



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 January 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:46 P.M., 20 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

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[138486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of financial support available to businesses affected by the covid-19 outbreak that are not eligible for an Additional Restrictions Grant.

Paul Scully:

The Government understands the considerable difficulties faced by UK businesses that have been adversely affected by a drop in business or closure due the coronavirus pandemic.

In November, at the beginning of the second national lockdown, the 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.

Since March 2020, we have made available a range of business support measures including loans, small business grants through local authorities, mortgage holidays and VAT deferral.

We have also updated the support available to fit the restrictions necessary: we have increased 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.

We have also extended 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 not been able to access support, or who are unsure about what support is available, to contact their nearest Business Growth Hub for advice. 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 at www.lepnetwork.net/local-growth-hub-contacts/.

The free Business Support Helpline offers impartial 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.

■ Business: Coronavirus**Marsha De Cordova:****[136604]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the number of covid-19 financial support applications made to local authorities that are (a) approved and (b) declined.

Paul Scully:

Local Authorities work within the guidance provided by the Department to ensure that support is provided where needed. The Department receives weekly progress updates from Local Authorities which includes information on the number and value of grants paid by Local Authorities to date.

■ Construction: Coronavirus**Taiwo Owatemi:****[136627]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Government's coronavirus taskforce on the (a) potential merits of ceasing all work on construction sites and (b) ensuring that companies are supported to ensure construction workers are furloughed during the high level of transmission of covid-19.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Construction workers play a crucial role in supporting our public services, maintaining vital infrastructure, and providing and maintaining safe, decent homes for people to live in. Throughout the pandemic, the Government has been clear that construction activity should continue, where it can take place safely.

The Government has worked with the Construction Leadership Council's Coronavirus Task Force, construction firms, and other stakeholders to develop guidance on safer working on construction sites. This is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/construction-and-other-outdoor-work>.

The construction industry has also developed Site and Branch Operating Procedures for firms and merchants, as well as guidance for small firms and mineral products suppliers. These provide advice as to how construction firms can apply the Government guidance on safer working.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is designed to help employers whose operations have been severely affected by Coronavirus, to retain their employees and protect the UK economy. All employers, including construction companies, are eligible to claim under the CJRS.

■ Construction: Pay**Alexander Stafford:**[\[136663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the 2011 amendments to the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 in ensuring fair and prompt payment for small businesses and contractors in the construction industry.

Alexander Stafford:[\[136664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking following the publication of the summary of the responses to the consultation on the 2011 amendments to the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, to improve the dispute resolution framework in construction industry.

Paul Scully:

The Government acknowledges that non-payment and late payment are significant problems for small businesses in the UK, and we remain fully committed to tackling them.

Part 2 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 ('the Construction Act') creates a framework for fair and prompt payment through the construction supply chain, and a resolution procedure for disputes.

The Post-Implementation Review of the 2011 Amendments to the Construction Act will formally assess the impact on the construction sector.

The stakeholder responses to the consultation which supported the Post-Implementation Review broadly favoured the principles of the framework and dispute resolution procedure.

Alexander Stafford:[\[136665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure prompt and fair payments for small businesses and sub-contractors in the construction industry.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to fulfilling its manifesto commitment to clamp down on non-payment and late payment to support small businesses in the UK.

We have introduced a number of measures to tackle late payment. These include the Payment Practices Reporting Duty which creates transparency in payment behaviour, and the Prompt Payment Code which sets standards and best practice in payment culture. Both measures are applicable in the construction sector.

Since September 2019, suppliers also risk being excluded from winning large Government contracts if they cannot demonstrate prompt payment. This policy applies to Central Government contracts valued above £5m per annum, subject to the Public Contracts Regulations.

In addition, in May 2020 the Government issued a Guidance Note on responsible contractual behaviour in the performance and enforcement of contracts impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government will continue to review behaviours in contracting, including public sector procurement, prompt payment and contract management arrangements.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

Mr Richard Holden: [\[138526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether town and parish councils can apply directly to the On-Street Residential Chargepoint scheme or whether an application needs to be made through a higher tier local authority.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme is available to all local authorities in the UK, including town and parish councils, who can apply directly for funding.

The On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme guidance for local authorities can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/grants-for-local-authorities-to-provide-residential-on-street-chargepoints/grants-to-provide-residential-on-street-chargepoints-for-plug-in-electric-vehicles-guidance-for-local-authorities>.

■ **Events Industry and Hospitality Industry: Unemployment**

Nadia Whittome: [\[136675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of potential job losses in the events and hospitality industry in 2021.

Paul Scully:

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

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

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

■ **Green Homes Grant Scheme: Coronavirus**

Dr Luke Evans: [\[136638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 outbreak and national lockdowns on

the length of the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending that scheme until December 2022.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Green Homes Grant installers may continue to carry out installations in people's homes during the national lockdown provided they follow the government guidance for working safely in other people's homes.[1]

We understand that some customers may not feel comfortable having an installer visit their home during a period of national lockdown. To reduce risk, installers can provide a quote remotely using a video call or detailed photographs, rather than physically attending a customer's home.

In November, the scheme was extended from March 2021 to March 2022 to give customers longer to complete home improvements under the grant. We do not currently have plans to extend the scheme beyond this date but keep the scheme under continual review.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes#national-lockdown>

■ **Green Homes Grant Scheme: Leicestershire**

Dr Luke Evans:

[136639]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the level of take up of the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme in (a) Leicestershire and (b) Bosworth.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme launched for applications on 30 September and as announced on 18 November, will run until 31 March 2022. As of 13 January, the number of grant applications within (a) and (b) are as follows:

(a) Leicestershire County - 1,641

(b) Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council - 94

The value presented in (a) Leicestershire County is inclusive of (b) Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council.

■ **Hospitality Industry and Tourism**

Dr Luke Evans:

[136636]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps with his Cabinet colleagues to develop a road map to support the trading of the hospitality and tourism sectors in 2021.

Paul Scully:

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic the Government has worked closely with the hospitality and tourism sectors to understand the impact of the pandemic on their businesses. In 2021 we will continue to provide a package of support including the

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, government-backed loans, Local Restrictions Support Grants, additional funding provided to Local Authorities to support businesses and the Cultural Relief Fund. We keep all support under review.

In the Global Travel Taskforce Review, the Government committed to producing a Tourism Recovery Plan. This is being led by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

■ Hospitality Industry and Tourism: Coronavirus

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[136637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of creating a Hospitality and Tourism Recovery Fund to help support the recovery of those sectors after the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic the Government has worked closely with the hospitality and tourism sector to understand the impact of the pandemic on their businesses.

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

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

The Government has announced that it intends to publish a Tourism Recovery Plan, and we will bring forward further details in due course.

■ Iron and Steel: UK Trade with EU

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[132930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Northern Ireland protocol, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that UK steel companies can export into the EU without facing EU Safeguard Tariffs.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has worked successfully with the European Commission to secure country-specific allocations for various steel products within the Tariff Rate Quotas (by which the EU imposes its steel safeguard measures) to enable UK companies to trade tariff-free into the EU. These tariff-free allocations came into operation on 1 January 2021. Officials in the Department for International Trade continue to discuss the size and applicability of these quotas with the European Commission.

