in schools than elsewhere in society.

Previous Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) advice has been clear that the measures that reduced transmission of the older variant all continue to apply

for the new variant, including those in schools. Those measures are now all the more important.

Wes Streeting:

[137978]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria he plans to use to determine when schools will re-open to all pupils as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Nick Gibb:

We know that receiving face to face education is best for children's and young people's mental health and for their educational achievement. Our hope is that with the efforts we are all making to contain COVID-19, children and young people across England will be back in the classroom, spending time with their friends and teachers, and getting back into the rhythms of the school year again soon.

We are keeping plans for the return to school and college under continuous review and will ensure that children and young people return to face-to-face education as soon as it is possible.

Sarah Olney:

[138002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether (a) primary and (b) secondary schools will be required to remain open during the February half-term holiday for the children of key workers.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is considering the arrangements for February half term and will give advance notice to schools and colleges.

■ Schools: Garston and Halewood

Maria Eagle:

[137880]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether schools in Garston and Halewood constituency can order additional digital devices 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 have already been delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities by the end of last week.

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 constituency is not available.

We announced on 12 January 2021 that we are purchasing 300,000 more laptops and tablets, bringing the total to 1.3 million. The Get Help with Technology scheme

will email all schools with information on the number of additional devices allocated to them, and when they will be able to order. Devices will be available from early February 2021.

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.

■ Schools: Health Services

Alexander Stafford:

[136102]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, is he will take steps with (a) schools and (b) local authorities to ensure that (i) physiotherapy and (ii) other additional support usually delivered in schools can continue to be delivered where it is safe to do so.

Vicky Ford:

The COVID-19 outbreak has been extremely challenging for many families of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). That is why we asked schools to stay open for vulnerable children, including those with an education, health and care plan, during the period of national lockdown. On 7 January 2021, we published guidance for schools on the current national lockdown, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

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 child 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 where this is reasonably necessary, including where this requires them to move between settings. On occasion, special schools may encounter circumstances where they cannot provide their usual interventions and provision at adequate staffing ratios, or with staff with vital specialist training. In these circumstances they should seek to resume as close as possible to the child or young person's specified provision as soon as possible. Pupil level risk assessments, which were used last spring, should not be used to filter children and young people in or out of attendance, but could be helpful to prioritise the provision a child or young person can get if full time provision for all is not possible.

We will issue updated guidance and as part of this we will be providing more detailed advice and support for special schools.

■ Schools: Mental Health Services

Daisy Cooper:

[134184]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will amend the definition of a health and social care worker in the guidance to schools to include (a) counsellors and (b) all mental health workers, whether employed directly by the NHS or otherwise.

Chi Onwurah:

[135925]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if the Government will publish an updated definition of key worker.

Nick Gibb:

We have made guidance available on “Children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings”. The document sets out the high level role-types for which the children of critical workers would be considered eligible to continue to attend school. The list in the guidance is not exhaustive, but it should offer sufficient information to help parents and carers to identify if their work falls under one of the umbrella groups. The guidance 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>.

Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 and EU transition response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors. Children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school if required. Schools should speak to parents and carers to identify who needs to go to school, and parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.

The Department knows that every school will have a different number of children of critical workers who need to attend. It is important that on-site provision is provided for these pupils. There is no limit to the numbers of these pupils who may attend, and schools should not limit attendance of these groups. We expect schools to work with critical worker parents to ensure their child is given access to a place if it is required, so that parents can continue providing vital services.

■ Secondary Education: Coronavirus

Steve McCabe:

[135798]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to encourage secondary school pupils to take up lateral flow testing in schools.

Nick Gibb:

Antigen lateral flow tests are designed to detect the level of virus in individuals who do not experience or show any symptoms, but who could still be infectious and pass the virus to others.

As part of the delivery of this new testing capability for pupils in secondary schools and colleges, the Department has strongly encouraged both staff and pupils to take the test as it will help to stop the spread of COVID-19, protect other people, and save lives.

In addition, the Department, in partnership with the Department for Health and Social Care, have produced a range of training and guidance material including webinars to support pupils in feeling able to complete the lateral flow testing. We have also

developed extensive guidance for schools and colleges to allow them to communicate to their pupils about how easy and quick it is to undertake the test in order to encourage them to take up the testing offer.

The testing will help to ensure that schools and colleges can avoid unnecessary staff shortages, and vulnerable pupils and students, and those whose parents or carers are key workers, can continue in face to face education.

■ Special Educational Needs: Remote Education

Steve McCabe:

[135801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will issue separate guidance on remote learning for special education schools.

Vicky Ford:

On 8 January 2021, the department published updated guidance regarding the provision of remote education during national lockdown while attendance is restricted: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf. This includes guidance for pupils with special education needs.

During the period of national lockdown, primary, secondary, alternative provision and special schools will remain open to vulnerable children and young people, including those with an education, health and care plan. For pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (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. Where possible, special schools should follow the age-related guidance for primary schools and secondary schools.

Schools should work collaboratively with families, putting in place reasonable adjustments as necessary, so that pupils with SEND can successfully access remote education alongside their peers. All further education (FE) providers 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.

There are a wide range of resources available to support schools and FE providers to meet the expectations we have set. Get Help with Remote Education provides a one-stop-shop for teachers and leaders, signposting the support package available: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-remote-education>. This includes information on supporting pupils and students with SEND.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[136104]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional support for university students who have caring responsibilities for children and who are engaged in university studies alongside home tutoring.

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.

It is for higher education (HE) providers as autonomous bodies to identify and address the needs of their student body and many providers have boosted their existing welfare services to ensure students are able to access the support they need.

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

Going forward, HE providers should continue to be innovative in how they identify issues and support their students

The department has also 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.

Guidance from the National Association of Student Money Advisers includes students with children as a priority group for hardship support.

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.

Andrew Griffith:

[136105]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support he plans to provide for undergraduate students whose university education has been disrupted by the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

We understand that this is a difficult and uncertain time for students, and we are working with the sector to make sure that all reasonable efforts are being made to enable all students to continue their studies and provide the support required for them to do so. Importantly, and following the national lockdown announcement, we have prioritised the return to face-to-face teaching for courses which are most important to be delivered in-person in order to support the pipeline of future key workers. All other courses should be delivered online until at least mid-February. We are working to ensure that all students are able to return to university as soon as it is safe to do so and we will provide further advice on this as soon as we can.

Our expectation, during these challenging times is that universities should maintain the quality and quantity of tuition and the Office for Students (OfS) will continue to actively monitor universities to ensure that quality of provision is maintained and accessible for all. That said, I know the sector has put in significant resources and worked hard to provide and prepare learning materials for this academic year and there are some fantastic and innovative approaches to delivering high-quality online learning.

We are also working with universities and the Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) to explore what extra measures they have, or will need, to put in place to ensure that students continue to graduate with PSRB accredited degrees.

Students undertaking courses that would normally require attendance on-site will qualify for loans for living costs in the 2020/21 academic year, even if universities are providing course lectures and/or tutorials online due to the COVID-19 outbreak, provided students continue to engage with their higher education provider.

Students who suspend their studies for a variety of reasons, including shielding, can apply to Student Finance England for their living costs support to be continued while they are absent from their course. Students who suspend their studies due to illness automatically receive living costs support for the first 60 days of their illness.

Students who have applied for a loan for living costs for the 2020/21 academic year and have been awarded a lower amount than the maximum and believe their household income for the current tax year (2020/21) will drop by at least 15% compared to the household income they provided when they were initially assessed, can apply for their entitlement to be reassessed.

In these exceptional circumstances, we recognise that some students may face financial hardship or experience mental health issues. We have asked universities to prioritise mental health support, and ensure that students required to self-isolate receive the support they need. To support with this, we have worked closely with the 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. We are also currently making available up to £20 million of additional hardship funding to support those that need it

most, particularly disadvantaged students. In addition, the £3 million OfS funded mental health and well-being platform, Student Space, has been extended for the whole of the 2020/21 academic year to provide extra support during these unprecedented times. The platform is designed to work alongside existing services. I also continually engage with Vice Chancellors and sector representatives, reinforcing at every opportunity that student welfare should remain a priority.

We will continue to monitor the situation and adjust sector guidance and support where necessary.

Dr Luke Evans:

[910861]

What steps he is taking to support university students during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Michelle Donelan:

We understand that this is a very difficult and uncertain time for students, and we are working with universities, higher education (HE) institutions, mission groups, unions and professional Sector Bodies to make sure that all reasonable efforts are being made to enable all students to continue their studies and provide the support required for them to do so. Our expectation is that universities should maintain the quality and quantity of tuition and the Office for Students (OfS) will continue to actively monitor universities to ensure that quality of provision is maintained and accessible for all.

Students undertaking courses that would normally require attendance on-site will qualify for loans for living costs in the 2020/21 academic year, even if universities are providing course lectures and/or tutorials online only due to COVID-19, provided students continue to engage with their HE provider.

Students who suspend their studies for a variety of reasons, including shielding, can apply to Student Finance England for their living costs support to be continued while they are absent from their course. Students who suspend their studies due to illness automatically receive living costs support for the first 60 days of their illness.

Students who have applied for a loan for living costs for 2020/21 and have been awarded a lower amount than the maximum and believe their household income for the current tax year (2020-21) will drop by at least 15% compared to the household income they provided when they were initially assessed, can apply for their entitlement to be reassessed.

In these exceptional circumstances, we recognise that some students may face financial hardship or experience mental health issues. We have asked universities to prioritise mental health support and ensure that students required to self-isolate receive the support they need. I have also set up a sub-group of the HE taskforce to ensure there is appropriate focus on this important matter. To support with this further, we have worked closely with the OfS to help clarify that providers can draw upon existing funding to increase hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by COVID-19. Providers are able to use OfS Student Premium funding worth around £256 million for this academic year towards student hardship funds. We

are also currently making available up to £20 million of additional hardship funding to support those that need it most, particularly disadvantaged students. In addition, the £3 million OfS funded mental health and well-being platform, Student Space, has been extended for the whole of the 2020/21 academic year to provide extra support during these unprecedented times. The platform is designed to work alongside existing services.

I continue to emphasise to Vice Chancellors at every opportunity that student welfare should remain a priority. We will continue to monitor the situation and adjust sector guidance and support where necessary.

■ Students: Rented Housing

Cat Smith:

[910862]

What steps he is taking to support students who have paid rent for accommodation at university but are unable to use it as a result of covid-19 restrictions.

Michelle Donelan:

Universities and private accommodation providers are autonomous and responsible for setting their own rent agreements. The government plays no direct role in the provision of student accommodation. However, the government encourages all providers of student accommodation to review their accommodation policies to ensure that they have students best interests at heart. We also urge them to communicate their policy clearly and be fair.

We recognise that in these exceptional circumstances some students may face financial hardship. The department has worked with the Office for Students to clarify that providers are able to draw on existing funds, worth around £256 million for academic year 2020/21, towards hardship support. The government is making available up to a further £20 million on a one-off basis to support those that need it most, particularly disadvantaged students.

Maintenance loans are available as a contribution towards a student's living costs while attending university. The system targets the most living cost support at those from the lowest income families, who need it most.

Maximum living costs support increased by 10.3% in cash terms for eligible new students on the lowest incomes in 2016/17 compared to the maximum support available for new starters in 2015/16 under the previous system. Further inflationary increases in living costs support have been made in each academic year since, with an increase of 2.9% announced for the 2020/21 academic year and 3.1% for the 2021/22 academic year, taking the support available for the lowest income students to record levels in cash terms.

Students who have applied for a loan for living costs for 2020/21 and have been awarded a lower amount than the maximum and believe their household income for the current tax year (2020-21) will drop by at least 15% compared to the household income they provided when they were initially assessed, can apply for their entitlement to be reassessed.

If students have concerns about their accommodation fees, they should first raise their concerns with their accommodation provider. If their concerns remain unresolved, and their higher education provider is involved in the provision of the accommodation, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education to consider their complaint.

If a student thinks their accommodation provider is treating them unfairly, they can raise a complaint under the accommodation codes of practice as long as their provider is a code member. The codes can be found at: <https://www.thesac.org.uk/>, <https://www.unipol.org.uk/the-code/how-to-complain> and <https://www.rla.org.uk/about/nrla-code-of-practice.shtml>.

■ Turing Scheme

Ben Lake: [138012]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many participants there were in the Erasmus+ programme in 2020-21; and how many of those participants were from Wales.

Ben Lake: [138013]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will provide details of the funding arrangements for (a) universities, (b) colleges and (c) schools under the proposed Turing scheme; and whether those institutions will be required to participate in a competitive bidding process for that scheme.

Ben Lake: [138014]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of students from Wales that will participate in the Turing scheme in (a) 2021-22 and (b) future years.

Ben Lake: [138015]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding his Department plans to allocate under the Turing scheme to (a) projects and (b) institutions in Wales in (i) 2021-22 and (ii) future years.

Ben Lake: [138016]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether UK students will liable for fees in their host countries under the Turing programme.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is committed to international education exchanges. The Turing scheme will be backed by over £100 million, providing funding for around 35,000 students in universities, colleges and schools to go on placements and exchanges overseas, starting in September 2021.

We will be making further information available very shortly to enable providers across the UK to prepare to bid for funding when applications open in the coming weeks for placements to take place from September 2021. This will include information on how applications will be assessed, and funding allocated and we plan

to have a call for bids much like Erasmus+. Successful applications will receive funding for administering the scheme and students taking part will receive grants to help them with the costs of their international experience.

This scheme will be demand-led and will be open to bids from providers across the UK. As such, there is no projection as to the number of students from each nation or specific limits for any specific region.

On tuition fees, we expect these to be waived for Turing scheme participants consistent with the arrangements for Erasmus+.

On participant numbers, the National Agency collects data on Erasmus+ participation by devolved administration, available here: <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/statistics>.

Data for the programme year 2020/2021 is not currently available.

■ Vocational Education: Assessments

Rachael Maskell:

[135995]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that BTEC students who will not sit exams receive a fair grade at the end of their courses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

We want to ensure that no student is disadvantaged if they are unable to take their exam or assessment during the 2020/21 academic year.

We are working with Ofqual, awarding organisations, and other stakeholders, including through a public consultation, to agree the arrangements that will be put in place so that students receive a fair grade at the end of their course.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[136056]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional provisions he will make for BTEC students who are still required to take their exams, in order for them to be assessed and graded fairly while their learning has been disrupted due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

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

The department allowed the January 2021 assessment window to proceed where schools and colleges judge it right to do so. Some students need to complete a practical assessment to obtain a licence to practice and enter the workplace and it is right that they should have the opportunity to do so, so that they are not prevented from progressing onto the next stage of their lives. To support providers, we have published guidance on conducting exams in a COVID-secure way and advice on how to restrict attendance during the national lockdown.

On 13 January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to Ofqual setting out that, where possible, practical assessments that are required to demonstrate occupational regulation or competence should proceed as planned, where they can be conducted in line with Public Health England safety measures. The letter also sets out that it is no longer viable for the written exams and assessments scheduled this academic year in February and March to go ahead, and the expectation that alternative arrangements would also be needed for exams between April and August 2021. Views on alternative arrangements will be sought through a consultation we are taking forward with Ofqual.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Pollution

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[135820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the air quality in each local authority area; and whether his Department prioritises funding for mitigation of poor air quality based on that assessment.

Rebecca Pow:

Local authorities are required to review and assess local air quality. If their assessment shows that local pollution levels exceed, or are likely to exceed, local air quality objectives they must declare an Air Quality Management Area and develop an Air Quality Action Plan with the aim of reducing air pollution to within statutory limits.

Local authorities receive grant in aid to cover their local air quality management duties. Defra's air quality grant programme provides funding to local authorities for projects in local communities to tackle air pollution. Particular consideration is given to applications that can demonstrate they will benefit local areas where there are, or are projected to be, pollutant exceedances. The Government has awarded over £64 million in funding since the air quality grant started in 1997.

The Government has put in place a £3.8 billion plan to improve air quality and reduce harmful nitrogen dioxide emissions. Clean Air Zones will deliver targeted action in air pollution hot spots to improve air quality, to improve health and support economic growth in the urban environment, encouraging the replacement of old, polluting vehicles with modern, cleaner technologies, such as ultra-low emission vehicles.

■ Air Pollution: Pollution Control

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[135818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps is he taking to ensure that local authorities are prioritising the elimination of air pollution.

Rebecca Pow:

We are continuing to deliver our ambitious plans to improve air quality. To tackle local NO₂ exceedances, we are providing £880 million to help local authorities develop and

implement local air quality plans and to support those impacted by these plans. We have supported the retrofit of over 3,000 buses with cleaner engines and agreed go live dates for clean air zones in Bath and Birmingham. We are committed to ensuring that local authorities have access to a wide range of options as they develop plans to address roadside pollution in a way that meets the needs of their communities.

In addition, through the Environment Bill we are improving cooperation within the Local Air Quality Management framework to widen the range of bodies that play a role in improving local air quality, including neighbouring local authorities and relevant public bodies, ensuring action is taken by all key players to tackle pollution sources and to improve air quality locally.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[135819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that climate crisis resolutions passed by local authorities are followed by action across communities to make them more sustainable in terms of air quality.