For steel traded into Northern Ireland, there is an interim solution already in place for steel from Britain and the EU to ensure it enters tariff free.

■ Mothers and Pregnancy: Discrimination

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[136651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to implement the Government's July 2019 commitment to establish a taskforce of employer and family representative groups to address pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace.

Paul Scully:

The Government is finalising plans to bring together a broad set of key stakeholders to look at what improvements can be made to the information available to employers and families to address pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace.

We will be setting up the first meeting shortly.

■ Parental Leave: Research

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[136650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the fieldwork and other research that will form the basis for the Government's evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave scheme was (a) initiated and (b) completed.

Paul Scully:

Work on the evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme started in July 2018 and has included commissioning and interrogating information collected through large scale, representative, surveys of employers and parents and a qualitative study of parents who have used the scheme. The various data sources will help us to better understand the barriers and enablers to parents taking Shared Parental Leave.

Fieldwork was completed in February 2020 and we are currently processing the data. Analysis of this data has taken longer than expected due to the impact of Covid-19 on our research partners and because we have necessarily prioritised work on supporting parents during the pandemic. However, the evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme remains important for the Government, and we will publish our findings in due course.

■ Pay: Ethnic Groups

Caroline Lucas:

[\[136482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he will publish the Government's response to the consultation on ethnicity pay reporting, which closed on 11 January 2019; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

In 2018/19 the Government consulted on options for employer-level ethnicity pay reporting. Following the consultation, the Government met with businesses and representative organisations to understand the barriers to reporting and explore what information could be published to allow for meaningful action to be taken. We also ran a voluntary methodology testing exercise with a broad range of businesses to

better understand the complexities outlined in the consultation using real payroll data. The Government is continuing to analyse this data and will respond to the consultation as soon as we can.

■ Public Houses: Coronavirus

Julian Sturdy: [\[136511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of easing regulations to allow pubs to temporarily trade as off-licenses during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021 to give consumers the option of buying bottled and canned alcoholic products from their local pubs.

Paul Scully:

While hospitality venues are not allowed to sell alcohol for takeaway under the new National Lockdown restrictions, they are allowed to continue to sell food and non-alcoholic drinks for takeaway until 11pm. All food and drink (including alcohol) can continue to be provided by delivery.

■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus

Charlotte Nichols: [\[136649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it Government policy to close click and collect services as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Click-and-collect services allow goods to be pre-ordered and collected without customers entering the premises, thus remaining in well ventilated spaces - which are, by definition, safer environments where transmission is less likely to occur.

Click-and-collect allows the public to have access to goods they need quickly, where they aren't available from retailers that can remain open. Additionally, it allows businesses subject to closure to be able continue operating.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Blood: Contamination

Barbara Keeley: [\[138425\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 14 September 2020 to Question 85069, what the timeframe is for establishing a framework of compensation for the (a) victims and (b) families of the contaminated blood scandal.

Penny Mordaunt:

Work is currently underway and I will update Parliament as soon as possible on this.

■ Civil Service: Select Committees

John Healey:

[\[138382\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what (a) policy, (b) administrative and (c) advisory support the civil service provides to select committees.

Chloe Smith:

The civil service does not provide policy, administrative or advisory support to select committees.

The Government supports the work of select committees by providing information and evidence to their inquiries.

■ Elections: Coronavirus

Cat Smith:

[\[138465\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to introduce fully digital postal vote applications in time for the May 2021 local elections.

Chloe Smith:

As I explained to the House on 13 January, we are looking at this but the Government will not introduce digital postal vote applications ahead of the May 2021 local election.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Cat Smith:

[\[138464\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 8 January 2021 to Question 134490, for what reasons the answer to the Question did not confirm where voters will collect their local elector ID from in the event that they do not possess photographic ID.

Cat Smith:

[\[138466\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the cost of rolling out voter ID.

Cat Smith:

[\[138467\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 133009, whether Irish passports will be accepted as valid photographic ID to vote at the next elections; and if he will publish a full list of ID which will be accepted at the next election.

Chloe Smith:

As legislation is brought forward to enable the national roll out of voter ID, appropriate impact assessments will be provided for Parliament in the normal way. Details about the full list of approved photographic ID will be set out in due course. As we have set out, for any voter who does not have one of the required forms of photographic ID, a

local elector ID will be available, free of charge, from their local authority. Local authorities will be responsible for issuing local elector identity documents. Further details will be set out in due course.

■ **Iron and Steel: Northern Ireland**

Alexander Stafford: [\[136672\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking in response to GB exports of steel to NI being subject to EU safeguards.

Penny Mordaunt:

As my Rt Hon Friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster set out in the Commons last week, the UK has put arrangements in place such that steel from Great Britain can move into Northern Ireland without being subject to tariffs.

■ **Local Government: Elections**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[136458\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans his Department has to (a) allocate additional funding and (b) take other additional steps to facilitate local elections going ahead in May 2020.

Chloe Smith:

Primary legislation states that the elections will go ahead in May 2021.

We continue to work closely with the electoral community and public health bodies to resolve challenges and ensure everyone will be able to cast their vote safely and securely - and in a way of their choosing.

The Government is also bringing forward additional measures to extend the ability to appoint a proxy, so that those that are affected by Covid-19 in the days before the poll are still able to make their voice heard.

Guidance will be published in good time ahead of the polls and this matter will be kept under review.

■ **UK-EU Partnership Council**

Angus Brendan MacNeil: [\[138410\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Trade Partnership Council and Trade Partnership Committee is planned to meet.

Penny Mordaunt:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement establishes a standard set of committees to oversee its operation. The Government is considering carefully the process around the establishment of these committees. Further announcements will be made in the usual way.

DEFENCE**■ Mali: Peacekeeping Operations**

Stephen Morgan: [\[136043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will deploy Royal Air Force assets to provide military air cover for troops taking part in the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali.

Stephen Morgan: [\[136044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the safety of troops taking part in the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali.

Stephen Morgan: [\[136045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to provide appropriate air cover for troops taking part in the UN peace keeping mission in Mali.

James Heapey:

[Holding answer 19 January 2021]: The Ministry of Defence assesses the threat in Mali to be unchanged from that set out in my statement to the House on 9 December 2020.

There is close air support provided by El Salvador as part of the MINUSMA force. In the unlikely event that our peacekeeping troops required this capability, it would be made available through the UN's mission commander. The UK cannot operate its own – non-UN affiliated – close air support as the UN rules are clear on the requirement for only UN attributed force elements to contribute to a UN mission. Helicopter based medical evacuation is also available through MINUSMA. As the Long Range Reconnaissance Group develops a better understanding of the mission and the medical evacuation capability is assured, Ministers will take a view on extending the range at which it can operate. Availability of appropriate helicopter medical evacuation will be key in determining the range.