Rebecca Pow:

It is for local authorities to determine the specific actions they take in the context of climate crisis resolutions they have made. However, in our Local Air Quality Management statutory guidance we are clear that local authorities should ensure that all parts of a local authority are working effectively together to improve air quality. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to review and assess local air quality, and to take action where a local exceedance of statutory local air quality standards and objectives is identified. Where no such exceedance has been identified we nonetheless recommend local authorities develop local air quality strategies.

■ Assistance Animals: Pet Travel Scheme

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[138079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to obtain Part 1 Listed Status under the Pet Passport scheme for assistance dogs and their owners.

Victoria Prentis:

The Department previously submitted an application to the European Commission to become a 'Part 1' listed third country in relation to non-commercial movement of pet dogs, cats and ferrets. On 3 December 2020 the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed of the EU voted in favour of, and has now adopted, the UK as a 'Part 2' listed status third country for the non-commercial movement of pet dogs, cats and ferrets. The rules that govern pet travel also apply to assistance dogs.

We are clear we meet all the animal health requirements to become a Part 1 listed third country and have one of the most rigorous pet checking regimes in Europe to protect our biosecurity. Our disease risk has not changed, and we recognise the challenges that 'Part 2' listed status pose for assistance dog users. We will continue to press the EU Commission on securing Part 1 listed status.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[138080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the UK-EU trade deal on travel (a) to the EU and b) to Northern Ireland for assistance dogs and their owners.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement does not include provisions relating to the movement of pet animals and assistance dogs. These movements are separately governed under the EU's Pet Travel Scheme, and for Great Britain to continue to take advantage of eased pet and assistance dog movements we applied to become a 'Part 1' listed third country specifically for these movements. This was a technical process that was separate to the wider negotiations.

On 3 December 2020 the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (PAFF) of the EU voted in favour of giving the United Kingdom "Part 2" listed status for the purposes of non-commercial pet travel after the Transition Period, and this has now been formally adopted. A Part 2 listed status means similar health requirements for assistance dogs travelling to the EU, but new documentation and rules on points of entry. These rules also now apply for movements from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

■ **Coronavirus: Clinical Waste**

Luke Pollard:

[\[138054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether used covid lateral flow test kits must be treated as clinical waste.

Luke Pollard:

[\[138055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the (a) waste handling and (b) treatment requirements are for (a) used covid-19 lateral flow test kits and (b) used pregnancy test kits.

Luke Pollard:

[\[138056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the capacity of waste handling and treatment operators to deal with the (a) scale and (b) complexity of (i) clinical and (ii) other waste generated by used covid-19 (A) protection, (B) vaccination and (C) testing products.

Luke Pollard:

[\[138057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what (a) scientific and (b) other evidence his Department used when classifying used covid-19 lateral flow test kits as specialised clinical waste.

Luke Pollard:

[\[138058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the capacity of local authorities to manage the (a) scale and (b)

complexity of (i) clinical and (ii) other waste generated by used covid-19 (A) protection, (B) vaccination and (C) testing products.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra and the Environment Agency are working closely with colleagues across government, including DHSC and PHE, and the waste sector to ensure that waste arising as a result of COVID-19 protection, testing, and vaccination is managed and disposed of safely.

Clinical waste and offensive waste are legally defined in The Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012. Other than general waste and any packaging waste, waste from Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) and the testing process is classified as non-hazardous healthcare offensive and chemical waste (

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-lateral-flow-tests-waste-codes/waste-codes-for-mass-testing-with-lateral-flow-antigen-testing-devices>).

DHSC has confirmed that this waste does not present any increased risk compared with, for example, personal care waste. Assessments of the chemicals used in LFD tests have been made by DHSC and have confirmed that this waste should not be classified as 'clinical waste' and does not need to be managed as such. Waste management operations should continue to follow appropriate guidance for hygiene and health and safety practices.

Householders undertaking home COVID-19 testing using a LFD test kit should dispose of the LFD test kit, in its packaging, in their residual waste bin, in a similar fashion to home pregnancy test kits.

Where a number of tests are being undertaken at the same place (e.g. mass population testing sites, workplaces etc.), LFD wastes should be segregated in accordance with DHSC guidance above, to ensure efficient and safe management of this waste. This waste must be collected from the testing location by an appropriately licensed waste carrier, such as those providing washroom services, or a general waste contractor. This waste must then be either taken directly to a municipal waste incinerator temporarily permitted to accept this waste by the Environment Agency under a Regulatory Position Statement (RPS C23: Incinerating specified healthcare wastes at a municipal waste incinerator); or to a waste transfer facility that has demonstrated to the Environment Agency that they can store these wastes in a safe and controlled manner, and have been granted a temporary formal local enforcement position to safely store and then transfer these wastes to municipal waste incinerators.

Vaccination waste will be managed within existing healthcare waste management systems. Clinical waste handling remains a devolved matter under the respective health bodies. In addition, a four nation cross government working group maintains active monitoring of the waste flows being generated and resilience measures have been put in place to support NHS Test and Trace, the vaccination programmes and PPE waste flows.

■ Export Health Certificates

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[135961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many applications for Export Health Certificates have been made on each day of the last four weeks.

Victoria Prentis:

Exporters can and may choose to request EHCs in bulk for future export use, therefore the total number of daily EHC applications submitted via EHC Online will not directly equate to the number of exported consignments each day.

	APPLICATIONS (EU – INCLUDES NI)	APPLICATIONS (ROW)
11-Dec	27	162
13-Dec	4	20
14-Dec	16	14
15-Dec	29	169
16-Dec	21	143
17-Dec	45	124
18-Dec	22	178
20-Dec	7	151
21-Dec	20	5
22-Dec	101	16
23-Dec	163	134
24-Dec	109	105
26-Dec	3	120
27-Dec	17	60
28-Dec	44	2
29-Dec	145	2
30-Dec	234	22
31-Dec	221	99
01-Jan	49	105

	APPLICATIONS (EU – INCLUDES NI)	APPLICATIONS (ROW)
02-Jan	45	86
03-Jan	58	6
04-Jan	234	4
05-Jan	305	11
06-Jan	322	125
07-Jan	390	217
08-Jan	396	146
Grand Total	3027	2550

■ Supermarkets: Coronavirus

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[136083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will have discussions with supermarkets to request that security guards act to encourage the use of masks by customers and restrict the number of customers in their stores.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK Government has regular meetings with the supermarkets, including at Ministerial level, on Covid-19 issues. This includes discussions about the measures that have supermarkets have put in place to ensure a Covid-secure environment for their customers and their staff.

We will continue to work with the supermarkets to support these activities, including how best to manage capacity in stores and to encourage the use of face coverings. On the latter we welcome the recent announcements from a number of supermarkets on the steps they are taking to encourage customers to comply with Government rules. The Secretary of State also wrote to those working in our food and drink supply chains recently, thanking them for the work they have done throughout the pandemic.

■ Waste: Recycling

Ruth Jones:

[\[136052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the proportion of residual waste sent to landfill, incineration and transfer stations that could have been recycled in England in 2020.

Rebecca Pow:

The proportion of residual waste sent to landfill, incineration and transfer stations that could have been recycled in England in 2020 is not available.

Reporting of waste and recycling data for Local Authorities in England for the year 2020, while subject to delays due to Covid 19, will not be complete until later in 2021.

However, it will not be possible to provide detailed information on the amount of waste in the residual waste stream that could be recycled as data on waste arisings are not structured around the material composition of waste streams.

The Resources and Waste Strategy set out the government's intention to introduce three major waste reforms; consistency in recycling, extended producer responsibility and a deposit return scheme. These commitments will be delivered through the Environment Bill and will ensure that less recyclable waste will be sent to landfill or incineration in the future.

In October 2020 as part of the Circular Economy Package we legislated to include a permit condition for landfill and incineration operators, meaning they cannot accept separately collected paper, metal, glass or plastic for landfill or incineration unless it has gone through some form of treatment process first and is the best environmental outcome.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Gareth Davies:

[\[910988\]](#)

What diplomatic steps he is taking to strengthen UK relations in the Indo-Pacific.

Nigel Adams:

Deeper engagement with the Indo-Pacific is fundamental to the UK's future economy, security and values.

The Foreign Secretary's visits to India in December, and to the Republic of Korea and Vietnam in September, advanced collaboration across critical sectors. The UK's application for ASEAN Dialogue Partner status and planned accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership will deepen our political, security and economic relations across the region.

Rushanara Ali:

[\[910990\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 on forcibly displaced people in fragile and developing countries.

James Cleverly:

Crowded conditions where social distancing, regular handwashing and self-isolation are difficult, and mean refugees and displaced people are among the most vulnerable. UK funding is helping to install handwashing stations, isolation and treatment centres, providing protection and education services and improved access to clean water for displaced people

We will continue to ensure displaced people are factored into the global COVID response, including access to national testing, health-care and prioritisation of vaccines.

Stephen Hammond:

[\[910994\]](#)

What diplomatic steps he is taking to strengthen UK relations with ASEAN countries.

Nigel Adams:

A strong UK-ASEAN relationship is a critical part of our Indo-Pacific Tilt.

The UK has applied to become a Dialogue Partner of ASEAN. The Foreign Secretary attended the first UK-ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in September to deepen cooperation on Covid-19, building a sustainable economic recovery, climate change and maritime security. The Foreign Secretary and I have engaged counterparts from Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia, Singapore and Vietnam in recent months.

■ Africa: Famine

Stephen Doughty:

[\[137938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) assessment he has made of and (b) support is he is providing to tackle the risk of famine in (i) parts of Northern Nigeria (ii) Burkina Faso and (iii) South Sudan.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government is concerned about the growing levels of food insecurity in South Sudan, Burkina Faso and Northern Nigeria. Across six counties in South Sudan there are an estimated 105,000 people in famine-like conditions, and in western Pibor the UN assesses a famine is likely occurring. Across South Sudan as a whole, around 60% of the country is facing acute food insecurity. In Burkina Faso, there is a risk of famine, with over 250,000 people currently in an emergency phase of acute food insecurity. In North-East Nigeria, 1.2 million people are currently experiencing acute food insecurity.

In September, the Foreign Secretary launched a global call to action to tackle the increasing threat of famine. This is a top FCDO priority. Since then, both I (Minister Duddridge) and the UK's Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs, Nick Dyer, have seen first-hand the challenges facing famine affected communities. We jointly visited South Sudan in October 2020, and Special Envoy Nick Dyer also visited North-East Nigeria in November. Since the call to action, we have pledged a total of £166 million to tackle food insecurity and the threat of famine, including the recent announcement for £47 million in December.

■ Africa: Humanitarian Aid

Stephen Doughty:

[\[137939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the humanitarian situation for refugees and internally

displaced people in (a) Ethiopia and (b) neighbouring countries as a result of the conflict in the Tigray region.

James Duddridge:

It is clear that the conflict in Tigray has had significant consequences and has displaced hundreds of thousands of people, internally and externally, as well as adversely impacting upon those that were already in need of humanitarian assistance. As of 15 January, 57,500 people have sought refuge in Sudan. We are extremely concerned that humanitarian agencies, including the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), still do not have access to refugee camps in northern Tigray, who have been without aid for many weeks. The UK continues to call for sustained, free and unfettered access to enable the delivery of much needed humanitarian assistance. We are saddened by further reports from Tigray of massacres of civilians, sexual violence, and attacks on humanitarian facilities. Protection of civilians must be a top priority. Independent investigations into allegations of human rights violations are critical.

The UK is working closely with humanitarian organisations to make sure aid reaches civilians affected by the fighting. UK humanitarian staff visited Gondar in neighbouring Amhara region this week to see response coordination. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are working hard to deliver support in challenging circumstances, including shelter, water and healthcare.

■ **Amar Fayaz**

Afzal Khan:

[\[137301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the disappearance of Pakistani youth activist Amar Fayaz on 8 November 2020; and whether he has made representations to his Pakistani counterpart on that issue.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: The UK is greatly relieved to hear reports that Amar Fayaz was released earlier this month. The UK Government strongly condemns any instances of enforced disappearances. We urge states to fully investigate any allegations, prosecute those responsible and provide justice to victims and their families. We regularly raise at a senior level our concerns about the human rights situation with the Government of Pakistan. Most recently, the Minister of State for South Asia and Minister for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised concerns about human rights with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 16 November and with Pakistan's Special Advisor to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for the Interior, Shahzad Akbar, on 7 December

■ Climate Change: International Cooperation

Caroline Ansell:

[\[910993\]](#)

What progress the Government has made through international co-operation on tackling climate change.

James Duddridge:

Climate is a priority for the FCDO. The Foreign Secretary and FCDO Ministers raise climate change in their international engagements. Teams are engaging and influencing countries across the globe. We deploy ODA effectively for climate outcomes.

In December the UK co-hosted the Climate Ambition Summit at which 75 leaders came forward with ambitious, new commitments around climate action.

■ Colombia: Human Rights

Dan Carden:

[\[910991\]](#)

What steps he is taking to support the 2016 peace agreement in Colombia following the recent killings of human rights defenders and trade unionists in that country.

Wendy Morton:

The UK remains concerned about the persistent level of violence towards human rights defenders in Colombia. We regularly raise this with the Colombian Government, and in multilateral fora.

I spoke to the Colombian Foreign Minister Blum on 2 June 2020, and reiterated UK support for the peace process, and concern about the killing of human rights defenders. Our Permanent Representative to the UN expressed our deep concern at the UN Security Council on 14 July 2020. Lord Ahmad discussed these issues with civil society, and government during a virtual visit to Colombia on 13 October 2020. The Colombian Government has taken measures to address violence, but there remain major challenges. We welcome the Colombian Government's continuing commitment to the full implementation of the 2016 peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

The UK will continue to support Colombia. We have committed £60 million through the Conflict, Security, and Stability Fund (CSSF) in support of peace, stability, and security. We lead on this issue at the UN Security Council, and are the largest donor to the UN Trust Fund. Our embassy programmes work to help human rights defenders at risk, and tackle root causes of the violence.

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

Alex Cunningham:

[\[910996\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on poverty rates in the Global South.

James Duddridge:

COVID-19 is likely to have resulted in over 140 million additional people living in extreme poverty – around 2% 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 one of the largest donors to the COVID-19 international response, committing up to £1.3bn of new ODA to counter the health, economic, humanitarian impacts, and to support the global effort to find and equitably distribute a vaccine.

Ethiopia: Human Rights**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[136457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with Ethiopian counterpart on the importance of reports of human rights abuses being fully investigated by independent third party actors.

James Duddridge:

We are deeply concerned at the mounting evidence of human rights abuses and violations. We have raised our concerns with Ethiopian Ministers, making clear the overriding need to protect civilians and adhere to international law and international human rights law. We continue to call for independent, international, investigations into allegations of human right abuses and violations, and that the perpetrators of those incidents that are proven are held to account, whoever they may be.

EU Countries: Borders**Steven Bonnar:**[\[910992\]](#)

What discussions he has had with (a) his counterparts in EU member states and (b) the Secretary of State for Transport on the diplomatic implications of the operation of the UK's border with the EU from 1 January 2021.

Wendy Morton:

I continue to speak regularly to my counterparts in Europe.

The FCDO continues to work closely with colleagues across Government, including the Secretary of State for Transport, to maintain smooth operation of the UK's border with the EU for both freight and passengers.

Hong Kong: Immigration Controls**Angela Crawley:**[\[135989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Hong Kong Government on border restrictions on people travelling from the UK.

Nigel Adams:

We are in contact with the Hong Kong SAR Government to minimise the disruption to UK and Hong Kong families and businesses.

However it is the authorities in the country or territory a person wishes to travel to, who are responsible for setting and enforcing the rules for entry. The Hong Kong authorities have informed us that the decisions will be reviewed every two weeks.

■ Human Rights

Craig Whittaker:

[\[910999\]](#)

What recent progress he has made on the next round of sanctions designations under the Magnitsky sanctions regime.

Nigel Adams:

We recently announced designations on International Human Rights Day under the Global Human Rights sanctions regime against ten individuals and one entity for serious human rights violations in Venezuela, Pakistan, The Gambia and Chechnya.

We will continue to consider targets, guided by the human rights objectives of the sanctions regime and the evidence.

■ India: Agriculture

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[136654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's policy is on the concerns raised about the infringement of human rights on farmers protesting in India.

Nigel Adams:

I am conscious of the level of concern from communities in the UK towards the farmers' protests in India. The right to gather lawfully and demonstrate a point of view is common to all democracies. Governments also have the power to enforce law and order if a protest crosses the line into illegality. The Foreign Secretary discussed the protests with External Affairs Minister Dr Jaishankar on his visit to India in December, while making it clear that this is an internal matter for the Indian authorities.

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[136655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with members of the Punjabi diaspora living in the UK who have raised concerns about the ongoing protests in India.

Nigel Adams:

I am conscious of the level of concern from communities in the UK towards the farmers' protests in India. The right to gather lawfully and demonstrate a point of view is common to all democracies. Governments also have the power to enforce law and order if a protest crosses the line into illegality. The Foreign Secretary discussed the protests with External Affairs Minister Dr Jaishankar on his visit to India in December, while making it clear that this is an internal matter for the Indian authorities.

■ India: Foreign Relations

Bob Blackman:

[\[911013\]](#)

What diplomatic steps he is taking to strengthen UK relations with India.

Nigel Adams:

We are committed to delivering the quantum leap in our bilateral relationship with India that our Prime Ministers have pledged to achieve.

The Foreign Secretary led efforts to strengthen UK relations with India during his visit to India in December. With his counterpart, the Foreign Secretary discussed important new UK-India collaboration across trade and investment, defence and security, climate change and health, to be agreed in a joint Roadmap to 2030.

■ Iran: Nuclear Fuels

Alexander Stafford:

[\[136099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government plans to take in response to Iran increasing uranium enrichment to 20 per cent.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[136100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of Iran's compliance with the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

James Cleverly:

We are deeply concerned by Iran's continued systematic non-compliance with its nuclear commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). On 4 January Iran commenced uranium enrichment up to 20% at the underground facility of the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant, which is in clear violation of Iran's commitments under the deal. We are also deeply concerned by the nuclear law passed by the Iranian Parliament in December, which obliges the Iranian Government to expand its nuclear programme and limit International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) monitoring access.

We have made our position clear to Iran, including at the JCPOA ministerial meeting on 21 December and in an E3 Foreign Ministers statement on 6 January, that it must return to its JCPOA commitments. Iran's non-compliance jeopardises our efforts to preserve the JCPOA and puts at risk the opportunity for diplomacy with the incoming US Administration. We remain in close contact with the other remaining JCPOA participants to assess how to best address Iran's non-compliance within the framework of the JCPOA. The JCPOA remains the best, and currently only, way to monitor and constrain Iran's nuclear programme and ensure Iran never gets a nuclear weapon.

■ Israel: Coronavirus**Alexander Stafford:**[\[136101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on that country's covid-19 vaccination rollout.

James Cleverly:

HMG has had sustained engagement with the Government of Israel on Israel's vaccination programme. We have facilitated a number of senior expert discussions and the British Embassy Tel Aviv are in regular contact with the Government of Israel and health providers on the vaccine rollout.

■ Israel: Foreign Relations**John Lamont:**[\[911008\]](#)

What recent steps he has taken to improve UK relations with Israel.

James Cleverly:

Israel is a close friend of the UK; and our relationship is built on decades of cooperation. I have met with the new Israeli Ambassador to the UK on multiple occasions, seeking to further strengthen the UK-Israel partnership.

The Foreign Secretary visited Israel/OPTs on 24-25 August 2020 where he held discussions with Prime Minister Netanyahu, and other senior members of the Government on a range of security and prosperity issues. Our security and defence cooperation – particularly CT and cyber – continues to go from strength to strength in addressing shared national security interests.

The UK and Israel have also cooperated extensively on Covid-19. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv have convened several UK/Israel expertise exchanges, including recently on vaccine rollout.

■ Kashmir: 4G**Paul Bristow:**[\[R\] \[136079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Indian Government on restoring 4G internet access in Jammu and Kashmir.

Nigel Adams:

We continue to raise our concerns about restrictions and the use of detentions in India-administered Kashmir with the Indian Government. The Foreign Secretary discussed the situation with his counterpart, the External Affairs Minister, Dr Jaishankar, during his visit to New Delhi last month. The Minister of State responsible for South Asia and Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised our concerns about the situation in Kashmir with the Indian Foreign Secretary on 3 November. We call for all remaining restrictions - including on full 4G internet access - to be lifted as soon as possible and welcome information from the Indian

Government that all individuals detained under so called "preventative measures" since the constitutional changes of 2019 have now been released. The UK will continue to encourage all States to ensure that their domestic laws and practices are in line with international standards. We continue to monitor the situation in Kashmir closely.

■ **Kashmir: Detainees**

Paul Bristow:

[R] [\[136080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Indian Government on the (a) welfare and (b) release of Kashmiris in custody under the Public Safety Act.

Nigel Adams:

We continue to raise our concerns about restrictions and the use of detentions in India-administered Kashmir with the Indian Government. The Foreign Secretary discussed the situation with his counterpart, the External Affairs Minister, Dr Jaishankar, during his visit to New Delhi last month. The Minister of State responsible for South Asia and Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised our concerns about the situation in Kashmir with the Indian Foreign Secretary on 3 November. We call for all remaining restrictions - including on full 4G internet access - to be lifted as soon as possible and welcome information from the Indian Government that all individuals detained under so called "preventative measures" since the constitutional changes of 2019 have now been released. The UK will continue to encourage all States to ensure that their domestic laws and practices are in line with international standards. We continue to monitor the situation in Kashmir closely.

■ **Kashmir: Homicide**

Paul Bristow:

[R] [\[136078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Indian Government on the killings carried out by the Indian Army in Srinagar on 30 December 2020.

Nigel Adams:

We are aware of reports that an Indian soldier has been charged with murder, kidnapping, and criminal conspiracy after the deaths of three Kashmiri men. The British High Commission in New Delhi will monitor this case closely, but it is a matter for the Indian judicial system. We welcome assurances from the Indian Government that the Indian Army is committed to ethical conduct in its operations, and that disciplinary action will be undertaken in accordance with Indian law, where necessary.

■ Kurdistan: Violence**Afzal Khan:**[\[137299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to recent reports of the escalation of violence in Kurdistan, what recent discussions has he had with his Iraqi counterpart on restoring peace to that region.

James Cleverly:

I regularly discuss the stability of the Kurdistan Region with Kurdistan Regional Government leaders and visited Erbil in December. We are deeply concerned by reports of violence in Sulaimaniyah, which our Consul General in Erbil has raised with the Kurdistan Regional Government. We call on security forces to respect the right to peaceful protest and to exercise restraint, and on those protesting to do so peacefully.

■ Nigeria: Christianity**Steve Double:**[\[135983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of (a) the attack on 2 December 2020 on the Christ Apostolic Church near Abeokuta in Ogun state and (b) other recent attacks on Christian communities by Fulani assailants in southern Nigeria.

James Duddridge:

The FCDO condemns all attacks on places of worship including these recent attacks in southern Nigeria. We continue to encourage the Government of Nigeria to take urgent action to protect all those at risk of inter-communal violence, to bring perpetrators to justice, and to implement long-term solutions that address the root causes of such violence and meet the needs of all communities. The FCDO is supporting this through the development of a new conflict, security and justice programme, which aims to reduce levels of inter-communal violence by building more effective conflict-management systems.

■ Nigeria: Politics and Government**Steve Double:**[\[135984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made representations to his counterpart in Nigeria on the continuing intimidation of (a) the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Matthew Kukah who is falsely accused of insulting Islam, (b) former presidential candidate Omoyele Sowore who was assaulted, detained and faces excessive charges and (c) other civil society actors expressing legitimate dissent.

James Duddridge:

We are concerned by reports of continuing intimidation of the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto, and the detention of journalist and opposition leader Omoyele Sowore. The Government makes clear to the Nigerian authorities at the highest levels the importance of recognising and respecting citizens' rights to peaceful protest. We

continue to push the Nigerian police to uphold human rights and Nigeria's rule of law in all operations, investigate any incidents of brutality, and hold those responsible to account. The British High Commissioner raises our concerns about intimidation of civil society groups and peaceful activists when she meets with the Government of Nigeria.

■ **Nigeria: Security**

Steve Double:

[\[136552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report of 24 December 2020 by Christian Solidarity Worldwide entitled Church leaders abducted amid renewed violence in Kaduna state, what recent assessment his Department has made of the security situation in Nigeria; and what assessment he has made of the accuracy of reports of increased communications and co-ordination between (a) terrorist factions from the north east and (b) rural banditry in the north west of that country.

James Duddridge:

For over a decade, terrorist groups, including Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa, have caused immense suffering to local communities, predominantly in North East Nigeria and the wider Lake Chad Basin region. We are aware that Boko Haram and other terrorist groups have been attempting to develop a presence in North West Nigeria for many years and have claimed responsibility for a number of incidents in the region. We are also aware that Boko Haram have claimed responsibility for attacks they have not directly conducted. We continue to monitor developments closely and are committed to helping Nigeria tackle the threat posed by the terrorist groups in North East Nigeria. We are providing a comprehensive package of humanitarian and stabilisation assistance to Nigeria to help tackle the threat and support affected communities.

■ **Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee: Diplomatic Service**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[137890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2021 to Question 130648, on Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee: Diplomatic Service, given that select committees are unable to travel due to covid-19 restrictions, what assessment he has made of the availability of the Ambassador to the Irish Republic; and if he will he meet with the Committee to discuss that matter .

Wendy Morton:

While COVID-19 restrictions are in place, Her Majesty's Ambassador to Ireland and the Embassy team remain at the Committee's disposal, including by means of virtual contact, to support any virtual Committee visits to Ireland or other virtual engagement with the Irish authorities, in line with the existing arrangements.

■ Overseas Workers: Coronavirus**Gordon Henderson:**[\[134416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) Iraq and (b) other countries allow UK contract workers who test negative for covid-19 to return to those countries.

James Cleverly:

The pandemic has led to unprecedented international border closures and other restrictions and all countries may impose travel restrictions without notice. The UK Government is in close contact with international partners, including the Government of Iraq, on the rules for UK contract workers. All FCDO travel advice pages remain under constant review to ensure they reflect the latest threat assessment to British nationals and include up-to-date information and advice.

Carriers may deny boarding if passengers are not in receipt of a qualifying negative test. The Government recognises the continued challenges that the pandemic poses, both for individuals and for businesses. If British Nationals test positive for COVID-19 they should not travel and should follow the local relevant guidance on self-isolation.

■ Qatar: Saudi Arabia**Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[136474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on the Middle East of the restoration of diplomatic relations between Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

James Cleverly:

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit announcement on Tuesday 5 January is a significant development. We pay testament to Kuwaiti mediation efforts, and urge the parties to continue building on this positive dialogue. The UK has long encouraged all parties to find a resolution to this dispute. The GCC is our third largest export market outside of the EU. We look forward to continued collaboration with all our friends in the Gulf to strengthen our shared security and prosperity interests.

■ Sri Lanka: Coronavirus**Afzal Khan:**[\[138047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the forced cremation of covid-19 victims in Sri Lanka, whether he has raised the WHO guidelines and advice, which allow for burials for covid-19 victims, with the Sri Lankan Government.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government is concerned about the Government of Sri Lanka's continued decision to mandate cremations for all Covid-19 victims, and recognises the particular impact this is having on Sri Lankan Muslims and other faith communities. The UK has shared guidance with the Government of Sri Lanka on how burials can continue to

operate in a safe format, within the WHO guidelines, to ensure all religious groups can practise their rites.

The Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, has raised concerns with the Sri Lankan High Commissioner, most recently in December. Lord Ahmad also raised the importance of minority rights in a call with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena in November. The UK's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka has also raised concerns about mandatory cremations several times with the Sri Lankan Government, most recently on 8 January.

■ Sri Lanka: Foreign Relations

Ruth Jones:

[\[134555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last spoke to his Sri Lankan counterpart.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs last spoke with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena in May 2020. The Minister of State for South Asia speaks regularly with Foreign Minister Gunawardena and with the Sri Lankan High Commissioner to the UK, most recently in November and December 2020 respectively. The UK's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka also has regular engagement with the Government of Sri Lanka, most recently in January 2021.

■ Sri Lanka: Politics and Government

Afzal Khan:

[\[138048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he made of the implications for his policies of the the Sri Lankan Government's recent passing into law of the 20th amendment which appears to remove almost all checks on the power of the Executive President.

Nigel Adams:

The UK government monitors political developments in Sri Lanka very closely, including the recent 20th Amendment to the Constitution which extends executive power over appointments to the judiciary and independent institutions. The UK Government has had regular discussions with the Government of Sri Lanka about democratic space, the centralisation of executive power and the military's role in governance. In a statement, delivered on behalf of the Core Group on Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council in June, the UK called on Sri Lanka to ensure that the country's democratic space remained open and accountable. The UK Government will continue to engage with the Government of Sri Lanka on this important issue.

■ Uganda: Elections and Human Rights**Stephen Doughty:**[\[137940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to the Government of Uganda on the conduct of elections and the upholding of human rights obligations in that country.

James Duddridge:

During the electoral period in Uganda, the UK had urged that the elections should be free, fair, credible and transparent as I [Minister Duddridge] outlined in my tweet on 13 January, so as to respect the rights of all Ugandans to express their views in a peaceful manner. I [Minister Duddridge] have also raised the importance of transparent elections directly with the Ugandan High Commission on 12 January and will continue to do so. Staff at the British High Commission observed the conduct of the elections and will monitor all events closely. As I [Minister Duddridge] and the British High Commissioner stated in our tweets on 14 January, we are concerned that the recent internet shutdown in Uganda impacted the transparency of the elections and broader freedom of expression. We called for the Government of Uganda to resume services immediately and understand the shutdown has now been lifted as of 18 January. Following the Presidential election results on 16 January, I issued a statement expressing my concerns about the overall political climate in the run up to the elections and during the electoral process as well as urging the Government of Uganda to meet international human rights commitments.

■ Uganda: Human Rights**Alex Sobel:**[\[138032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to (a) the Ugandan Government and (b) the international community on the arrest of Uganda presidential candidate Robert Kyagulany and the subsequent deteriorating human rights situation in Uganda.

Alex Sobel:[\[138033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to (a) encourage free and fair elections and (b) protect the right to protest in Uganda, following the arrest of presidential candidate Robert Kyagulany and the protests that have followed.

James Duddridge:

During the electoral period in Uganda, the UK had urged that the elections should be free, fair, credible and transparent as I [Minister Duddridge] outlined in my tweet on 13 January, so as to respect the rights of all Ugandans to express their views in a peaceful manner. I [Minister Duddridge] have also raised the importance of transparent elections directly with the Ugandan High Commission on 12 January and will continue to do so. Staff at the British High Commission observed the conduct of the elections and will monitor all events closely. As I [Minister Duddridge] and the British High Commissioner stated in our tweets on 14 January, we are concerned that

the recent internet shutdown in Uganda impacted the transparency of the elections and broader freedom of expression. We called for the Government of Uganda to resume services immediately and understand the shutdown has now been lifted as of 18 January. Following the Presidential election results on 16 January, I issued a statement expressing my concerns about the overall political climate in the run up to the elections and during the electoral process as well as urging the Government of Uganda to meet international human rights commitments.

■ UN Security Council

Ruth Jones:

[\[138069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his priorities are for the UK's UN Security Council Presidency in February 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The UK's presidency of the UN Security Council in February 2021 is an important moment in a year of international leadership for the UK. We will use our presidency to maximise impact while role modelling a more efficient and effective presidency of the Council. There will be a particular focus on climate security and vaccines.

■ West Bank: Demolition

Afzal Khan:

[\[138046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the bulldozing and demolition of Ras Ein Al Auja, a Bedouin community in the Jordan Valley and if will he make representation to his Israeli counterpart in light of this.

James Cleverly:

We are concerned by increasing rates of demolition of Palestinian property by the Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process. The UK regularly raises demolitions with the Government of Israel. I raised my concerns about demolitions of Palestinian and humanitarian structures with the Israeli Ambassador on 29 October 2020, and the UK Ambassador to Israel outlined the UK's position to the Israeli Authorities in Jerusalem on the same day. UK senior officials raised demolitions with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 10 November 2020. The UK also urged the Government of Israel to end demolitions of property in the West Bank at the UN Security Council on 21 December 2020. We are focused on preventing demolitions from happening in the first place through our legal aid programme, which supports Bedouin communities and Palestinians facing demolition or home eviction in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem. We continue to urge the Government of Israel to develop improved mechanisms for zoning, planning and permitting in Area C for the benefit of the Palestinian population, including by facilitating local Palestinian participation in such processes.

■ Western Sahara: Sovereignty

Afzal Khan: [\[137300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he made of the effect of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara on the prospects for peace and lasting settlement for the Sahrawi.

James Cleverly:

The UK continues to regard the status of Western Sahara as undetermined. The UK fully supports the UN's efforts to achieve a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

■ Yemen: Humanitarian Aid

Alyn Smith: [\[137310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the decision by the US Secretary of State to designate the Houthis as a terrorist organisation on humanitarian access in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

We are deeply concerned by assessments from the UN and NGOs that the US Administration's decision to designate the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation is likely to disrupt the humanitarian response and stop vital food supplies getting in to Yemen. We have already engaged with the US to urge them to ensure that the vital humanitarian response, including food supplies, are not disrupted. Ministers and officials will continue to engage closely with the UN and other donors, including the US, to ensure life-saving humanitarian aid reaches the millions of Yemenis in need.