■ Military Aid: Coronavirus

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[138536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2021 to Question 134251 on Military Aid: Coronavirus, what specific tasks members of the armed forces deployed to the NHS headquarters in Skipton House to assist with the rollout of the vaccine are conducting.

James Heapey:

Defence has further increased its support to Skipton House, with 28 Service personnel now deployed to assist with the rollout of the vaccine. 26 of these personnel are supporting primarily the NHS Vaccine Delivery programme through operational and logistical planning assistance, and two military officers are providing Chief of Staff support to enhance coordination of vaccine procurement for Her Majesty's Government.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[138537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2021 to Question 134251 on Military Aid: Coronavirus, what tasks members of the armed forces deployed to the NHS headquarters in Skipton House that are not involved in the vaccine rollout effort are conducting.

James Heappey:

There are now five Armed Forces personnel deployed to Skipton House not involved in vaccine rollout tasks. Four of these are working as MOD Liaison Officers to NHS England, primarily assisting NHS National Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response (EPRR) with Military Assistance to Civil Authority (MACA) requests. There is also one officer on a 12-month placement to NHS England, working alongside NHS England Strategic Leadership.

■ **Military Aircraft: Procurement**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[138403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has contracted (a) C-17 and (b) other heavy-lift transport aircraft under the NATO Airlift Management Programme in the last 24 months.

Jeremy Quin:

Defence Supply Chain Operations and Movements has not contracted (a) C-17 or (b) other heavy-lift transport aircraft under the NATO Airlift Management Programme in the last 24 months.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Creative Europe**

Paul Blomfield:

[\[137194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on establishing an alternative to Creative Europe.

Paul Blomfield:

[\[137195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to replace funding from Creative Europe provided to the UK creative industries.

Caroline Dinenge:

This Government recognises the great value of the UK's arts and cultural sectors. We have provided £1.57bn through the Cultural Recovery Fund, ensuring record breaking support is available to support the cultural sector through the COVID-19 crisis.

The Government decided not to seek continued participation in the Creative Europe programme as part of the UK's withdrawal from the EU but to look at other ways of supporting the UK's arts and cultural sectors. The Spending Review announced £7m in funding for a pilot year of the Global Screen Fund. The Fund will support the UK independent screen sector, in particular UK independent film content, to remain competitive in the international market and help ensure the continued stability of the independent screen sector as a whole.

We understand the role international cultural partnerships and networking play in driving forwards the very best in leading contemporary practice. The Government will continue to assess the needs of the sector through the continued impacts of COVID-19 and in establishing our place on the world stage outside of the European Union.

■ **Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme**

Neale Hanvey:

[\[137326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will extend the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme beyond 31 March 2021.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is fully committed to supporting listed places of worship and has committed to the present level of funding until 31 March 2021. We recognise the importance of this scheme and the reliance which is placed on it. We are presently working through the implications of DCMS's Spending Review settlement with HMT and within DCMS. We will be able to provide an update shortly.

■ **Musicians: Visas**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[138408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January 2021 to Question 135862 on Musicians: Visas, whether the EU offered visa arrangements during negotiations on the future relationship between the UK and the EU which would have allowed UK musicians to tour in the EU visa-free for 90 days.

Jamie Stone:

[\[138481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the revenue lost to the live performance industry as a result of covid-19 restrictions since March 2020.

Caroline Dinéage:

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

■ Travel Agents: Coronavirus**Andrew Gwynne:****[137893]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the provision of financial support for online travel agencies that have not been eligible for business support schemes during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

We hold regular discussions with Her Majesty's Treasury and across Government regarding the significant impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the travel sector, including online travel agencies.

The Government has introduced a number of support measures for businesses and individuals through COVID-19, which online travel agencies can access. These include various government-backed loans, as well as the extended furlough and self-employed support schemes.

The Chancellor also announced that Local Authorities in England will be given an additional £594 million discretionary funding to support their local businesses. This builds on the £1.1 billion discretionary funding which local authorities in England have already received to support their local economies and help businesses impacted. The guidance for this funding encourages Local Authorities to develop discretionary grant schemes to help those businesses which - while not legally forced to close - are nonetheless severely impacted by the restrictions. We encourage local authorities to be sympathetic to applications from businesses such as online travel agents who may not have been eligible for other grants.

We continue to engage with relevant stakeholders, including UKInbound and the Association of British Travel Agents, to assess how we can best support the sector's domestic and international recovery.

EDUCATION**■ Children: Day Care****Gill Furniss:****[137997]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of childcare arrangements for key workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, announced on 4 January 2021 that early years settings remain open for all children during the national lockdown. Details can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>. For school-aged children, schools, childminders and wraparound care remain open for vulnerable children and children of key workers.

Early years provision should continue to allow all children to attend full time or their usual timetabled hours. This includes early years registered nurseries and childminders, maintained nursery schools, as well as nursery classes in schools and other pre-reception provision on school sites. Only vulnerable children and children of critical workers should attend on-site reception classes. Early years settings remain low risk environments for children and staff. Current evidence suggests that pre-school children (0 to 5 years) are less susceptible to infection and are unlikely to be playing a driving role in transmission.

We do stay in regular contact with the early years sector, and we are closely monitoring both parental take-up of places and the capacity and responses of providers. An estimated 49,000 early years settings were open on 7 January 2021. This represents 72% of all settings, with 13% closed and 15% unknown. The percentage closed may include some providers which are open, due to differences in the ways local authorities collect data and report non-responses.

The Department for Education does not hold a central register of all wraparound provision and so does not routinely collect data on the number of providers in operation. However, ensuring sufficiency of childcare provision for critical worker parents and carers remains a government priority. This is why we have ensured that wraparound childcare providers, and other providers of out-of-school activities, can continue to remain open during the current national lockdown for the children of critical workers to support their parents or carers to work, seek work, undertake training or education, or to attend a medical appointment or address a medical need, as well as for all vulnerable children. We have also published updated guidance on 'Protective measures for holiday and after-school clubs, and other out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak' to support providers to continue to operate as safely as possible during the national lockdown. This guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

In addition, we are encouraging all schools to continue offering their before and after school provision to ensure parents and carers who are critical workers can continue to work, as well as to ensure vulnerable children continue to have access to this valuable provision. Schools can also continue to open up or hire out their premises for use by external wraparound providers, such as after-school or holiday clubs, to support them to do so.

Our Regional Education and Children Team, comprising education and social care staff from both the Department for Education and Ofsted, are also continuing to work closely with local authorities, and will act as a valuable source of intelligence on the sufficiency of wraparound and early years childcare places for the children of critical workers, and for vulnerable children and young people during the current national lockdown.

■ Children: Visual Impairment

Marsha De Cordova:

[136605]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to monitor access to essential assistive technology for children with vision impairments to use when learning remotely.

Vicky Ford:

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

We have updated the remote education guidance for schools and colleges, including guidance for pupils with 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. The guidance is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952443/210114_School_national_restrictions_guidance_FINAL_140120_21.pdf.