■ Yemen: Military Intervention

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[136475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for Government policy on arms sales to Saudi Arabia of President-elect Biden's pledge to end US support for the Saudi-led War in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

The UK takes its export control responsibilities and obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty extremely seriously and regularly calls on states which have not yet implemented various arms control instruments to accede to these instruments as soon as possible. We assess all export licences in accordance with strict licensing criteria. The UK regularly raises, at senior level, the importance of complying with International Humanitarian Law and of conducting thorough and conclusive investigations into alleged violations with Saudi Arabia.

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.

■ Zimbabwe: Politics and Government

Ruth Jones:

[911002]

What recent assessment he has made of the political situation in Zimbabwe.

James Duddridge:

We remain concerned by the current situation in Zimbabwe, particularly human rights violations. We continue to press for genuine political and economic reform and for the constitutional rights of Zimbabweans to be upheld.

Extreme poverty is increasing sharply. The worsening economic situation with annual inflation at 402% is due to economic mismanagement and corruption.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion: Drugs

Sir David Amess:

[129947]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 14 December 2020 to Question 125929 on Abortion: Drugs, how people without access to a computer can submit a written submission in response to his Department's consultation document on home use of both pills for early medical abortion up to 10 weeks gestation; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Department's preferred method of response to the consultation is via submission online at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/home-use-of-both-pills-for-early-medical-abortion>

However, people who are unable to access the online form can submit a written submission to the consultation to the following address:

Abortion Consultation

Ministerial Correspondence and Public Enquiries Unit

Department of Health and Social Care

39 Victoria Street

London

SW1H 0EU

United Kingdom

■ Care Homes: Visits

Justin Madders:

[\[113569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which local authority areas have been chosen to trial plans allowing specific family and friends to visit care homes supported by testing.

Helen Whately:

Visitor testing was trialled in care homes in Cornwall, Devon and Hampshire.

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[126145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of inconsistent lateral flow tests on the adequacy of testing undertaken to facilitate visits in care homes.

Helen Whately:

Extensive testing has shown that lateral flow devices are suitable for use in care homes. They can identify individuals who are the most likely to spread the virus further and prevent transmission of the disease from staff and visitors. The rapidity of the result from lateral flow devices allows for more frequent testing of staff and visitors, increasing the chances of an infectious positive case being picked up.

Testing is only one part of the protect and contain strategies. It is critical that visitors wear personal protective equipment and follow all infection control methods to keep their loved ones, other residents and staff safe. We want to bring an end to the pain of separation and help care homes bring families and loved ones together. The launch of visitor testing is a crucial step to making that happen.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Alex Norris:

[\[136596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the viability of allowing changes to childcare bubbles at shorter notice than the expiry of the minimum period in emergency situations.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: If a household decides to change their childcare bubble, they should treat their previous bubble as a separate household for at least 10 days before forming a new bubble. This means following the general rules on meeting people from other households. The households should not provide childcare as if they are in a bubble during this period.

The 10 day minimum period is based on corresponding self-isolation guidance and the underlying scientific evidence and must be adhered to in order to mitigate the transmission risks associated with changing a childcare bubble.

Emma Hardy:

[136600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to restrict people working within other people's homes during the period of the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The regulations and the Government's published guidance make clear that, where it is necessary to work in other people's homes people can do so. Otherwise, individuals should avoid meeting for work in a private home or garden, where COVID-19 secure measures may not be in place.

Rachael Maskell:

[137243]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to retain support bubbles in the event that tighter restrictions are introduced during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown period.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: The Government recognises the important function that support bubbles can play for those most acutely impacted by social contact restrictions. We keep the restrictions under continual review and will make changes if the data and science support it.

Marco Longhi:

[137332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he made of the effect of the covid-19 tier restrictions on people's wellbeing who could not attend community lunches over Christmas 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government ensured that the regulations allowed charitable lunches over the festive period to continue.

The Government acknowledges the impact the restrictions can have on mental health and wellbeing. Public Health England published guidance on social distancing and self-isolation and advice on looking after mental health and wellbeing during the outbreak.

Florence Eshalomi:

[138109]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the scientific basis that informed his decision not to include non-cohabiting couples in the scope of support bubbles in England during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies has provided expert strategic scientific advice to the Government throughout the COVID-19 pandemic which is available at the following link:

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

Individuals who are eligible to form a support bubble may choose to do so with their partner and where this is not possible, couples can meet up outside. The guidance states that those in an established relationship do not need to socially distance outdoors but those in the early stages of a relationship should follow the guidance on social distancing.

■ Coronavirus: Health Services

Andrew Gwynne:

[137155]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what preparations his Department is making for the increase in numbers of people with long covid following the winter 2020-21 spike in covid infections.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: In October 2020, NHS England announced a £10 million investment package to support people with 'long' COVID-19. As part of the investment, 69 post-COVID-19 assessment service centres are operational across England to assess people with long-term effects of COVID-19 and direct them to effective treatment pathways. Seven trusts in the Greater Manchester area are already providing clinics. A further 12 long COVID-19 assessment service centres are expected to launch in early 2021 nationally.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence published a clinical case definition of long COVID-19 in October 2020 and evidence-based clinical guidelines for medical staff treating people with long COVID-19 in December 2020. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng188>

■ Coronavirus: Newcastle upon Tyne

Chi Onwurah:

[136518]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2021 to Question 122693 on Coronavirus: Newcastle upon Tyne, what is included in the definition of Other settings in the Covid-19 incident report.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: Public Health England report on acute respiratory infection (ARI) incidents in the following settings; care homes, food outlet/restaurants, workplaces, educational settings, hospitals and prisons.

Any ARI incidents that do not fit in these categories are captured under the 'Other' category.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Ruth Jones:

[134566]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a covid-19 vaccine passport.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We have no plans to introduce COVID-19 vaccine passports. As with other vaccination programmes, vaccine record cards are issued to patients with the relevant details about the vaccine including the date of their vaccination and their vaccine type. This does not constitute an immunity passport and will not be used as a form of identification.

Chi Onwurah:[\[135938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2021 to Question 130071, what consideration the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation gave to the challenges of maintaining social distancing among adults with learning difficulties in care homes when prioritising vaccinations for people aged over 75.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: The current evidence shows that the COVID-19 vaccines are effective in protecting people from symptomatic disease, but there is not yet evidence to show whether having the vaccine prevents infections and onward transmission of the virus. Therefore, those who have been vaccinated may still be able to pass on the virus and should continue to follow the Government's advice on social distancing. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised direct protection of those most at risk of mortality. Evidence indicates that the risk of mortality increases rapidly with age, with the oldest in the population at the highest risk of mortality.

The JCVI has advised vaccination of all adults 50 years of age and over and clinical risk groups from 16 years of age and over in the first phase of the COVID-19 vaccination programme. The clinical risk groups include those with severe and profound learning disabilities and with Down's syndrome. Vaccination is also advised in older children with serious neuro-disabilities requiring residential care and in frontline health and social care workers.

Any evidence on the impact of the vaccines on transmission will be considered in deliberations on the second phase of the COVID-19 programme, including transmission in closed settings.

Kenny MacAskil:[\[136064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what research his Department holds on the effect of alcohol consumption on the efficacy of the covid-19 vaccine.

Edward Argar:

The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The NIHR is funding a wide portfolio of research on COVID-19 vaccination but has not commissioned any specific research on the effect of alcohol consumption on the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines.

Emma Hardy:

[136601]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to include teachers amongst occupations prioritised in the first phase of the covid-19 vaccination roll out.

Sarah Owen:

[137323]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of putting (a) teachers and (b) school staff in a higher priority group for the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: 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.

Teachers aged 50 years and older or in an at-risk group are eligible for vaccination in the first phase of the programme. Prioritisation decisions for the next phase of delivery are subject to the surveillance and monitoring 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 and school staff.

Olivia Blake:

[137350]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to extend the mobile vaccination model being used to support the vaccination of care home residents and workers in the UK covid-19 vaccines delivery plan to (a) people who have experienced rough sleeping and (b) frontline staff in homelessness services.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: The Department recognises that some groups may need tailored plans in place to ensure they can access vaccinations in line with the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations' advice on prioritisation. For that reason, NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with voluntary, community and social enterprise partners, inclusion health providers and others to develop an accessible model of delivery for people including the homeless.

Currently, NHS England and NHS Improvement are asking partners to support their clients and service users to register with a general practice where they are not already. NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to consider a number of options based on the most appropriate local and logistical requirements and will co-design these with partners.

■ Coronavirus: Visual Impairment

Catherine West:

[134039]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has assessed the potential risk of transmission of covid-19 between visually impaired people and their guides

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We have issued guidance on how to be supported by others outside your home in a way which limits the spread of COVID-19. This is available as part of the guidance at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-people-outside-of-their-home/supporting-people-outside-of-their-home>

The guidance has been developed to permit support, including guiding, to be given whilst mitigating the risk of transmission as far as possible. The evidence considered by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and used to support the government response to COVID-19 is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/scientific-evidence-supporting-the-government-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19>

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[137229]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 112072, tabled by the hon. Member for Salford and Eccles on 5 November 2020.

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.

■ Disease Control: Coronavirus

Chi Onwurah:

[136517]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2021 to Question 124185 on Disease Control: Coronavirus, if he will publish data for each setting category in the North East.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: Public Health England publishes weekly influenza and COVID-19 surveillance reports which include data on suspected and

confirmed COVID-19 outbreaks by setting in the North East and other regions, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports>

■ Exercise: Coronavirus

Dan Jarvis: [136521]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of public health restrictions on exercise on people's mental health.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: The Government understands the importance of physical exercise and spending time outdoors on people's mental health and wellbeing and acknowledges the impact the current restrictions are having. Public Health England has published guidance on social distancing and self-isolation and advice on how people can look after their mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

We are also raising awareness of the resources and guidance available to adults, children and parents and carers through our Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Plan for COVID-19 and the 'Every Mind Matters' platform.

■ Food: Coronavirus

Chi Onwurah: [136520]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the food outlet/restaurant setting category of the covid-19 incident report differentiates between incidents in indoor eating and take-out outlets.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Public Health England's weekly flu and COVID-19 surveillance report does not differentiate between incidents in indoor eating and take-out outlets.

The food outlet/restaurant categories include café, restaurant, fast food, supermarket, pub, catered event, bar, food manufacturer/distributor, members' club and market.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Philip Davies: [135882]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people caught covid-19 as a hospital inpatient since September 2020; and how many and what proportion of those people died in hospital from covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

This information is not held in the format requested. It is not possible to provide information on the estimated nosocomial infection rate for COVID-19 throughout 2020 in England.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[136519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether covid-19 incidents relating to hospital workers are categorised as (a) hospital or (b) workplace setting incidents in his weekly incident report.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: COVID-19 incidents relating to hospital workers are categorised as ‘hospital setting incidents’ by Public Health England in the weekly flu and COVID-19 surveillance reports.

■ **Mental Health Act 1983**

Jeff Smith:

[\[136554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the forthcoming Mental Health Act white paper, what the Government's timetable is for bringing forward legislative proposals.

Jeff Smith:

[\[136555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the forthcoming Mental Health Act white paper, whether the Government plans to implement each recommendation set out in the 2018 report on the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government published its white paper, ‘Reforming the Mental Health Act’ on 13 January. At the same time, we launched a formal 14-week consultation, which will run until April 2021.

The white paper contains a full response to the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act and considers each of the Review's recommendations in turn. The Government welcomed the Independent Review's final report and accepts the vast majority of these recommendations.

We will publish a response to this consultation this year and, for those changes which require legislation, our ambition is to share a draft Mental Health Bill around this time next year for pre-legislative scrutiny.

■ **Mental Health Services**

Jon Trickett:

[\[135812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many referrals to NHS psychological therapies services there were per year in (a) 2010 and (b) 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The information is not available in the format requested.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**Philip Davies:** [\[135884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the rate of referrals per 100,000 is to mental health services for (a) children and (b) adults; and what those rates were in each of the last five years.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Data is not held in the format requested.

■ Mental Health Services: LGBT People**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[137287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of mental health support made available to LGBT people during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: The National Health Service has provided 24 hours a day, seven days a week, all-age urgent mental health helplines across the country and we have given more than £10 million of additional grant funding to support mental health charities during the pandemic. We are also raising awareness of the resources and guidance available to adults, children, parents and carers, including the LGBT community, through our Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Plan for COVID-19 and the 'Every Mind Matters' platform.

However, we know there were pre-existing inequalities in access, experience and outcomes of mental health care for LGBT people. The NHS recently published its Advancing Mental Health Equalities Strategy to support local health systems to better address inequalities in mental health services. Implementation of the strategy will be overseen by the Advancing Mental Health Equalities Taskforce.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum and Immigration****Sir John Hayes:** [\[136442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to bring forward legislative proposals on the asylum and immigration system.

Chris Philp:

The Home Secretary has set out the Government's ambition to overhaul our approach to asylum and illegal migration, delivering a firm but fair system, including bringing forward new legislation this year.

■ Asylum: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[137959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will ensure that all school age children in initial asylum hotel accommodation have access to adequate (a) space, (b) internet connections and (c) other equipment to continue with online learning during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Chris Philp:

It is our aim to move asylum-seeking families with school-age children to suitable dispersed accommodation as quickly as possible. Due to the temporary nature of accommodating families in hotels, it is unlikely that children will have been enrolled in a local school before being moved to dispersal accommodation.

However, in our wider accommodation estate, the Home Office and its providers are taking the steps to ensure that children are able to access education as quickly as possible, including liaising with local authorities to source and provide educational activity packs and securing tablets and Wi-Fi to ensure that service users are able to access online resources.

Wi-Fi is also available throughout hotels and data SIM cards are provided in core initial accommodation where needed.

■ Asylum: Finance

Andy McDonald:

[\[137943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's timescale is for the change of provider of the ASPEN card for asylum support payments.

Chris Philp:

As part of the COVID-19 contingency measures introduced by the Home Office, the transition to the new ASPEN card was postponed to enable the Department to focus on handling the operational challenges that the pandemic was causing on the wider asylum support system.

However, the current contract has been extended to ensure there is payment service continuity during this challenging time. The new card service provision is scheduled to be in place by the end of May 2021.

■ Asylum: Hunger Strikes

Caroline Nokes:

[\[137911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers in supported accommodation are currently refusing food or fluid.

Caroline Nokes:

[\[137913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers in supported accommodation have refused fluid or food in the last 12 months.

Chris Philp:

We take the welfare of those in our care very seriously. We provide asylum seekers in supported accommodation with safe, Covid-compliant accommodation along with free nutritious meals, all paid for by the taxpayer.

Regular welfare checks are conducted on service users, including behavioural monitoring of those who show signs of vulnerability, and where appropriate safeguarding referrals are made to relevant bodies.

We work closely with our accommodation providers to ensure that all asylum seekers in supported accommodation are aware of, and have access to, Migrant Help's helpline. This service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, if service users need help, advice or guidance, including signposting to relevant mental and medical health services.

The Home Office does not publish statistics of service users who refuse fluid or food in supported accommodation.

■ Asylum: Scotland**Stuart C McDonald:****[137950]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people applied for asylum at Scottish (a) ports and (b) airports in each of the last five years.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office are unable to state how many people applied for asylum at Scottish ports and airports in each of the last five years as the Home Office do not publish this data.

However, the Home Office do publish data to state how many people applied for asylum in each of the last five years, broken down by location (in-country or at Port) found in the Immigration Statistics, Asy_D01:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets>

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Sajid Javid:****[135894]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle criminals who attempt to defraud (a) the most vulnerable and (b) other citizens during the covid-19 vaccine roll-out.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is aware that fraudsters are exploiting the pandemic to commit opportunistic crimes such as fraud. We are regularly monitoring the number of cases being reported to the police and these – at present- remain very low.

The Government is working closely with local enforcement teams and urging the public to beware of fake text messages, claiming to be from NHS or instructing people to sign up for the #COVID19 vaccine.

Through our public communications, we are reminding the public that the NHS will never:

- Ask for bank account or card details;
- Ask for a PIN or banking password;
- Arrive unannounced at someone's home to administer the vaccine;
- Demand proof of identity by sending copies of personal documents such as a passport, driving licence, bills or pay slips.

We are encouraging the public to forward suspicious emails to report@phishing.gov.uk and to forward suspicious text messages to 7726 (which is free of charge). This information is being used by law enforcement partners, alongside crime reports to identify, disrupt and stop fraudsters.

■ Detention Centres: Coronavirus

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[135963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential level of risk of continuing to operate immigration removal centres during the covid-19 outbreak, particularly in light of new strains of that virus; and if she will make a statement.

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[135964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish regular data on rates of covid-19 among people in immigration removal centres comparable to the Ministry of Justice's monthly data publication on coronavirus cases and deaths in prisons.

Chris Philp:

The safety and health of people in the detention estate is of the utmost importance. The Home Office has robust contingency plans in place and continues to follow national guidance issued by Public Health England (PHE), Health Protection Scotland and the National Health Service (NHS).

All immigration removal centres (IRCs) have communicable disease contingency plans, based on PHE advice, and dedicated health facilities run by doctors and nurses which are managed by the NHS or appropriate providers. Detained individuals arriving at IRCs are medically assessed by a nurse within two hours of their arrival, are offered an appointment with a doctor within 24 hours and have access to medical assistance throughout their detention. In addition, we are in the process of rolling out COVID 19 testing on reception in all IRCs.

Everyone entering an IRC spends a minimum of 14 days on a 'reverse cohorting' unit; this is dedicated accommodation designed to prevent an asymptomatic individual transmitting the virus to the wider centre population. Reverse cohorting is

supported by further measures such as single occupancy rooms in all IRCs and the cessation of social visits. Protective shielding is available to those who are deemed medically high or very high risk. In addition, all staff and visitors to IRCs and short term holding facilities are required to wear a face mask, at all times, when undertaking direct contact duties with those detained and when in the main centre or holding facility.

The Home Office published statistics relating to COVID-19 and the immigration system on Gov.uk on 28 May, and the latest Immigration Statistics publication includes the numbers of individuals detained under immigration powers in prisons. Further information about the operational response to COVID-19 in immigration detention is available on Gov.uk and has been updated throughout the outbreak. This has been supplemented by the publication of guidance associated with COVID-19 and immigration detention on 30 November. We have no current plans to publish further data on COVID-19.

■ Detention Centres: Hunger Strikes

Caroline Nokes: [\[137910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people in immigration removal centres are on hunger strike as of 14 January 2021.

Caroline Nokes: [\[137912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people in immigration removal centres have refused fluid and food for 24 hours or more in the last 12 months.

Chris Philp:

We take the welfare and safety of persons detained in our care very seriously and their health is monitored closely at all times and particularly during periods where they appear to be or are not consuming food and or fluid. Persons detained who appear to be or are not consuming food and or fluid are managed in line with published guidance, Detention Services Order (DSO) 3/2017, 'Care and Management of Detainees Refusing Food and Fluid'.

It is not uncommon for persons detained to refuse set meals at times of fasting, or for religious or dietary reasons. Individuals may also prefer to purchase their own food and drink from the local shop within an Immigration Removal Centre.

As there may be many reasons why an individual is not eating set meals, the Home Office does not publish data on the number of individuals who are being managed in line with the DSO.

■ Donald Trump

Grahame Morris: [\[137909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she will prohibit Donald Trump from entering the UK following his impeachment for incitement of insurrection by the US Congress.

Kevin Foster:

All foreign nationals wishing to enter the UK must comply with UK Immigration Rules.

The Home Office does not comment on individual cases.

■ Falun Gong: China**Owen Thompson:**[\[136005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to extend the Government's Country Policy and Information Note on Falun Gong in China to include Hong Kong if the new National Security Law results in following Falun Gong being outlawed in Hong Kong.

Kevin Foster:

All asylum and human rights claims from Chinese nationals are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations. Each individual assessment is made against the background of the latest available country of origin information and any relevant caselaw.

Our assessment of the situation for those who practise Falun Gong in China, including the situation for those in Hong Kong, is set out in the relevant country policy and information note, which is available on the Gov.uk website.

We regularly monitor and review the situation in countries of origin, working closely with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Where there is a change to the country situation, we will look to address this in an update to the country policy and information note.

■ Immigrants: Coroanvirus**Thangam Debonnaire:**[\[137958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will suspend the in-person reporting of migrants to immigration reporting centres for the duration of the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Chris Philp:

On Tuesday 17 March 2020, following Public Health and Government guidance relating to COVID19 and the developing situation, we paused immigration reporting and sent an SMS text message to reportees with a valid mobile telephone number on our systems informing them of this.

On Tuesday 24 March we maintained the decision to close reporting centres and police reporting temporarily following the Prime Minister's address to the nation. This was because we were not confident that we could practice safe social distancing and operate within a COVID secure environment.

Immigration Enforcement recommenced face to face reporting in July and August for limited, priority cohorts of people. We have implemented Safe Systems of Working (SSOW) and Risk Assessments in all our Reporting Centres where we have put in place robust social distancing measures; health screening questions are asked as a

person enters; face masks are offered to those who have travelled without them; and one-way systems and sanitiser stations are placed throughout our buildings. We continue to review our current reporting arrangements in line with any new local and national COVID restrictions that are put in place.

Following the announcement on Monday 4 January 2021 we decided to maintain face to face reporting for priority cohorts of people. Our robust Safe Systems of Working and Risk Assessments remain in place and still adhere to current Government guidance. Those that are required to report at this time are covered for movement under The Health Protection Regulations 2020 where movement is permitted for the purpose of fulfilling a legal obligation, including attending court or satisfying bail conditions, or to participate in legal proceedings;

We continue to keep in contact with the overall reporting population by telephone to update individuals on the current reporting position. An SMS text or email/letter is sent to those required to recommence reporting informing them of the date and time they should report, along with relevant advice on COVID. We have also updated the reporting pages on GOV.UK for those who report and their representatives. This information includes how to travel most safely by public transport, avoiding both busy transport hubs and traveling at peak times; advice on reporting alone where possible; and what to do if those reporting have symptoms or are shielding and how to contact their local reporting centre.

■ Police: Training

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[137898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what training police officers receive on dealing with people who have mental health issues.

Kit Malthouse:

Training on mental-ill health is integrated throughout the initial police learning programme which all new recruits - police constables, specials constables and PCSOs - must complete. Many individual forces have also gone on to develop their own training programmes, including joint training with partner agencies and local Mental Health trusts.

In October 2016, the College published Authorised Professional Practice on mental health, and this guidance supports all police officers, including custody staff, in responding to people suffering with mental health issues. This training package is currently being reviewed with a planned release this Spring.

■ UK Visas and Immigration

Alex Davies-Jones:

[\[138106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much revenue was generated by the charge for overseas customer emails enquiries related to UK visa and immigration updates in each year since 2017.

Kevin Foster:

The £2.74 email charge is levied to fund the commercial contract. The UK government believes it is right those who use and benefit directly from the UK immigration system make an appropriate contribution towards meeting its costs. Those who use the services are predominantly from outside the UK, with [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) providing the main source of information and advice, free of charge.

The Home Office uses SITEL UK Ltd for the provision of Contact Centre Services (UK and International) including overseas customer email enquiries. Further details of the financial arrangement in place between the Home Office and SITEL UK Ltd including revenue generated by email enquiries, is not available due to it being commercially sensitive.

■ Visas: British National (Overseas)**Sarah Owen:****[138089]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress the Government has made on the introduction of the Hong Kong British National Overseas visa scheme.

Kevin Foster:

The Hong Kong British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) route opens for applications from 31 January 2021.

Guidance for BN(O) citizens will be kept updated on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hong-kong-british-national-overseas-visa-applications>

Further details of this new immigration route will be published in due course.

This government looks forward to realising its commitments to BN(O) citizens and their family members and receiving applications for the Hong Kong BN(O) route in due course.

■ Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre**Mohammad Yasin:****[138006]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January 2021 to Question 136030, whether a person being initially processed at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal centre will be moved to the new, temporary accommodation for asylum seekers on the adjacent site.

Chris Philp:

All service users that might be accommodated in initial accommodation at Yarl's Wood will have already completed the required period of self-isolation at another location before being transferred there.

Therefore, asylum seekers will not transfer directly from Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre to the initial accommodation on the adjacent site.

■ Youth Mobility Scheme

Andrew Bowie:

[\[136586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether a decision has been taken on the expansion of the Youth Mobility Scheme to European nationals.

Kevin Foster:

The UK currently operates nine Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) arrangements with Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Korea, San Marino, Japan, Monaco, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

As each YMS is subject to a bilateral, reciprocal agreement which also provides benefit to UK Nationals, the Home Office will not add nations to the scheme unilaterally in the absence of such an agreement.

Looking to the future, we have indicated our desire to negotiate a youth mobility arrangement with the EU, or with individual countries within it if a collective agreement is not possible.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund

Mike Amesbury:

[\[138041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that applicants to the Building Safety Fund are able to speak publicly about cladding and remediation.

Christopher Pincher:

I refer the Hon Member to my [response](#) to his oral question of 11 January 2020. The Building Safety Fund does not impose restrictions on leaseholders or residents in their private capacity as individual flat owners commenting on remediation projects or on Government policy on cladding and remediation

Funding agreements for the Building Safety Fund include a clause which is standard in commercial agreements between building owners and funders of construction of work which applies to communication with the media about the individual construction project. The clause applies to applicants to the fund who we expect to discuss with delivery partners in the first instance any queries about the remediation project or the funding agreement. We want a constructive working relationship with building owners who apply to the fund, which ensures that the Government's provision of £1.6 billion of funding will make buildings safe for residents as swiftly as possible.

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention

Mike Amesbury: [138042]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities, and Local Government, what progress the Building Research Establishment is making on research on trigger thresholds.

Mike Amesbury: [138043]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to amend the fire safety guidance to the building regulations (Approved Document B) following the completion of the Building Research Establishment's research on trigger thresholds.

Christopher Pincher:

All research projects commissioned as part of the technical review of Approved Document B will inform the review of the guidance to the building regulations (Approved Document B).

The project on the trigger thresholds was commissioned in September 2020 and the research remains on going.

■ Buildings: Insulation

Mike Amesbury: [138044]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if his Department will publish the latest data on the number of public sector buildings where combustible insulation has been identified in England.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department publishes data on the identification and remediation progress of high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings in England with ACM cladding systems unlikely to meet building regulations. The latest data is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/aluminium-composite-material-cladding#acm-remediation-data>.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Alexander Stafford: [137351]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will issue guidance to local authorities on whether the discretionary grant funding for local authorities announced on 5 January 2021 will be accessible to essential businesses affected by the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

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 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 new 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.

■ English Language: Education

Felicity Buchan:

[\[137343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether it is his policy that English Language Schools that have been forced to close under the covid-19 restrictions announced in January 2021 are eligible for grant funding coordinated by local authorities.

Luke Hall:

We have 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.

Local authorities must be assured that businesses applying for grants: a) have been mandated to close as a result of national restrictions, b) are solvent, c) are eligible to pay business rates, and d) that the business in question is able to meet any other criteria laid out in the guidance. Where businesses do not meet this criteria, local authorities have the ability to provide discretionary grant funding via the Additional Restrictions Grant.

■ Holocaust Memorial Day

Sajid Javid:

[\[135895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January 2021.

Eddie Hughes:

Due to the Covid19 pandemic, this year's national Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration will take place on-line on the 27 January at 7pm. The event will include a national candle-lighting moment at 8pm. Several national buildings will be lit in remembrance of the six million Jewish men, women and children murdered during the Holocaust, all victims of Nazi persecution and victims of subsequent genocides.

MHCLG and a number of other Government departments will be hosting Holocaust Memorial Day events in the run up to Holocaust memorial Day. Local authorities,

churches, schools and a number of civic society organisations across the country will also be marking the day with online ceremonies.

■ Housing: Construction

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[137956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in addition to plans to regenerate England's cities with new homes, what steps he plans to take to help ensure that planning system reforms prioritise sustainable housing and transport.

Christopher Pincher:

Last year's White Paper *Planning for the Future* reaffirmed our commitment that the planning system should play an important role in addressing climate change and contributing to net-zero by 2050. The reforms would support creating places built closer to where people want to live and work, to reduce our reliance on carbon-intensive modes of transport, and with buildings and places that are better designed and more sustainable.

The White Paper also set out our intention to amend the National Planning Policy Framework, to ensure that it targets those areas where a reformed planning system can most effectively play a role in mitigating and adapting to climate change, and maximising environmental benefits. We are considering the responses to the White Paper and will set out our next steps.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[137957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he plans to take to ensure more effective coordination across central and local governments in the (a) planning and (b) delivery of new homes, including clarity about where responsibility lies for the resultant (i) transport and (ii) housing emissions.

Christopher Pincher:

Our *Planning for the Future* white paper set out how we will reform the planning system to make it more efficient, effective and equitable. A Government response will follow.

In addition, the Department is frequently in touch with partners across central and local Government to ensure the effective planning and delivery of new homes, and to advance shared priorities for both transport and emissions.

With specific regard to emissions, the minimum energy efficiency standards that we set for buildings through Part L of the Building Regulations must put us on the right path to achieve our net zero commitment. The Future Buildings Standard consultation, which was published on 19 January 2021, builds on the Future Homes Standard by setting out energy and ventilation standards for non-domestic buildings, existing homes and to mitigate against overheating in residential buildings. Together, the Future Homes Standard and proposed Future Buildings Standard provide a

pathway towards creating homes and buildings that are fit for the future and a built environment with lower carbon emissions.

■ Housing: Energy

Marco Longhi:

[136077]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make it his policy that in the event that a change in his policies on energy ratings requires owners of private dwellings to undertake building works those changes in policies will be limited to new build properties.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. Both new and existing homes will need to become more energy efficient and switch to low carbon heating to meet this ambitious target. The Government recently consulted on raising minimum energy performance standards in private rental sector homes and is currently consulting on measures to improve energy performance of homes through lenders. Our Heat and Building Strategy will set out further actions we will take for reducing emissions from buildings.

The Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, published in November 2020, also set out a range of measures to support all property owners to improve the energy performance of their homes, including extending the Green Homes Grant scheme for a further year.

The minimum energy efficiency standards that we set for buildings through Part L of the Building Regulations must put us on the right path to achieve our net zero commitment. The Future Buildings Standard consultation, which was published on 19 January 2021, builds on the Future Homes Standard by setting out energy and ventilation standards for non-domestic buildings, existing homes and to mitigate against overheating in residential buildings. Together, the Future Homes Standard and proposed Future Buildings Standard provide a pathway towards creating homes and buildings that are fit for the future and a built environment with lower carbon emissions

■ Local Government: Climate Change

Thangam Debbonaire:

[137955]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what (a) long term financial support and (b) expert advice he is making available to local councils that have declared climate emergencies to enable them to act on their climate emergency plans.

Luke Hall:

Half of all English councils have committed to reducing their direct emissions to zero by 2030, enormously supporting the ambition set by the Prime Minister. Local action can accelerate deployment of new technologies and drive significant cost efficiencies through strategic coordination, including vital new energy and transport infrastructure

As we continue to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic we need to ensure that our recovery plans support our climate change response. By building back greener and better, we can achieve our climate goals, protect our biodiversity and natural capital, and sustain climate-resilient economic development, all in a fair and inclusive way

Councils are uniquely positioned to align local needs, opportunities and resources to deliver strategic interventions at all scales. We will continue to work with councils to enable them to build back greener and better locally, through an effective planning framework and devolution

A significant amount of support has been made available for councils to act on climate change, from heat networks to cycle paths to flood defences. To give a few examples:

- The £1 billion Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and Skills Fund is part of the Chancellor's 'Plan for Jobs 2020' commitment to support the UK's economic recovery from Covid-19, supporting up to 30,000 skilled jobs in the low carbon and energy efficiency sectors: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-decarbonisation-scheme-psds>
- The Green Homes Grant includes £500 million for local authorities to improve the energy efficiency of low-income households. This will help reduce fuel poverty and support the installation of low carbon heating: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-homes-grant-local-authority-delivery-scheme-entering-a-bid>
- The £250 million emergency active travel fund is designed to help local authorities create an environment that is safe for both walking and cycling in their regions. The money will help create pop-up bike lanes, wider pavements, safer junctions, and cycle and bus-only corridors. We want to support all communities across England who want to change the way they use their streets and new guidance has already been published to tell councils how they can give more road space to cyclists and pedestrians: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-billion-package-to-create-new-era-for-cycling-and-walking>

Finally, MHCLG is supporting clean growth initiatives through existing funding pots, including the Towns Fund and Local Growth Fund, and local institutions are using strategic plans to support the UK's net zero by 2050 commitment. My officials are working with other Departments including BEIS and DEFRA to ensure that green recovery and clean growth form a key part of our emerging local economic recovery planning.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ British Airways and Easyjet: Loan Guarantee Scheme****Clive Lewis:**[\[137976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the loan guarantee support from UK Export Finance for EasyJet and British Airways, if she will publish all relevant analysis carried out by UKEF in accordance with its compliance with the Equator Principles including (a) UKEF's assessment of the climate risks posed by EasyJet and British Airways and their categorisation of each company or project and (b) the alternatives analysis to evaluate lower greenhouse gas intensive alternatives which the Equator Principles require.

Graham Stuart:

UK Export Finance's (UKEF) Export Development Guarantee Scheme allows for the provision of general working capital support to UK exporters. The support does not relate to the construction of any individual project and therefore falls outside of the scope of the Equator Principles.

■ Trade Agreements: Kenya**Emily Thornberry:**[\[136470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, for what reason annex III of the UK's trade agreement with Kenya does not contain the same references to the consequences of human rights abuses transposed from Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement that are included in annex III of the UK's trade agreement with Cote d'Ivoire.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[Holding answer 15 January 2021]: Annex III of the United Kingdom's Economic Partnership Agreement with Kenya replicates language from the Cotonou Agreement and the effects of the Cotonou references in the EU's Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the East African Community to make sure that upholding rights and responsibilities remain essential and fundamental elements of the agreement.