For pupils with SEND, their teachers are best placed to know how the pupils' 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. 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, the department expects schools to consider these expectations in relation to the pupils' stage of development and special educational needs, for example, where this would place significant demands on parents' help or support.

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

To ensure pupils with SEND are supported effectively, we have provided additional funding to one of our demonstrators, National Star College, to provide specialist

training in assistive technologies to teachers, leaders and SENCOs in all state funded schools in England. This training will help to secure remote education arrangements for pupils with special educational needs. Advice and guidance is also available to support the development of an inclusive curriculum.

In addition, the department has made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects for Reception up to Year 11. Specialist content for pupils with SEND is also available.

Marsha De Cordova:

[136606]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he will take to increase provision of (a) brailled, (b) large print materials and (c) other essential alternative learning formats for children with vision impairment during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

Children with vision impairment may be vulnerable children, such as those with education health and care plans, and as such are strongly encouraged to attend school. Braille, large print materials and other essential alternative learning formats should be provided by schools as normal. Where pupils with vision impairment are not in school, we expect schools to provide suitable remote learning materials, which could include braille, large print materials and other essential alternative learning formats.

We are also funding National Star College to provide specialist online training on assistive technology to strengthen remote education provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Marsha De Cordova:

[136607]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure Qualified Teachers of Vision Impairment are able to safely provide face-to-face support to children with vision impairment.

Vicky Ford:

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

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

We recognise that social distancing and other protective measures can be harder to implement in specialist settings, particularly when working with children and young people with complex needs, or those who need close contact care. The 'Guidance for full opening: Special Schools and other specialist settings' has been developed with experts from PHE and provides advice on how special schools and other special

education settings specifically can implement a 'system of controls' to reduce the risk of transmission. The guidance can be accessed here:

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

Specialist settings should use their discretion and assess their own individual circumstances to achieve the greatest reduction in contacts. This should not unduly limit the quality or breadth of teaching, or access to support, specialist staff and therapists. This guidance can be found here:

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

The government is delivering a program of rapid asymptomatic testing from the start of January 2021 for staff, pupils and students in secondary schools and colleges. The Department for Education has provided guidance on delivering asymptomatic testing in specialist settings to support delivering testing in special schools and specialist colleges, which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/mass-asymptomatic-testing-in-specialist-settings>. The government also announced that all primary schools, including primary special schools, will receive testing kits for staff from 18 January 2021 with testing of staff commencing from the 25 January.

Marsha De Cordova:

[136608]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to ensure that Qualified Teachers of Visual Impairment are not deployed away from their core role of providing specialist support for children with a vision impairment.

Vicky Ford:

During the period of national lockdown, primary, secondary, alternative provision, special schools and special post-16 institutions should allow vulnerable children and young people, including those with an education, health and care plan to attend. To support this, on 7 January 2021, we published guidance for schools on the current national lockdown, which is available at the following web link:

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

On 14 January 2021 we published additional guidance for special school, special post-16 providers and alternative provision during the national lockdown at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952377/Guidance_for_special_schools_specialist_post-16_providers_and_alternative_provision_during_the_national_lockdown.pdf.

This guidance makes clear that specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for pupils can provide interventions as usual where this is reasonably necessary, including where this requires them to move between settings.

On occasions, 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 specified provision for the child or young person as soon as possible.

Where it is necessary to take this approach, education settings should work collaboratively with families to make these assessments and agree an approach that is in the child or young person's best interests. This should take into account the support that the child or young person needs and the specific circumstances affecting the family, and their views as to what would be appropriate. Any decisions taken should be regularly reviewed.

■ Children's Social Care Independent Review

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[138450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the terms of reference are of the Children's Social Care Review.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[138451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which organisations and individuals will be consulted as part of the Children's Social Care Review.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[138452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what process will be used for recruiting the Chair of the Children's Care Review; what the remuneration will be for that role; what other roles have been formerly hired as part of that review; and what the (a) recruitment process and (b) remuneration was for those roles.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[138453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the planned timescale is for concluding the Children's Social Care Review.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[138454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what Parliamentary scrutiny there will be of the (a) Children's Social Care Review and (b) the findings of that review.

Vicky Ford:

The independent review of children's social care was launched on 15 January 2021. The terms of reference for the review can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952624/terms_of_reference_independent_childrens_social_care_review.pdf.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education asked Josh MacAlister to lead the review. He will be remunerated for his work on the review in line with

government practice when commissioning independent reviews. Josh MacAlister will be supported by a secretariat team, which is currently being recruited.

The reviewer will consult widely to ensure that a broad range of views, particularly from those with experience of the children's social care system, are reflected in the review. This will include with interested parliamentarians as appropriate. The reviews recommendations will be published, and the government will respond to the review.

The review is also in the process of recruiting for an Expert by Experience group which will further support the independent reviewer, more information on this group can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/independent-review-of-childrens-social-care#get-involved>.

The department will set out the expected timescales for the review in due course.

Fleur Anderson: **[138523]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish the forthcoming review of children's social care in England.

Fleur Anderson: **[138524]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the forthcoming Children's Social Care Review is planned to address racial disparities in adoption and fostering.

Vicky Ford:

The Department for Education will set out the expected timescales for the review in due course.

The terms of reference of the review are available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952624/terms_of_reference_independent_childrens_social_care_review.pdf.

■ Erasmus+ Programme

Mr Kevan Jones: **[136453]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on what date the Government decided not to pursue membership of the Erasmus Scheme as part of the UK's future relationship with the EU.

Michelle Donelan:

Agreement with the EU on all elements of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, which includes programme participation, was concluded on the 24 December 2020. We said we would consider participation in elements of Erasmus+ on a time-limited basis, provided the terms were in the UK's interests. The EU would not meet those terms and we did not consider participation would be in the interests of the UK taxpayer. Through the new Turing scheme we will provide UK students with the opportunity to study not only in Europe, but in countries across the world.

■ Free School Meals

Alison McGovern:

[\[137200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to monitor Chartwell UK's progress in delivering the free school meals programme.

Vicky Ford:

The continuing provision of free school meals to children from out of work families or those on low incomes is of the utmost importance to this government. Guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>.

The department does not hold a contract with any provider to provide free school meals of lunch parcels to children. School catering contracts are agreed locally, and are held at school, academy trust, or local authority level. We have guidance in place allowing schools to decide the best approach for supporting free school meal pupils who are at home. This can be through lunch parcels, local vouchers or the national voucher scheme which was available from Monday.

The images circulating of poor-quality food parcels are unacceptable. On 13 January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, met with Chartwell's and other leading school food suppliers and caterers to insist on urgent action to make sure lunch parcels meet the standards we expect. We are grateful to those firms who are working hard with schools to provide nutritious, balanced lunches for children.

If a parent is concerned about the standards of their lunch parcel, they should speak directly with their school. If a parent cannot resolve their concern through their school, they can contact the department. The department will make contact with suppliers where concerns are escalated, to ensure they are following the good practice guidance we have set out. We will also alert the school to confirm appropriate contract management arrangements are in place, so that immediate improvements are made.

■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[136546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of support provided to pupils entitled to (a) benefits-related free school meals and (b) universal infant free school meals to ensure that they receive sufficient nutrition through those meals during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[136547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) criteria and (b) assessment process he has in place to ensure that food providers provide food parcels that are sufficient, nutritious and equal to the sum of £30 or above for eligible free school meal pupils who are at home during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Vicky Ford:

The continuing provision of free school meals to children from out of work families or those on low incomes is of the utmost importance to this government.

We have guidance in place allowing schools to decide the best approach for their pupils. School leaders know their communities best and have flexibility to select the most appropriate support for their pupils. This can be through lunch parcels, local vouchers or the national voucher scheme, which re-opened on Monday 18 January 2021. Our funding for schools to cover benefits-related free school meals equates to £15 per week per eligible child.

The pictures of food parcels circulating are not acceptable and not in line with guidance. On 13 January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State of Education, met the leading school food suppliers and caterers to insist on urgent action to make sure lunch parcels meet the standards we expect. I am grateful to those firms who are working hard with schools to provide nutritious, balanced lunches for children.

If a parent is concerned about the standards of their lunch parcel, they should speak directly with their school. If a parent cannot resolve their concern through their school, they can contact the department. The department will make contact with suppliers where concerns are escalated, to ensure they are following the good practice guidance we have set out. We will also alert the school to confirm appropriate contract management arrangements are in place, so that immediate improvements are made.

Schools and caterers have been provided with extensive guidance from the Department for Education and from the Local Authority Caterers Association on what each food parcel should include. They should follow our school food standards to ensure they are healthy, nutritious and sufficient – they should:

- Contain food items rather than pre-prepared meals due to food safety considerations.
- Minimise the fridge and freezer space that schools and families will need to store foods.
- Contain items which parents can use to prepare healthy lunches for their child/children across the week.
- Not rely on parents having additional ingredients at home to prepare meals.
- Not contain items restricted under the school food standards, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-school-food-in-england>.
- Cater for pupils who require special diets, for example, allergies, vegetarians or religious diets - schools should ensure there are systems in place to avoid cross-contamination. Guidance on allergies is available here: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-guidance-for-food-businesses>.

- Contain appropriate packaging sizes for household use, rather than wholesale sizes.

As was the case over Christmas, vulnerable children and families will continue to receive meals 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 – which is why the funding will be distributed by them, rather than schools, who will continue providing meals disadvantaged children during term-time. Families who need support should speak to their local authority.

Mick Whitley:

[\[136618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will seek to recoup monies paid to private catering firms for the provision of food parcels to disadvantaged young people in the event that the quality of those parcels is deemed to be inadequate.

Vicky Ford:

The Department for Education does not directly contract school catering firms. These contracts are negotiated and held at school, academy trust or local authority level. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and myself have since held a meeting with a number of catering companies, to be clear that higher standards are expected.

We know there is, understandably, concern about free school meal support during the period that schools will be restricted from opening. Schools can decide how best to support eligible free school meal pupils who are at home. We will provide extra funding to support schools to provide lunch parcels, or locally arranged vouchers. We have also reopened the national voucher scheme from the week commencing 18 January 2021.

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[136632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) adequacy of the standard of food parcels issued to families with children eligible for free school meals and (b) the long-term effect of those parcels on levels of child hunger.

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[136633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the cost to the public purse is of outsourcing the preparation and delivery of food parcels to children eligible for free school meals.

Vicky Ford:

The continuing provision of free school meals to children from out of work families or those on low incomes is of the utmost importance to this government.

School leaders know their communities best and have flexibility to select the most appropriate support for their pupils.

The pictures of food parcels circulating are not acceptable and not in line with guidance. On 13 January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, met the leading school food suppliers and caterers to insist on urgent action to make sure lunch parcels meet the standards we expect. I'm grateful to those firms who are working hard with schools to provide nutritious, balanced lunches for children.

School catering contracts are agreed locally, and the department does not hold a contract with any provider to provide free school meals of lunch parcels to children. We have guidance in place allowing schools to decide the best approach for supporting free school meal pupils who are at home. This can be through lunch parcels, local vouchers or the national voucher scheme which was available from Monday 18 January 2021.

If a parent is concerned about the standards of their lunch parcel, they should speak directly with their school. If a parent cannot resolve their concern through their school, they can contact the Department. The Department will make contact with suppliers where concerns are escalated, to ensure they are following the good practice guidance we have set out. We will also alert the school to confirm appropriate contract management arrangements are in place, so that immediate improvements are made.

Schools and caterers have been provided with extensive guidance from the department and from LACA on what each food parcel should include. They should follow our school food standards to ensure they are healthy, nutritious and sufficient. They should:

- contain food items rather than pre-prepared meals due to food safety considerations;
- minimise the fridge and freezer space that schools and families will need to store foods
- contain items which parents can use to prepare healthy lunches for their child/children across the week;
- not rely on parents having additional ingredients at home to prepare meals;
- not contain items restricted under the school food standards, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-school-food-in-england> ;
- cater for pupils who require special diets, for example, [allergies](#), vegetarians or religious diets - schools should ensure there are systems in place to avoid cross-contamination;
- and contain appropriate packaging sizes for household use, rather than wholesale sizes.

The government will continue to provide schools with their expected funding throughout this period. To recognise the additional cost of provision for pupils at home, schools will be able to claim additional funding:

- up to £3.50 per eligible pupil, per week, where lunch parcels are being provided, to top up the £11.50 they already receive to provide lunches;
- and up to £15 per eligible pupil, per week, where vouchers for local shops or supermarkets are being provided.

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

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[136652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish details of the tendering process for the provision of food parcels to children eligible for free school meals who are learning at home during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Vicky Ford:

The Department for Education does not directly contract school catering firms for the provision of school meals or lunch parcels. These contracts are negotiated and held at school level.

It is integral that we quickly put support in place for pupils who are eligible for free school meals when they are at home, and that is why we are reopening the national voucher scheme. By the time the previous scheme closed in the summer, more than £380 million worth of vouchers had been successfully redeemed into supermarket gift cards.

We will be working with Crown Commercial Service to launch a cross-government and wider public sector tender for retail vouchers, including food vouchers, that can be used by schools and other local authority bodies. We expect further details to be released shortly.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Dan Jarvis:

[\[133854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications of the findings of Ofsted's report, COVID-19 series: briefing on early years, November 2020, for the economy in Yorkshire.

Vicky Ford:

The government recognises the importance of the role of the early years sector during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Local authorities are responsible for monitoring demand and capacity for childcare and should work with early years settings to ensure there are sufficient places to cater for those in priority groups as well as meeting local need.

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

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

Where nurseries do see a drop in income from either parent-paid fees or income from the Department for Education, they are able to use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) to furlough staff who were on payroll on or before 30 October. Working parents on COVID-19 support schemes will still remain eligible for childcare support even if their income levels fall below the minimum requirement.