For both the agreements with Kenya and Côte D'Ivoire, the overall result is a replication of the effects of the Cotonou references in the existing EPA, so that appropriate measures can be taken in the event of a violation of these elements.

■ UK Trade with EU: Import Duties**Emily Thornberry:**[\[132811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the effect of prospective future EU tariffs contained within the rebalancing clauses of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the long-term stability of the investment climate for exporters and investors operating in the UK.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Britain's deal with the EU will help attract continued investment and protect high-value jobs right across the United Kingdom.

Investment plays a crucial role in the British economy, underpinning countless jobs across the country. The United Kingdom has a proud and hard-won reputation as one of the top destinations for foreign direct investment in Europe and as one of the foremost destinations of inward investment in the world. We continue to radically transform the United Kingdom's investment offer, including through freeports, to drive economic and productivity growth in every corner of the United Kingdom. For example, the newly created Office for Investment will work closely with existing and new investors to unblock issues and corral the whole of HM Government to work together to improve the business environment.

The United Kingdom-EU trade deal sets out some very limited and specific circumstances in which either side may seek to take strictly restricted and proportionate rebalancing measures to address material impacts on trade that are arising only as a result of significant divergences between the parties in a narrow set of areas. Measures of this type are subject to the approval of an independent arbitration panel – in practice the chance of any such measures being applied is very low due to the difficulty of meeting the requirements of the panel. Additionally, the right to take rebalancing measures is fully reciprocal.

■ UK Trade with EU: Non-tariff Barriers**Emily Thornberry:****[132810]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the effect of non-tariff barriers, including but not limited to documentary, identity and physical checks, on the profitability of UK exporters.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government has developed a Digital Market Access Service to help capture, assess and resolve non-tariff trade barriers affecting British exporters. British businesses can register barriers directly through GREAT.GOV.UK and the potential economic value of removing each barrier is part of the assessment process.

In the last financial year (2019/2020), we helped remove 175 trade barriers to trade, across 61 countries worldwide, opening new global markets for British exporters. Once we have defeated COVID-19, our analysis shows that liberalising market access barriers could boost British exports by £75 billion per year.

Our analysis, together with industry estimates, show the immense value of this important work in every corner of the United Kingdom. Our successes to date have included lifting barriers facing Scottish salmon exports to Brazil, an important boost for the fisheries sector which could be worth up to £90m over five years; lifting the lamb export ban to Japan, a helpful step for Welsh sheep farmers, worth £52 million over five years; and securing access for British beef, though the United States' has banned EU beef for 20 years, worth £66 million over five years. Our FTA with Japan

has reduced non-tariff barriers for British businesses in areas such as financial services too.

JUSTICE

■ Animal Welfare: Convictions

Alex Davies-Jones:

[138105]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many convictions there were for offences relating to animal cruelty in (a) England and (b) Wales in each year since 2015; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions and convictions relating to animal cruelty, in England and Wales, up to December 2019, available in the 'Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code' data tool, here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938554/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx

In the data tool linked above, use the 'Offence' filter to select the following offences:

- 108a Animal Cruelty under sections 4-8 under Animal Welfare Act 2006
- 108b Other Cruelty to animal offences

In order to specify data from Wales, use the 'Police Force Area' filter to select only North Wales, South Wales, Gwent and Dyfed-Powys. In order to specify data from England, select all forces except those above and 'Special/miscellaneous and unknown police forces'

■ Prisons: Remote Education

Gill Furniss:

[137999]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure that prison teachers and other staff with desk-based roles within prisons are only undertaking essential duties and that they are working remotely wherever possible to help contain the spread of covid-19.

Lucy Frazer:

The safety of staff and prisoners is our top priority, which is why we have taken quick and decisive action – backed by Public Health England and Wales – to limit the spread of the virus. Due to the current risk level posed by Covid-19, all adult prisons are currently operating a Stage Four regime, as outlined in our National Framework (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-national-framework-for-prison-regimes-and-services>).

These restrictions reduce contact between people and therefore reduce the chance of transmission. As part of these measures, staff who can work from home, including

teachers, are doing so, and since September education staff have delivered in-cell distance learning. For staff who cannot work from home, we have established Covid-safe workspaces with robust risk assessments and safe systems to ensure safety.

We have also introduced a comprehensive testing regime of both staff and prisoners to help prevent the spread of the virus. We are also working closely with the NHS to support the roll-out of Covid-19 vaccinations for eligible groups in custody. Our experience and evidence gathering provides an indication that these measures have had a positive impact on limiting the transmission of the virus in prisons.

■ Remand in Custody: Coronavirus

Alex Cunningham:

[\[137923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether there have been any identified cases of covid-19 transmission as a result of remanded defendants being taken to court and supervised in court custody.

Lucy Frazer:

The safety of our staff and those under our supervision remains our top priority, and we have taken quick and decisive action – backed by Public Health England and Wales – to limit the spread of the virus. Regular testing of prisoners and staff continues to be conducted, along with the use of Reverse Cohorting Units to limit possible spread from new arrivals.

It is not standard practice for Prisoner Escort and Custody Service (PECS) to transfer prisoners from prison to court who are either symptomatic or confirmed positive with COVID-19, or are required to isolate as an identified contact of a person with COVID-19. This is in line with HMCTS guidance that anyone who is either suspected of having Covid-19, or a confirmed case, should not attend court. A robust process has been adopted with guidance circulated within both HMPPS and HMCTS.

All defendants who are produced from custody are assessed by a healthcare professional as fit for travel. However asymptomatic prisoners participate in various testing programmes for

COVID-19, including upon initial reception, and therefore there will be limited occasions where prisoners having arrived at court receive a positive test result.

Any member of staff, visitor or defendant with a positive COVID-19 test will declare close contacts and, in such circumstances, should begin contact tracing so relevant parties can be informed.

There are no known occasions in which COVID-19 has been transmitted by this route.

■ Wormwood Scrubs Prison: Coronavirus

Andy Slaughter:

[\[135867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners in HMP Wormwood Scrubs have (a) been tested and (b) tested positive for covid-19 in each of the last six months.

Andy Slaughter:

[\[135868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many staff employed in HMP Wormwood Scrubs have (a) been tested and (b) tested positive for covid-19 in each of the last six months.

Andy Slaughter:

[\[135869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prison officers are employed at HMP Wormwood Scrubs; how many are absent on grounds of sickness; and how many are absent as a result of having to self-isolate or having tested positive for covid-19 as of 11 January 2021.

Lucy Frazer:

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has been working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care, the NHS, and health authority colleagues in England and Wales for a number of months on providing access to Covid-19 tests in a prison environment. More recently, additional testing capacity has been made available to limit the importation of infection into prisons. This includes the regular testing of staff across all prisons and carrying out testing of all new receptions to stop the virus spreading into and between jails.

The most recently published figures included in the HMPPS workforce quarterly statistics provided data for HMPPS staff in post by establishment, as at 30 September 2020. On that date there were 485 directly employed staff in post, by headcount, at HMP Wormwood Scrubs, 91 of which were off sick for non-COVID reasons. The average non-COVID days lost at the prison were lower for the 12 months ending in September 2020, the most recently published data, compared to the prior period ending in March for 2020.

30 staff were absent from work due to self-isolation or quarantine on official health advice on 30th October. This includes both directly and non-directly employed staff. It does not, however, include staff who were off work due to COVID related sickness, caring responsibilities due to COVID or any other COVID related absences.

The table below shows the most recent verified data for HMP Wormwood Scrubs. HMPPS do not hold complete data for the number of individual staff members or prisoners who have been tested. It should be noted that staff numbers include both those directly and non-directly employed. Where values of two or fewer are present they have been suppressed (~) in order to prevent disclosure of personal information. Although care is taken when processing and analysing the returns, the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system. Much of the data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic has been done at pace, with recording practices evolving as we understand more about the requirements and conditions we are facing. In order to present the timeliest information, the data presented has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics.

	MAY 20	JUN 20	JUL 20	AUG 20	SEP 20	OCT 20
Staff testing positive	~	0	~	~	0	19
	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20
Prisoners testing positive	0	0	0	55	7	6

TRANSPORT

■ Cycling and Walking

Catherine West:

[\[137989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to support walking and cycling schemes.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Last summer the Prime Minister launched ambitious plans to boost cycling and walking in England, so that half of all journeys in towns and cities are cycled or walked by 2030. This includes a £2 billion package of funding for active travel over the next 5 years.

Over £200 million has been made available to authorities during the current financial year, via the Active Travel Fund, to support an active and green recovery from Covid-19. This will enable them to deliver safe and direct cycling and walking measures in their areas, such as protected cycle lanes, widened pavements, safer junctions and cycle and bus-only corridors. The Spending Review in November confirmed that a further £257 million of dedicated funding would be made available next financial year to support cycling and walking schemes.

■ Ferries: Freight

Jim McMahon:

[\[137995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which ferry routes have been affected by the redeployment of ferries to support the transportation of freight since the UK left the EU.

Robert Courts:

The Department for Transport, on behalf of the Government, has secured additional capacity for the transportation of Category 1 goods. The Government Secured Freight Capacity has been procured through four Ferry Operators: Brittany Ferries, P&O, DFDS, and Stena Line. These freight operators will provide capacity equivalent to over 3000 HGVs per week, across nine routes, operating from eight ports in

England: Teesport, Hull, Felixstowe, Harwich, Tilbury, Portsmouth, Newhaven, and Poole. The current contracts provide capacity until 30 June 2021.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries**

Sir David Amess:

[\[137867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the UK Classic Car Industry is supported in the event of future restrictions on the use of petrol and diesel cars.

Rachel Maclean:

The government is going further and faster to decarbonise transport by phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030 and, from 2035, all new cars and vans must be zero emissions at the tailpipe. Owners of existing petrol, diesel and hybrid cars and vans, including classic cars, will still be able to use these vehicles and buy and sell them on the used market.

■ **Roads: Repairs and Maintenance**

Sarah Owen:

[\[138090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions officials in his Department have had with Luton Council on funding for road repairs.

Rachel Maclean:

Department for Transport officials have regular meetings with Luton Borough Council on a variety of transport related matters, including on local road maintenance issues. The Department is providing Luton with over £2.3 million towards highway maintenance this financial year. It is for each Council to decide on how this funding is utilised based on their highway asset management strategy, needs, and priorities.

■ **Transport for London: Finance**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[135910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a new funding model for Transport for London.

Rachel Maclean:

In October 2020, the Government agreed an extraordinary funding and financing package for TfL worth up to £1.7bn, in addition to the earlier May 2020 deal worth up to £1.6bn, to ensure the continuation of public transport services in London during the pandemic; this deal runs until 31 March 2021. The deal is fair to national taxpayers and it takes steps to put TfL on a sustainable footing. As part of the deal, TfL was required to produce a plan for financial sustainability, with a target date for 2023. Having received this plan, the Government will now consider and discuss with the Mayor and TfL how a trajectory to financial sustainability can be achieved.

TREASURY**■ Carbon Emissions: Taxation****Alexander Stafford:**[\[136674\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to provide a long term budget for the carbon price compensation scheme.

Kemi Badenoch:

The UK's new Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) provides compensation for energy-intensive businesses at risk of competitiveness impacts. This compensation can cover up to 75% of the costs in their electricity bills due to the ETS and Carbon Price Support (CPS). The existing compensation schemes have been extended by a year until the end of 2021 and any funding decisions beyond this will be settled at a future Spending Review.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**Dan Jarvis:**[\[137924\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the viability of deferring Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme repayments in the context of the introduction of additional public health restrictions in the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

CBILS capital repayments for businesses start immediately unlike the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) where no repayments are due from the business during the first 12 months of the facility. CBILS borrowers have benefitted from the Business Interruption Payment with the Government covering their interest payments for the first 12 months of borrowing to provide additional support at this difficult time.

Any business concerned about their ability to repay their finance should discuss this with their lender in the first instance. Given loans under CBILS are varied and resemble more traditional commercial lending, CBILS borrowers are more likely to benefit from tailored engagement with their lender if they have concerns about repayments. Lenders have an ongoing relationship with CBILS borrowers and will be best placed to provide support tailored to an individual businesses circumstance.

The Government has amended the CBILS rules to allow lenders to extend loan terms from six to a maximum of ten years where they judge that this will help borrowers repay their loan, helping them to reduce their monthly repayments.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[136024\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason furlough pay for people who were originally furloughed in March 2020 and have retained their job is determined solely by their pre-pandemic earnings, including in circumstances where those people went on

to work more hours in the months between the March and November 2020 covid-19 lockdowns.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was designed to operate at significant scale to sustain individuals at 80% of their pre-coronavirus income, up to a maximum grant of £2,500 per month. It was therefore right that the default reference pay period to calculate CJRS was that of the pre-coronavirus period for those claiming prior to 31 October.

For the extended scheme from 1 November, the Government appreciates that a minority of employees may have seen an increase in earnings during the pandemic, but others have not, and therefore to be fair to all claimants the default reference pay period for those employees in continuous employment since claiming has remained at the pre-coronavirus period.

For newer employees, it was simply not possible to refer to a pre-coronavirus period, and therefore the reference pay period is necessarily different for this group.

Using the pre-coronavirus reference pay period to calculate the CJRS grant means that it is not necessary to recalculate the basis of the claim for the greatest number of employees and employers.

While a decision for employers to make alone, the terms of the scheme do allow for employers to make a top-up payment should they deem this affordable and appropriate.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Tracy Brabin:

[138000]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many full-time equivalent civil servants in his Department are working on developing new policy initiatives to support people during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

HMT takes a flexible and dynamic approach to resourcing in order to meet Government priorities. Many staff working on the government's COVID-19 response often do so alongside its other policy priorities. We do not routinely record the number of full time equivalent civil servants who work on individual policy initiatives.

As at September 2020 HMT had 1838.8 paid full time equivalent staff.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-12-17/131452>

■ Economic Growth: Coronavirus

Andrew Griffith:

[\[136681\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on promoting economic growth to support the recovery from covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Prime Minister and Chancellor chaired the first meeting of the new Build Back Better Business Council on 18 January. Here, the Chancellor laid out the three key pillars of the government's plan to drive growth beyond the pandemic: investing in infrastructure, skills and innovation.

This is in addition to the unprecedented fiscal action set out by the Chancellor at January's Economic Update, taken to support jobs and businesses through the crisis, in order to minimise short term and long-term damage to the economy.

The Government has provided over £280bn of fiscal stimulus through the UK's comprehensive economic support plan. By doing this, we continue to provide comparable or greater support than all our international peers across almost all areas of economic policy.

This support provides a bridge for people and businesses until the economy reopens, giving them a chance to rebuild and grow again in the future.

■ Energy: VAT

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[135856\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to remove VAT on household energy bills in response to the effects of the covid-19 outbreak on household finances.

Jesse Norman:

Households already benefit from a reduced rate of 5 per cent of VAT on domestic fuels such as gas and electricity.

Although the Government keeps all taxes under review, there are no plans to change the current VAT treatment of domestic energy.

■ Entertainments: Coronavirus

Paul Bristow:

[\[136081\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support is available for self-employed people in the entertainment sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Government recognises the impact that closures across the country will have on the entertainment industry, as well as those who work within it, and remains committed to supporting the sector through the impact of the pandemic.

The Culture Recovery Fund has already supported a wide range of cultural organisations, including venues, festivals and theatres. The £1 billion already committed has supported 3,000 organisations and more than 75,000 jobs. The remaining £400m of Culture Recovery Fund grants and loans announced on 11 December will support significant cultural organisations and those who work within them who now face financial distress as a result of closure, as well as helping them transition back to fuller opening in the spring.

Further, the third grant of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will be available to self-employed individuals, including those working within the entertainment sector, who have been affected by reduced demand or have been unable to trade due to COVID-19, which they believe will lead to a significant reduction in their trading profits.

The online service for the third grant is open to claims until 29 January 2021.

Guidance on who can claim has been published on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme>.

There will also be a fourth grant covering February to April 2021. The Government will set out further details, including the level of the fourth grant, in due course.

Moreover, the SEISS continues to be just one element of a substantial 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.

■ Hospitality Industry: VAT

Dr James Davies:

[136001]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment the Government has made of the effect of the temporary reduction in VAT for hospitality, holiday accommodation and attractions on levels of (a) growth, (b) employment and (c) tax revenues of companies in the hospitality sector and its supply chain.

Jesse Norman:

To support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and to protect 2.4 million jobs, the Government has applied a temporary reduced rate of VAT (5 per cent) to goods and services supplied by the tourism and hospitality sectors until 31 March. This relief is estimated to be worth over £2 billion to the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Lucy Powell:

[137937]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total cost is to the public purse of the reduced rate of VAT for the (a) hospitality sector, (b) accommodation and (c) attractions to date.

Jesse Norman:

The Exchequer cost of the temporary reduced rate of VAT for hospitality, accommodation and attractions until 31 March 2021 was set out at Spending Review 2020. The estimated cost is £2,540m, as shown in Table 1.1:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents>.