We continue to ensure early years providers can access all the support available. Providers should consult the full guidance on the CJRS scheme before submitting a claim: <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>. Childminders may use the Self Employment Income Support Scheme: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-self-employment-income-support-scheme>. The sector has also benefitted from business rates holidays and business loans.

We stay in regular contact with the early years sector and are closely monitoring both parental take-up of places and the capacity. We will keep this under constant review to understand how they can best be supported.

■ Pre-school Education: Finance

Kim Johnson:

[136658]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of the provision of emergency funding to the early years and nursery sector to cover (a) the maintenance of the funding calculation based on pre-covid 2019-20 place numbers and (b) other additional costs incurred due to covid-19 to ensure the viability of the sector post-outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

We recognise childcare attendance has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, however, we saw attendance rise over the autumn term from 482,000 on 10 September 2020 to 759,000 on 17 December 2020. On 17 December, the government therefore announced a return to funding early years settings on the basis

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

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

On 17 December, the government announced a return to funding early years settings on the basis of attendance, as measured by the January 2021 census. The Early Years census count will go ahead this week as expected and the census guidance is unchanged. To support local authorities we have issued some technical advice on how that guidance can be applied this year.

In summary, where a child is reasonably expected to attend Early Years provision, and that provision is made available to them by the provider, their expected hours should be recorded in the Early Years Census. This means that children should be counted 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 includes children who have previously attended the provision and children who were expected to start attending the provision in January 2021.

Where the provider is temporarily closed due to circumstances such as staff infections or isolation periods, they should return their expected levels of provision for census week. Where the provider chooses not to offer the entitlements – i.e. to close, or only offer a limited provision to children of key workers - then they should not make a return for a child who is not being offered a place.

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

The private nursery sector could not claim for specific costs incurred due to increased premises costs needed to keep schools open during school holidays, or over and above the cost of existing cleaning arrangements as a result of confirmed or suspected coronavirus cases in the same way as primary and secondary schools.

The Covid Workforce Fund aims to support schools and colleges to remain open, even when they face significant workforce pressures caused by COVID-19.

The early years sector has benefitted from the continuation of early years entitlement funding during the summer and autumn terms in 2020, and as private

nurseries typically rely on private income for a significant proportion of their income, they are able to also access support to furlough their staff via the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme (CJRS). As long as the staff meet the other criteria for the scheme, private nurseries are able to also access support to furlough their staff via the CJRS if they have experienced a drop in either their income from parents or government. Eligible nurseries can also benefit from a business rates holiday and can access the business loans as set out by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[138086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will issue guidance to local authorities to continue funding early years providers based on the January 2020 census count so a provider's funding is not reduced as a result of children not attending due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

We recognise that childcare attendance has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. However, we saw attendance rise over the autumn term from 482,000 on 10 September to 759,000 on 17 December. On 17 December, the government therefore announced a return to funding early years settings on the basis of attendance. Under these arrangements, local authorities should ensure that providers are not penalised for short-term absences of children (for example sickness, arriving late or leaving early, or a family emergency through withdrawing funding), but use their discretion where absence is recurring or for extended periods, taking into account the reason for the absence and the impact on the provider.

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

The early years census count will go ahead this week as expected and the census guidance is unchanged. We have issued some technical advice on how that guidance can be applied this year.

In summary, we have taken the view that where a child is reasonably expected to attend early years provision, and that provision is made available to them by the provider, their expected hours should be recorded in the early years census. This means children who, were it not for the impact of COVID-19 on either their own personal circumstances or on the operation of their early years setting, would be attending early years provision. This includes children who have previously attended the provision and children who were expected to start attending the provision in January.

Where the provider is temporarily closed due to circumstances such as staff infections or isolation periods, they should return their expected levels of provision for census week. Where the provider chooses not to offer the entitlements – i.e., to close, or only offer a limited provision to children of key workers - then they should not make a return for a child who is not being offered a place.

We stay in regular contact with the early years sector and have heard from them already on this subject. We publish regular official statistics on attendance in early years settings, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak-23-march-2020-to-14-january-2021>. We will be closely monitoring both parental take-up of places and the capacity and responses of providers and will keep under constant review whether further action is needed.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Rachel Hopkins:

[910851]

What assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 lockdown on (a) the attainment gap and (b) children's mental health and wellbeing.

Nick Gibb:

Understanding the impact of COVID-19 disruption is a key priority for the Government.

The Department has commissioned an independent research agency to analyse catch-up needs and monitor progress over this academic year. This research is based on a large sample of pupils and will identify whether particular groups of pupils have been more affected by time out of school – including the most disadvantaged, those with historically poor outcomes, and those in particular areas.

The Government is providing a £1 billion catch-up programme, including a 'Catch-up Premium' of £650 million, to help address lost teaching time and support pupils' social and emotional needs. 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.

The Department is working with the Department of Health and Social Care to understand the impact on children's mental health and wellbeing. Public Health England is monitoring the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, including on children and young people, and have published a report about population mental health and wellbeing in England during the COVID-19 outbreak:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report>.

The Department will also be convening a task force to look at the effects on children, young people and staff in the education system and we will confirm the next steps in due course.

Steven Bonnar:

[910873]

What steps his Department is taking to ensure the adequacy of education received by school pupils during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

All primary and secondary schools in England are now expected to provide remote education for the majority of their pupils and students, with the exception of

vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers, who can attend school or college in person. Where vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers do not attend school or college, we expect schools and colleges to provide them with remote education.

We have updated the remote education guidance for schools to clarify and strengthen expectations while on-site attendance is restricted, drawing on our evolving understanding of best practice in remote education. This guidance is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952443/210114_School_national_restrictions_guidance_FINAL_14012021.pdf#page=46&zoom=100,72,76.

To ensure all pupils continue to access high-quality education, we are securing 1.3 million laptops, investing over £400 million to support access to remote education. A comprehensive package of support continues to be available to schools and colleges which can be accessed via the Get Help with Remote Education page on gov.uk, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-remote-education>. As part of that support, we have published a 'Review Your Remote Education Provision' tool to help schools to understand their remote education strategies and signpost them towards packages of support to help them meet basic requirements and go further in their strategies, available here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-your-remote-education-provision?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=53522a25-c275-4777-996d-ade6d8f11bd5&utm_content=immediately.

We have asked schools to publish information about their remote education provision on their websites by 25 January and published an optional template to support schools in setting out that information, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/providing-remote-education-information-to-parents-template>.

During the spring term Ofsted will conduct monitoring inspections of schools most in need. These will have a strong focus on remote education and an emphasis on being supportive. In addition, Ofsted will inspect schools of any grade if it has any significant concerns about a school's provision, including in relation to remote education. Where parents approach Ofsted with concerns, having first sought to resolve them with the school, Ofsted will consider and take action where appropriate. This could mean discussing the complaint with the school, or if necessary, inspecting the school.

■ Special Educational Needs

Stuart Anderson:

[136612]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what Government support is being provided to ensure that children with special educational needs can access (a) specialist

playgrounds and (b) play centres that cater for children with sensory needs in their local area.

Vicky Ford:

We continue to prioritise support for children and young people with special educational needs, including those with sensory needs, and their families. Children and young people with an education, health and care plan should be allowed to continue attending their education setting if their parent wants them to (or, for post-16 provision, if the young person wants to attend). This will mean that those children and young people can continue to access sensory support at their school or college.

Parents and carers may continue to access respite care to support them in caring for their disabled children during the national lockdown, including both services which care for children away from home and care which is delivered in the family home. Guidance for parents on early years providers, schools and colleges, which sets out that respite provision for families of disabled children can continue to operate, 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>.

In terms of access to specialist playgrounds, under national lockdown rules, outdoor playgrounds can remain open. The full guidance for this can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms>.

We are also providing £40.8 million for the Family Fund this year to support over 85,000 families on low incomes raising children with disabilities or serious illnesses. This includes £13.5 million to specifically address needs arising from the COVID-19 outbreak. These grants can be used to purchase a range of things including sensory toys and equipment.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Remote Education**

Henry Smith:

[136488]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that all children with SEND are able to access education remotely which meets their needs.

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/952443/210114_School_national_restrictions_guidance_FINAL_140120_21.pdf\(opens_in_a_new_tab\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952443/210114_School_national_restrictions_guidance_FINAL_140120_21.pdf(opens_in_a_new_tab)).

This includes guidance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

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 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 special educational needs who may not be able to access remote education without support.

The government 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. This includes over 800,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to schools, academy trusts and local authorities by 17 January 2021.

In addition, the department has also made £4.84 million available for the Oak National Academy, both for the summer term of the academic year 2019-20, and then for the 2020-21 academic year, to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects for Reception up to year 11. Specialist content for pupils with SEND is also available. This covers communication and language, numeracy, creative arts, independent living, physical development and early development learning. Additionally, the Oak National Academy offers therapy-based lessons and resources across occupational, physical, sensory and speech and language therapy.

We have provided additional funding to one of our Demonstrators, National Star College, to provide training in assistive technologies to school teachers, leaders and special educational needs coordinators (SENCo). This training can be accessed by all state-funded schools and is available via the SEND hub:

https://www.nationalstar.org/products-services-facilities/star-technology/accessible-tech/send-support-hub/?doing_wp_cron=1610617013.4222929477691650390625(opens in a new tab).

The training has been designed to help 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. Between now and 31 March 2021, National Star College will:

Boost the support available through the Demonstrator Network, through training specifically targeted on SEND practice using accessible technology in order to ensure skills and knowledge sustainability within the Demonstrator network.

Provide teacher and SENCo training through online learning covering teaching techniques, accessibility considerations and assessment methodologies.

Offer leadership training focused on inclusive curriculum design.

Pupil assessments, partnering with demonstrators and SENCos to guide them through an initial assessment of pupil need before any interventions take place.

Weekly training webinars (between 20 to 40 mins every Thursday at 4:15pm) focusing on the best ways to integrate accessible technology into classrooms – enabling teachers to improve the outcomes for all of their pupils. The webinars can be found here: https://www.nationalstar.org/products-services-facilities/star-technology/accessible-tech/?doing_wp_cron=1610617612.5390760898590087890625(opens in a new tab).

There is a wide range of resources available to support schools and FE providers to meet the expectations we have set. The Get Help with Remote Education page on gov.uk provides a one-stop-shop for teachers and leaders, signposting the support package available: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-remote-education>(opens in a new tab). This includes helping schools and colleges to access technology that supports remote education, as well as peer-to-peer training and guidance on how to use technology effectively. It also includes practical tools, a good practice guide and school-led webinars to support effective delivery of the curriculum, information on issues such as safeguarding and statutory duties and expectations information for supporting pupils and students with SEND, as well as signposting support for recovery and catch up.

■ Students: Loans

Catherine West:

[137261]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of to what extent the interest payable on student loans is a potential barrier to Muslim students.

Michelle Donelan:

The government assessed the merits of a sharia-compliant alternative finance product, including the views of students and other stakeholders, as part of the response to the consultation published in September 2014. The consultation response is at the link below:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/349899/bis-14-984-government-response-to-a-consultation-on-a-sharia-compliant-alternative-finance-product.pdf.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Dogs: Imports****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[136454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the number of dogs entering the UK from Russia.

Victoria Prentis:

The Animal and Plant Health Agency does not hold data on the country of origin for non-commercial pets moving into the United Kingdom, and therefore this answer relates solely to dogs imported from Russia commercially. The commercial importation requirements apply to dogs, cats and ferrets who:

- Travel in groups of more than five (unless travelling with a specific exemption for sports shows or training)
- Travel more than five days before or after their owner or authorised person
- Are being moved for the transference of ownership (including rescue animals being rehomed) or for sale

In 2018, 60 dogs were imported commercially into the United Kingdom from Russia and in 2019, 70 dogs were moved in this way. We do not currently have figures for the number of dogs commercially imported from Russia to the United Kingdom in 2020.

■ Fisheries: Barents Sea and Norway**Stephanie Peacock:**[\[136588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans the Government has to ensure that UK fishing can restart in (a) the Norwegian Exclusive Economic Zone and (b) around the Barents Sea; and what the timeframe is for securing those fishing agreements.

Emma Hardy:[\[138492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to secure continued access to the quotas the UK has caught historically up until 31 December 2020 in the Norwegian Economic Zone in and around the Barents Sea.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a Fisheries Framework Agreement with Norway. The annual bilateral negotiations with Norway for opportunities during this year will begin shortly, however some UK vessels already have access and will sail imminently. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for agreements to not conclude by December; it is important agreements are met which are balanced for the whole industry.

■ Fisheries: Greenland

Stephanie Peacock: [\[136590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans the Government has to ensure that UK fishing can restart in the Greenland Exclusive Economic Zone; and what the timeframe is for securing that fishing agreement.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Greenland on 9 November 2020. This agreement provides a platform for cooperation on fisheries issues but does not at this stage provide for annual negotiations or exchanges of fishing opportunities.

■ Fisheries: Iceland

Stephanie Peacock: [\[136591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans the Government has to ensure that UK fishing can restart in the Icelandic Exclusive Economic Zone; and what the timeframe is for securing that fishing agreement.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Iceland on 11 November 2020. This agreement provides a platform for cooperation on fisheries issues but does not provide for annual negotiations or exchanges of fishing opportunities. The UK has not had fishing opportunities in the Icelandic Exclusive Economic Zone since 2008.

■ Fisheries: Norway

Stephanie Peacock: [\[136589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plan does the Government has to ensure that UK fishing can restart in the Svalbard Exclusive Economic Zone; and what the timeframe is for securing that fishing agreement.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK fleet continues to benefit from fishing opportunities in the waters around Svalbard as a result of arrangements between the UK and Norway. The Marine Management Organisation has now received the relevant information from the operators involved and the relevant licensing processes are complete.