This costing has been certified by the Office for Budget Responsibility.

The actual cost to date is not available owing to the lags in VAT reporting, and the final cost will depend on the level of demand and the extent of restrictions during the period of the relief.

■ **Iron and Steel: Northern Ireland**

Claire Hanna:

[138098]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to remove the 25 per cent duty that is now incurred on steel sold into Northern Ireland from outside Great Britain as a result of the UK's departure from the EU.

Jesse Norman:

On the issue of steel movements into Northern Ireland, the Government will write to affected businesses this week to set out routes for bringing UK-origin and EU-origin steel into Northern Ireland tariff-free.

The Government will also set out how relevant quotas can be accessed when businesses in Northern Ireland import steel from the rest of the world.

■ **London Capital and Finance: Compensation**

Paul Blomfield:

[137914]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his statement of 17 December 2020, what the eligibility criteria will be for further compensation for former London Capital and Finance bondholders.

John Glen:

The Written Ministerial Statement of 17 December 2020 outlined the three main channels through which London Capital & Finance plc (LCF) bondholders can seek compensation. These are the administration process, the Financial Services Compensation Scheme, and the Financial Conduct Authority's Complaints Scheme.

The statement also announced that, taking into consideration the specific and complex set of circumstances surrounding the collapse of LCF, the Treasury will set up a compensation scheme which will assess whether there is justification for further one-off compensation payments in certain circumstances for some LCF bondholders

. The Government will announce further details, including the eligibility criteria, in due course.

■ New Businesses: Company Liquidations

Dan Jarvis:

[137926]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the effect on the economy of the number of businesses ceasing trading in their first year in the 2019-20 financial year.

Kemi Badenoch:

HM Treasury regularly monitor a range of sources to assess the health of businesses and the wider corporate sector.

Official business demography statistics relating to the period 2019-20 are not yet available. The latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) Business demography series extends to 2019; this series is typically updated in November each year.

However, the ONS Business insights and impact on the UK economy statistical series regularly captures information on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on UK businesses and the economy. This series records the proportion of businesses that have permanently ceased trading, disaggregated by industry. This series can be found here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/output/datasets/businessinsightsandimpactontheukeconomy>

The Government has announced unprecedented support for public services, business and workers to protect lives and livelihoods. Our economic response to the pandemic is one of the most comprehensive globally.

The independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) noted in its Autumn Economic Fiscal Outlook (EFO) in November 2020 that “in the short term, this extra spending will cushion the blow to household incomes and business finances arising from the pandemic. And in the medium term, it should reduce unnecessary job losses and business failures, thus limiting any persistent ‘scarring’ of the economy’s supply capacity and future tax base.”

■ Protective Clothing: VAT

Andrew Rosindell:

[135860]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of waiving VAT on personal protective equipment sales until the end of 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary zero-rate of VAT on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was an extraordinary measure to help affected sectors (such as hospitals and care homes) during the initial shock of the COVID-19 crisis and when the global supply of PPE did not meet demand.

This measure came to an end on 31 October (as legislated), as from 1 November new measures were introduced by the Government to ensure supply of COVID-19 related PPE to affected sectors. Given these steps taken by the Government, there are no plans to review the VAT treatment of PPE.

■ **Self-employed: Coronavirus**

Jon Trickett:

[\[135815\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what Government support is available for people classed as self-employed solely for the 2019-20 tax year who have experienced a loss of income and are ineligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

I refer the honourable Member to the answer given on 18 December 2020 to UIN 127482.

■ **Self-employment Income Support Scheme**

Peter Kyle:

[\[137979\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer on 11 January 2021 to Question 133991 on the Self-employment Income Support Scheme, what plans he has to include newly self-employed people who file a tax return for the 2019-20 financial year in the fourth grant of that scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government recognises that taxpayers have faced immense challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and it has prioritised delivering support to as many people as possible while guarding against the risk of fraud or abuse.

The first Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant supported 2.7 million individuals with claims totalling £7.8 billion. A further £5.9 billion has been claimed through the second 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 Government has taken a flexible and responsive approach and it will continue to look for ways to improve the SEISS grant and existing support.

The SEISS continues to be just one element of a substantial 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.

Helen Hayes:

[\[137980\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to enable people who were previously unable to access the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme to apply for support through that scheme based on their self-assessment for the 2019-20 financial year.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has acknowledged that it has not been possible to support everyone as they might want.

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), namely that HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will not have access to the full set of 2019-20 self-assessment returns in order to verify their eligibility, still remain. The latest year for which HMRC have tax returns for all self-employed individuals is 2018-19.

The Government has taken a flexible and responsive approach and has extended the SEISS over the coming months. The Government will continue to look for ways to improve the SEISS grant and existing support.

Stamp Duty Land Tax: Coronavirus**Alex Cunningham:**[\[135919\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to extend the stamp duty holiday on new homes in response to delays to building work due to the covid-19 lockdown.

Alex Cunningham:[\[137921\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January to Question 135918 on Stamp Duty Land Tax: Coronavirus, if he will extend the stamp duty holiday for the purchase of new property due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary increase in the Stamp Duty Land Tax nil rate band was designed to create immediate momentum within the property market, where property transactions fell by as much as 50 per cent during the COVID-19 lockdown in March.

The Government is closely monitoring delays in the building process. As the relief was designed to provide an immediate stimulus to the property market, the Government does not plan to extend this relief.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:[\[136055\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the stamp duty holiday to mitigate the effect of logistical delays occurring during property transactions as a result of the covid-19 lockdown.

Jesse Norman:

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

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

■ Tax Avoidance

Greg Smith:

[\[136071\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps HMRC is taking against umbrella companies who advised their clients to use disguised remuneration schemes.

Jesse Norman:

The Government and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) are determined to continue to tackle promoters and operators of tax avoidance schemes. This includes challenging the entities, including umbrella companies, and individuals who promote disguised remuneration schemes.

Umbrella companies advising individuals to use disguised remuneration tax avoidance schemes are treated as promoters or enablers by HMRC. Where appropriate, they are subject to the range of measures laid out in HMRC's strategy for tackling promoters of tax avoidance schemes, published on 19 March 2020. The strategy sets out HMRC's work to date and outlines how HMRC will continue to take robust actions against promoters of tax avoidance. The Promoter Strategy is available on GOV.UK.

The Government announced new measures at Budget 2020, which will strengthen the existing regimes and which will help HMRC act more swiftly against promoters and enablers. The Government has also announced that it will consult in the spring on further measures to tackle promoters.

■ VAT: Coronavirus

Lucy Powell:

[\[137936\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of VAT registered businesses have taken advantage of the deferral of VAT payments due between 20 March and 30 June 2020; and what estimate his Department has made of the amount of VAT that has been deferred.

Jesse Norman:

Approximately 600,000 businesses have deferred £34bn of VAT due to COVID-19. This equates to approximately 26% of the 2.3 million businesses registered for VAT.

■ Veterans: Tax Avoidance

Greg Smith:

[\[136070\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the number of armed forces veterans that (a) are subject to or (b) have settled to avoid being subject to the Loan Charge.

Greg Smith:

[\[136072\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of how many medical professionals are (a) subject to or (b) have settled to avoid being subject to the Loan Charge.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not hold the requested estimates and do not routinely collect data on profession.

WALES

■ Business: Wales

Andrew Griffith:

[\[137359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent assessment his Department has had made of the adequacy of the economic support available for Welsh businesses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Simon Hart:

The UK Government is focused on supporting Welsh businesses and jobs through the Covid-19 outbreak. We have provided over £1.3 billion in Bounce Back Loans, £374 million in Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans, £523 million through the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, as well as £20 million through the Future Fund.

The UK Government has also protected over 400,000 Welsh jobs through the Job Retention Scheme, introduced VAT deferrals and VAT cuts for the tourism industry, provided an additional £9.3 billion to the welfare system across the UK, and created new innovative schemes such as 'Eat Out to Help Out' from which Wales has benefitted to the value of £13 million.

On top of this direct support we have provided the Welsh Government with a £5.2 billion funding guarantee for the current financial year to help tackle coronavirus. The Welsh Government will also receive an additional £1.3 billion next year, including £770 million for tackling the pandemic.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Ethnic Groups: Coronavirus

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[138511\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Minister for Equalities of 13 January 2021, Official Report, column 276, where in her first report on the disproportionate impact of covid-19 on ethnic minority groups published in October 2020 it concludes that there is no evidence suggesting that ethnicity itself is a risk factor.

Kemi Badenoch:

My first report to the Prime Minister and Health Secretary of 22 October summarised the current evidence which shows that a range of socioeconomic and geographical factors such as occupational exposure, population density and household composition, coupled with pre-existing health conditions, contribute to the higher infection and mortality rates for ethnic minority groups. This is stated in the executive summary of my report and in paragraph 20.

As also stated in my report, a small part of the excess risk remains unexplained for some groups, although there is no evidence thus far suggesting that ethnicity on its own is a risk factor. The Race Disparity Unit has been conducting further analysis of risk factors, which I will summarise in my second quarterly report in the coming weeks.

WORK AND PENSIONS■ **Jobcentres: Staff****Seema Malhotra:**[\[137933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many full-time equivalent work coaches her Department employs; and what the average caseload is for each full-time equivalent work coach.

Mims Davies:

The department employs 19457 Work Coaches and their average workload for IWS (Intensive Work Search) cases is 190.19. These figures were correct at the date of the last reporting period which was 31 December 2020 and 10 January 2021.

■ **Kickstart Scheme****Stephen Morgan:**[\[134537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have begun placements under the Kickstart scheme in (a) Portsmouth South constituency, (b) Hampshire and (c) the UK.

Mims Davies:

As of 15/01/21 there have been 1,868 new starts in the UK. We are working to provide geographical breakdowns of data soon.

Alex Sobel:[\[136050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure that small independent business will be given the same priority as larger corporations such as supermarkets when applying for the Government's Kickstart scheme.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work & Pensions encourages employers of all sizes and from all sectors to create new job opportunities for young people through applying for Kickstart funding.

We have continued to engage with stakeholders to improve the scheme and understand any barriers to participation for both employers and young people. We have made it easier for small organisations – including sole traders – to apply through a Kickstart Gateway. Our Kickstart Gateway Direct model allows small employers to place a young person on the Gateway's PAYE system. One example of a Kickstart Gateway Direct is delivered by the Federation of Small Businesses in partnership with Adecco Working Ventures.

■ Mining: Industrial Diseases

Stephanie Peacock:

[137279]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to include coal miners in the prescription and guidance for D11 primary carcinoma of the lung where there is accompanying silicosis.

Justin Tomlinson:

On matters relating to Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB), the Secretary of State is advised by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC) to consider any recommendations to improve the scheme and any changes to prescription and guidance. The Council can only recommend prescription where there is good scientific and epidemiological evidence to establish the link between the disease and the occupation.

In June 2018, the IIAC published a position paper 41 "Coal Mining, Silicosis and Lung Cancer" recommending eligibility of coal miners for PD D11 due to an inherent part of their jobs involving tunnelling.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/717040/coal-mining-silicosis-and-lung-cancer-iiac-position-paper-41.pdf

IIAC has recommended that there should be a change to the technical guidance. Due to considerable constraints on departmental resources, this has not yet been actioned, and as a result of Covid-19 other priorities have taken precedence over the last year. My officials are aware of the IIAC recommendation and will be carefully considering the recommendations made by the Council. We will take this forward as soon as possible.

■ Pension Credit

Ruth Jones:

[138075]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing time-bound targets for increasing Pension Credit uptake.

Guy Opperman:

No such assessment has been made.

■ Pension Schemes Bill (HL)**Wendy Chamberlain:****[138081]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 1311810 on Pension Schemes Bill powers, by what means she plans to ensure that none of the provisions in Part 3 can be applied retrospectively.

Guy Opperman:

I confirm that Part 3 of the Pension Schemes Bill does not contain any provision which would enable it to have retrospective effect.

■ Pension Wise: Hartlepool**Mike Hill:****[136597]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people living in Hartlepool had a Pension Wise guidance appointment by telephone or in person from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

Mike Hill:**[136598]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people living in the North East of England had a Pension Wise guidance appointment by telephone or in person from April 2019 to March 2020.

Guy Opperman:

The Money and Pensions Service publishes data on pension wise appointments across 2019-2020 here: <https://moneyandpensionsservice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Pension-Wise-Service-Evaluation-report-2019-2020.pdf>

■ Pensions: Canada**Andrew Rosindell:****[137892]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with the Canadian Government on a reciprocal social security agreement with the UK covering the uprating of pensions.

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.

Sarah Olney:**[138003]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has responded to recent representations from the Canadian Government on proposals for a reciprocal social security agreement that covers the uprating of pensions.

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.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Appeals

Alexander Stafford:

[\[136662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of personal independence payment claimants have had their claim accepted at appeal following an initial rejection, in (a) Rother Valley, (b) South Yorkshire, and (c) nationwide in the latest period for which data is available.

Justin Tomlinson:

The table below provides the information requested for initial decisions following a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment for the Rother Valley Parliamentary constituency, the four local authority areas that make up South Yorkshire and Great Britain for all PIP initial disallowance decisions.

		INITIAL DISALLOWANCE DECISIONS FOLLOWING A PIP ASSESSMENT: APRIL 2013 TO JUN-20	
		totals	%
GB		PIP decision - disallowed following a PIP assessment	1,336,740
Appeal lapsed	26,880	2%	
Overtaken at appeal	137,970	10%	
South Yorkshire		PIP decision - disallowed following a PIP assessment	37,550
Appeal lapsed	750	2%	
Overtaken at appeal	3,290	9%	
Rother Valley		PIP decision - disallowed following a PIP assessment	2,200
Appeal lapsed	40	2%	
Overtaken at appeal	200	9%	

Initial decisions: April 2013 to 30th June 2020; appeals: to 30th September 2020

Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

Percentages are to the nearest 1% and based on the total number of initial disallowance decisions following a PIP assessment.

Initial disallowance decisions following a PIP assessment reflect outcomes prior to any Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) and appeal action. They do not include Award Review or Change of Circumstance decisions, or decisions prior to an assessment being completed.

Claimants who have received benefit decisions more recently may not yet have had time to complete the claimant journey and progress to appeal. The volumes of appeals for the more recent periods of initial decision could increase as claimants' progress to MR and appeal.

A lapsed appeal is where DWP changed the decision in the customer's favour after an appeal was lodged but before it was heard at tribunal.

The appeal figures will include some decisions which are changed at a Mandatory Reconsideration, where the claimant continues to appeal for a higher PIP award, are then changed again at appeal.

South Yorkshire data consists of the four local authority areas of Barnsley, Doncaster, Sheffield and Rotherham.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Coronavirus**

Mohammad Yasin:

[\[137276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 133744 on Personal Independence Payment: Coronavirus, for what reasons claimants are being advised by a private firm contracted by her Department that timescales are not in place to due to the covid-19.

Justin Tomlinson:

We have interpreted your question to mean what reason claimants are advised by assessment providers (Capita and Independent Assessment Services), contracted by her department, that timescales are not currently in place due to COVID-19.

The department maintains the same targets for claims clearance as pre-COVID, but recognises the current delivery challenges faced by its providers due to COVID-19. We are working with our providers to provide continued support to claimants in need of Personal Independence Payment (PIP). We remain committed to delivering quality functional assessments and ensuring claimants are assessed as quickly as possible.

So we do not place people at unnecessary risk, we have temporarily suspended face to face PIP assessments. All assessments are currently being progressed on the basis of paper based evidence alone, or that evidence together with a telephone assessment to ensure decisions on PIP can be made without delay.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus**

Seema Malhotra:

[\[136526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what equality impact assessment she has made of the effect of the benefit cap during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: The Secretary of State has reviewed the adequacy of the benefit cap grace period and has no current plans to alter it. 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.

Seema Malhotra:[\[136527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the length of the benefit cap grace period.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: Ministers continue to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and to monitor the current situation as it develops. The published benefit cap statistics are currently available to August 2020. Statistics for the number of households capped in Universal Credit and Housing Benefit in November 2020 will be published on the 30 March 2021:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/benefit-cap-statistics>.

Seema Malhotra:[\[137935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many households are not having their benefits capped as a result of the benefit cap grace period.

Mims Davies:

Information relating to households not having their benefits capped as a result of the benefit cap grace period is not readily available, and to provide it would incur disproportionate costs.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[136530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what her Department's policy is on yellow card warnings and benefit sanctions.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: I refer the honourable member to the answer given for PQ 78683 on 1 st September 2020.

The increase in claimants due to Covid has led to a pause in this testing in order to prioritise support for claimants during this difficult time.

■ Social Security Benefits: Up-rating**Stephen Morgan:**[\[137295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to uprate legacy benefits.

Will Quince:

The Secretary of State announced her plans for up-rating 2021/22 in a Written Ministerial Statement published on 25 November 2020:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-11-25/hcws600>

The proposed rates are subject to Parliamentary approval and are available on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-and-pension-rates-2021-to-2022>

■ Unemployment Benefits: Young People**Seema Malhotra:****[137931]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of unemployed young people who are not claiming unemployment-related benefits.

Mims Davies:

No estimate on this has been made.

The Chancellor's Plan for Jobs announcement in July outlined a comprehensive package of support for young people, which DWP is providing in collaboration with the Department for Education, schools and other partners. This will mean that whatever their needs, young people can find the right support, education or training that will ultimately lead to sustained employment.

We are also committed to ensuring that young people, and those supporting them, are aware of the broader offer available. The national [Good Place to Start](#) campaign encourages young people to visit our advice and signposting hub, where they can access a range of advice about job search, specific initiatives such as Kickstart, and signposts to expert careers and skills help.

■ Universal Credit**Shabana Mahmood:****[134401]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Lord Chancellor on court fine deductions applied to people in receipt of universal credit and the establishment of a payment plan at the court.

Shabana Mahmood:**[134403]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to review the maximum 30 per cent deduction for universal credit claimants for court fines.

Will Quince:

From October, we will reduce the Universal Credit standard deductions cap to 25% of a claimant's Universal Credit standard allowance from 30%.

Court fine deductions fall within the cap which means, from October, the maximum deduction will be the lower of £108.35, set out in legislation, or 25% of a claimant's

standard allowance. The maximum deduction applies only where a claimant's individual circumstances allow the maximum deduction within the standard deductions cap.

Deductions for court fines are only made from Universal Credit if a Court requests DWP to do so. The Court only makes such a request if it decides that a deduction from benefit is the most appropriate method of payment. It has always been the case that individuals can ask the Court to consider a private payment arrangement - both before a deduction from benefits is requested and at any time thereafter. Officials from DWP and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service have regular discussions about these arrangements.

■ Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit: Coronavirus

Dan Jarvis: [R] [137927]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of removing the £20 per week uplift to universal credit and working tax credits on the Yorkshire economy.

Dan Jarvis: [R] [137928]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the number of universal credit claimants who would be affected by the removal of the £20 per week uplift to universal credit and working tax credits in (a) Barnsley Central constituency, (b) the Sheffield city region and (c) Yorkshire and the Humber.

Will Quince:

The available information on the number of claimants on Universal Credit by Parliamentary Constituency is published and can be found at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

The £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit was announced by the Chancellor as a temporary measure in March 2020 to support those facing the most financial disruption as a result of the public health emergency. This measure remains in place until March 2021. As the Government has done throughout this crisis, it will continue to assess how best to support low-income families, which is why we will look at the economic and health context before making any decisions.

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Patrick Grady: [136551]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of (a) receipt and (b) non-receipt of furlough payments on in-work claimants in receipt of universal credit as a top-up to their wages.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

■ Universal Credit: ICT**Neil Gray:**[\[137946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2021 to Question 134451 on Universal Credit: Maladministration, for what reason can welfare benefits staff retrospectively amend information they have posted to a claimant's universal credit journal; and if she will make a statement.

Neil Gray:[\[137947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2021 to Question 134451 on Universal Credit: Maladministration, what steps she is taking to ensure that claimants receive an explanation for each retrospective amendment made to journal entries by a staff member.

Neil Gray:[\[137948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2021 to Question 134451 on Universal Credit: Maladministration, if she will publish the guidance her Department provides to staff on retrospective amendments to journal entries.

Will Quince:

Universal Credit guidance is routinely published in the House of Commons' Library. Guidance is themed by topic and work areas; within these instructions the role of the journal is outlined, including how and when it should be used for messaging claimants.

Journal entries can be deleted in specific circumstances, including where messages are addressed to the wrong claimant, personal or sensitive information has been added, or an incorrect letter has been uploaded. However, as stated in my response to Question 134451, claimants should receive an explanation to explain any changes to their journal messages. There are exceptions to providing explanation of amendments which can apply if it would be inappropriate to do so due to a claimant's personal circumstances.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ 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.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 18 January 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Edward Argar:

Following agreeing the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) with the European Union, United Kingdom residents travelling to the EU will continue to be covered for necessary healthcare, and this includes kidney dialysis. The new Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) covers necessary healthcare for UK residents visiting the UK. UK residents can apply online for the GHIC. Current European Health Insurance Cards (EHIC) will remain valid until the expiration date. Holders of current EHICs and the new GHIC are entitled to the same access to emergency and necessary healthcare cover when they travel to the EU, including cover for a pre-existing or chronic condition. In some countries, individuals may have to pay a percentage towards the cost of any state-provided treatment, known as a patient co-payment. As before, UK residents will need to pre-arrange kidney dialysis with the relevant healthcare provider in the country they are visiting.

~~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.~~

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Regulations Update

**Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
(Robert Jenrick):** [\[HCWS721\]](#)

I am today announcing a package of changes in relation to Part L and F of the Building Regulations. This includes the Government's Response to the 2019 Future Homes Standard consultation and the launch of the Future Buildings Standard consultation.

40% of the UK's energy consumption and carbon emissions arise from the way buildings are lit, heated and used, and homes - both new and existing – account for 22% of emissions. Therefore, if we are to meet our ambitious target to reduce the UK's carbon emissions to net zero by 2050, we must improve the minimum energy efficiency standards of new buildings and homes. By improving energy efficiency and moving to cleaner sources of heat, we can reduce carbon emissions, lower energy consumption and bills for households and ensure that we will be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.

I am publishing the Government's response to the Future Homes Standard consultation of 2019. This was the first stage of a two-part consultation which proposed an ambitious uplift in the energy efficiency of new homes through changes to Part L (conservation of fuel and power) of the Building Regulations.

The Future Homes Standard will deliver a considerable improvement in energy efficiency standards for new homes. We expect that homes built to the Future Homes Standard will have carbon dioxide emissions 75-80% lower than those built to current Building Regulations standards, which means they will be fit for the future, with low carbon heating and very high fabric standards. The interim uplift to energy efficiency requirements will act as a stepping stone towards the full Future Homes Standard, and should result in a meaningful and achievable 31% in carbon emissions savings compared to the current standard. We anticipate that a two-stage approach to implementing the Future Homes Standard will help to prepare the necessary supply chains and appropriately skilled workforce by encouraging the use of low-carbon heating in new homes, while accounting for market factors.

The Prime Minister's ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution noted that we must implement the Future Homes Standard within the shortest possible timeline. Therefore, our priority will be to implement an interim uplift to the energy efficiency requirements for new homes and non-domestic buildings as swiftly as possible. This key stepping stone will enable us to successfully implement the Future Homes Standard and Future Buildings Standard. We have also listened to those stakeholders that called for a swifter and more certain pathway to implementation. Our work on a full technical specification for the Future Homes Standard has been accelerated and we will consult on this in 2023. We also intend to introduce the necessary legislation in 2024, with regulations coming into

force from 2025. In the meantime, to provide greater certainty for all stakeholders, we have published a draft notional building specification for the Future Homes Standard alongside this consultation response which provides a basis on which we can begin to engage with all parts of industry on the indicative technical detail of the Future Homes Standard.

To ensure as many homes as possible are being built in line with new energy efficiency standards, transitional arrangements will now apply to individual homes rather than an entire development and the transitional period will be one year. This approach will support implementation of the 2021 interim uplift and as such the successful implementation of the Future Homes Standard from 2025.

I am also publishing today the Future Buildings Standard, which is the second stage of the two-part consultation. This consultation builds on the Future Homes Standard consultation by setting out energy and ventilation standards for non-domestic buildings, existing homes and to mitigate against overheating in residential buildings.

The Future Buildings Standard consultation proposes changes to the Building Regulations and primarily covers new and existing non-domestic buildings. This includes an interim uplift of Part L and Part F requirements for new and existing non-domestic buildings. The interim uplift will also encompass existing homes, meaning that when works take place in an existing home, such as an extension to a property, the work carried out will need to meet the standards set by building regulations – these requirements will not apply to the wider building. It also proposes some changes to requirements for new homes, including to the Fabric Energy Efficiency Standard; some standards for building services; and to guidance on the calibration of devices that carry out airtightness testing. Finally, it details a new standard for mitigating overheating in new residential buildings.

Together, the Future Homes Standard and Future Buildings Standard set out a pathway towards creating homes and buildings that are fit for the future; a built environment with lower carbon emissions; and homes that are adapted to the overheating risks caused by a warming climate. By making our homes and other buildings more energy efficient and embracing smart and low carbon technologies, we can improve the energy efficiency of peoples' homes and boost economic growth while meeting our targets for carbon reduction.

I am depositing a copy of the Government Response to the 2019 Future Homes Standard consultation and the Future Buildings Standard consultation in the House Libraries.

■ Building Safety Update

Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick): [\[HCWS722\]](#)

I wish to update the House on the Government's work to tighten regulatory oversight of construction product safety, so that people can feel confident that the products used to construct our homes will perform as they should.

Introduction

Shocking recent testimony to the Grenfell Inquiry has shown that some manufacturers of safety-critical construction products appear to have put lives at risk by gaming product-testing regimes, putting products on the market that do not perform as advertised, and to be refusing to take responsibility when caught in the act.

This is unacceptable. This Government will act decisively to protect residents by ensuring that companies who manufacture or sell construction products act responsibly or face the consequences.

In her independent review of the building regulations and fire safety system, Dame Judith Hackitt recommended that industry should ensure that construction products are properly tested, certified, labelled and marketed and Government should put in place a robust regulatory framework to incentivise and oversee this. We agree.

In July 2020, this Government published in draft the Building Safety Bill. The Bill set out the biggest reforms to building safety regulation for a generation, including provisions to strengthen and extend the scope of the powers available to government to regulate construction products. I welcome the constructive report published by the Pre-Legislative Committee on the draft Bill – the Government will respond to it shortly and we intend to introduce the Bill in the Spring. In my statement to the House of 20 July 2020, I also committed that the Government would develop options for a new, national regulatory function that would ensure that those regulations are better enforced. Today, I want to update the House on the progress we have made on both fronts – the regulations and the regulator – as well as our plans to go further on product testing.

Broader, tougher construction products regulations

Firstly, we are making good progress in extending and strengthening construction product regulations. At present, some products are not covered by the regulations. Our Bill will ensure that all construction products will be covered by the regulatory regime, and that all manufacturers will be required to ensure that their products are safe before putting them on the market. The Bill will also ensure that products designated as ‘safety-critical’ will be subject to additional requirements, including having to meet clear performance standards and to have undergone mandatory testing and control processes before they can be sold. The Bill will also make it possible for regulators to remove from the market any product that poses a significant safety risk, and to prosecute or use civil penalties against any company that flouts the rules.

A strong national regulator for construction products

Secondly, I am pleased to announce today that this Government will establish a national regulator to ensure that the regulations are better enforced, and to provide vital market surveillance that will enable us to spot and respond to safety concern earlier and more effectively. We will do this by extending the remit of the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), which will take on oversight of construction products alongside its existing responsibilities. OPSS has valuable skills and experience in regulating consumer products and of working closely with local authority Trading Standards and other regulators, and will be granted up to £10 million in 2021/22 to establish the new function.

The national regulator will have strong inspection and enforcement powers - including to commission and conduct its own product-testing when investigating concerns – and will work with both national regulators (such as the Building Safety Regulator) and local regulators (such as Trading Standards) to encourage and enforce compliance. The regulator will also advise the public, government and the sector on technical and policy issues, pursuant to its function. Over coming months, I expect the regulator to begin to operate in shadow form, including engaging with the sector to clarify how the new regime will operate in practice.

Going further on product testing

Third, recent testimony to the Grenfell Inquiry has shone a light on appalling practices by some manufacturers of construction products, including what appears to be wilful attempts to game the system and to rig the results of safety tests that are intended to give the market vital information about how products will perform in a fire.

I have written to the Advertising Standards Authority and National Trading Standards to ask them what steps they can take to ensure that marketing of construction products is not misleading. We will provide further information to the House on this in due course.

Furthermore, I am today announcing that I will shortly commission an independent review to examine in detail the deficiencies in testing and conformity assessment regime for construction products, and to recommend how we can prevent abuse of the system by irresponsible companies who are prepared to put profits before lives. The review will report later this year, and may lead to further regulatory changes.

Ongoing work to improve building safety

These measures come on top of other major steps we are taking as we deliver our commitment to bring about a generational shift in building safety, including:

- £1.6 billion of funding to remove dangerous cladding from high rise buildings
- Introducing the Building Safety Bill and Fire Safety Bill to bring about the biggest change in building safety for a generation
- Establishing a new Building Safety Regulator
- Recruiting the first ever Chief Inspector of Buildings

Conclusion

I trust that these important measures will receive broad support across the House. I also call on companies who manufacture, sell or distribute construction products to do the right thing and address the rotten culture and poor practice that have come to light. We have a shared responsibility to confront poor practice and establish new norms that will restore public confidence in the industry. Residents deserve and expect nothing less.

■ Planning update

Minister of State for Housing (Christopher Pincher):

[\[HCWS720\]](#)

The country needs more, better and greener homes in the right places.

This Government's ambition is to deliver 300,000 homes per year by the mid 2020s and one million homes over this Parliament. Increasing the number of up-to-date Local Plans across England is central to achieving that goal. Local Plans not only unlock land for development and ensure that the right number of new homes are being built in the right places, they also provide local communities with an opportunity to have their say on how their local areas will change over the coming years, and how the local environment can be protected and enhanced.

91% of local planning authorities have now adopted a Local Plan, but we know that many of them are not being kept up to date. In March 2020, the Government set a clear deadline of December 2023 for all authorities to have up-to-date Local Plans in place.

It is critical that work should continue to advance Local Plans through to adoption by the end of 2023 to help ensure that the economy can rebound strongly from the COVID-19 pandemic. Completing Local Plans will help to ensure that we can build back better and continue to deliver the homes that are needed across England.

To support this, we recently rolled forward temporary changes that we made over the summer to ensure the planning system continues to operate effectively during the pandemic. In addition, we announced changes to the methodology for assessing Local Housing Need and published the 2020 Housing Delivery Test measurement. This should help to provide greater certainty for authorities who are currently preparing Local Plans. The Government recently issued a formal direction in relation to South Oxfordshire District Council's Local Plan to ensure it continued to adoption. Where necessary, we remain committed to using all powers available to Government in order to ensure that progress on plan making is maintained.

We also want to see Neighbourhood Plans continue to make progress with the support of local planning authorities, to give more communities a greater role in shaping the development and growth of their local areas.

The Planning for the Future White Paper consultation closed in October. The White Paper sets out proposals to deliver a significantly simpler, faster and more predictable system. These proposals will need further development. Authorities should not use this period as a reason to delay plan-making activities. Authorities who have an up-to-date plan in place will be in the best possible position to adapt to the new plan-making system.

I will consider contacting those authorities where delays to plan-making have occurred to discuss the reasons why this has happened and actions to be undertaken.

This Written Ministerial Statement only covers England.

TREASURY**■ Operation of the UK's Counter-Terrorist Asset Freezing Regime: 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020**

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): [\[HCWS719\]](#)

Under the Terrorist Asset-Freezing etc. Act 2010 (TAFAs 2010), the Treasury is required to prepare a quarterly report regarding its exercise of the powers conferred on it by Part 1 of TAFAs 2010. This written statement satisfies that requirement for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020.

This report also covers the UK's implementation of the UN's ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida asset freezing regime (ISIL-AQ), and the operation of the EU's asset freezing regime under EU Regulation (EC) 2580/2001 concerning external terrorist threats to the EU (also referred to as the CP 931 regime), for the same period (1 July 2020 – 30 September 2020).

Under the ISIL-AQ asset freezing regime, the UN has responsibility for designations and the Treasury, through the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI), has responsibility for licensing and compliance with the regime in the UK under the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida (Asset-Freezing) Regulations 2011.

Under EU Regulation 2580/2001, the EU has responsibility for designations and, throughout the Transition Period while the UK was a member of the EU, OFSI had responsibility for licensing and compliance with the regime in the UK under Part 1 of TAFAs 2010.

EU Regulation (2016/1686) was implemented on 22 September 2016. This permits the EU to make autonomous Al-Qaida and ISIL (Da'esh) listings.

UK Sanctions following the end of the Transition Period

Since the Transition Period ended at 11:00pm on 31 December 2020, the UK no longer applies EU sanctions regulations and all sanctions regimes will be implemented through UK regulations. The Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 (the Sanctions Act) provides the legal framework for the UK to impose, update and lift sanctions autonomously. Information on the three new Counter-Terrorism Sanctions regimes can be found via this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-counter-terrorism-sanctions>

These new sanction regimes ensure that the UK implements its international obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 1373 and give effect to the UK's obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 2368.

There will be a final Quarterly Report to Parliament on the UK's Terrorist Asset Freezing Regime, covering the period 1 October 2020 – 31 December 2020, which will be released in due course.

The following table set out the key asset-freezing activity in the UK during the quarter.

Attachments:

1. Counter-Terrorist Asset Freezing Regime Q3 2020 [WMS Q3 of 2020 - Table.pdf]