■ Fisheries: Territorial Waters

John Redwood: [\[136425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will ban supertrawlers from fishing in UK waters to help protect fish stocks and the marine environment.

Victoria Prentis:

We are reviewing our policies for these vessels operating in UK waters including marine conservation areas. Any action needs to be evidence-based and in line with the UK/EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

■ Fishing Vessels: Procurement**John Redwood:**[\[136426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to support people to acquire second hand fishing vessels from abroad or new vessels from UK yards to expand the UK fishing fleet.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is committed to supporting the fisheries and seafood sector and helping new entrants into the industry. At the Spending Review we allocated funding that will enable all parts of the UK to deliver their own financial support schemes, which will promote long-term sustainable growth and be tailored to the characteristics of their sectors. The Prime Minister has also announced a new £100M fund to support UK fishing communities. One of the aims of this programme will be the modernisation of fleets and the fish processing industry. We will set out more detail on this programme in due course.

■ Food: Charities**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[136545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much of the £16 million announced for food charities on 8 May 2020 has been allocated to frontline food aid providers (a) within and (b) beyond the FareShare network to date.

Victoria Prentis:

In March 2020, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government announced a support package of £16m to provide food for vulnerable individuals.

The programme of measures was designed to provide millions of meals over the summer period and was broken down into three separate parts:

1. FareShare received £10.5m of the £16m allocation;
2. A Food Charity Grant Scheme was set-up for individual charities to apply for grants for up to £100,000; and
3. £1.8m was awarded to the Covid-19 emergency food surplus redistribution programme, which was administered by the Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP).

In total 6,802,260kg of food was purchased and allocated to 3,201 frontline food aid providers which fall within the FareShare network, equivalent to 16.1 million meals. FareShare also received £386,444 of the £1.8m awarded to the Covid-19 emergency food surplus redistribution programme.

In total 19,010,83kg of food was purchased and allocated to 1,339 frontline food aid providers which fall beyond the FareShare network, equivalent to 3.3 million meals. Other redistribution charities received £1,413,556 of the £1.8m awarded to the Covid-19 emergency food surplus redistribution programme.

As a result of the £10.5m grant, the equivalent of around 20 million meals were purchased and distributed to charities across England, including charities supporting refuges, homeless shelters and rehabilitation services. It covered rural areas as well as cities and targeted all those who were struggling to get food.

■ **Fruit and Vegetables: Horticulture**

John Redwood:

[\[136427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what Government (a) grant and (b) loan assistance is available to people wishing to expand capacity of vegetable and fruit growing under suitable cover to extend the growing season and protect from weather damage.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has provided some limited grant support for indoor horticultural growers through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) for the purchase of innovative lighting, heating and irrigation technology. Funding continues to be available to producer organisations who implement operational programmes in the Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme.

From autumn 2021 my department will launch the new Farming Investment Fund, providing grants to farmers, foresters and growers to enable them to invest in the equipment, technology and infrastructure that will help their businesses to prosper, while improving their productivity and enhancing the environment. My officials are working with stakeholders and others on the detailed design of the scheme.

■ **Marine Protected Areas: Fisheries**

John Redwood:

[\[136424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect marine conservation areas from illegal fishing by large trawlers.

Victoria Prentis:

As an independent coastal state, the UK has full responsibility over how it manages all of our fisheries. All vessels fishing in our waters have to be licensed by a UK Fisheries Administration, and abide by the licence conditions and relevant legislation. We are also committed to ensuring an effective and robust enforcement system. To ensure appropriate arrangements to enforce fisheries regulations are in place to protect our waters, including marine protected areas, the Government has put in place a significant increase in the number of personnel and surveillance assets dedicated to fisheries protection, which includes offshore patrol vessels supported by aerial and radar surveillance. This strong presence will deter against any fisheries infringements.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[138487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to ban supertrawlers from Marine Protected Areas.

Victoria Prentis:

We are reviewing our policy on access for supertrawlers. This review will be driven by evidence. We will need to consider how any measures fit with our obligations under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU and avoid taking any action against individual vessels which could be construed as discriminatory.

Under the Fisheries Act 2020, vessels permitted to fish in UK waters have to be licensed and comply with UK rules and regulations including those on sustainability. Licence conditions set by UK Sea Fisheries Authorities apply to both UK and foreign vessels alike.

■ **Pesticides: Reviews****Caroline Lucas:**[\[136486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to enable the independent review of emergency authorisations of pesticide use following the conclusion of the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

All applications for emergency authorisation follow the same process within the legal framework. Each application for emergency authorisation is assessed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), with independent scientific advice from the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP). Pesticides regulation is devolved and so each of the four UK administrations may take a decision on applications for emergency authorisation within their territory or may leave the decision with HSE. There are no plans to alter these arrangements following the end of the transition period.

■ **Sugar Beet: Neonicotinoids****Caroline Lucas:**[\[136485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how the process for taking the decision to approve an emergency authorisation of neonicotinoid thiamethoxam for the treatment of sugar beet seed in 2021 complies with the Aarhus Convention requirements to (a) make environmental information available to the public in a way that is transparent and accessible and (b) inform the public early in the decision making process and provide for their adequate participation in the decision making process; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The decision followed the normal process for emergency authorisations, as provided for in Regulation (EC) 1107/2009. The regulation provides a comprehensive framework for the assessment of applications for emergency authorisation, including mechanisms for the assessment of risks to human or animal health, or the environment.

■ Supermarkets: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[136562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the covid-19 security practices of supermarkets compared with the first lockdown; and what additional steps he plans to advise supermarkets to take to reduce the risk of infection of (a) staff and (b) customers.

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 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. We welcome the recent announcements from a number of supermarkets on the steps they are taking to encourage customers to comply with Government rules and guidance. These emphasise the importance of solo shopping, maintaining social distancing and the need to wear a face covering unless medically exempt. It is the responsibility of all us to follow these instructions.

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.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Bahrain: Human Rights

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[138484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of the Human Rights Watch 2020 Annual Report's finding that (a) human rights in Bahrain have not improved, (b) online repression has increased and (c) the use of the death penalty continued to be marred by torture allegations and due process violations; and what assessment he has made of the effect of those findings on UK technical assistance to Bahrain.

James Cleverly:

We take note of a number of sources of information and continue to monitor closely developments on all matters that relate to human rights within Bahrain, publishing our assessments in the annual Human Rights Report, most recently in July 2020.

■ Bahrain: Overseas Aid

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[138483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa on 22 October 2020, Official Report, column 491WH on the 5,000 complaints investigated by

Bahraini Ombudsman's office, what the source is for the number of complaints investigated; and what assessment he has made of the accuracy of that figure.

James Cleverly:

The Ombudsman's Office has made public statements that it has investigated 5,500 complaints and requests for assistance since its inception in 2012. The figures are published online in the Ombudsman's annual report.

■ **China: Embassies**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[138402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the planning dispute between Belfast City Council and the Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Belfast has been resolved.

Nigel Adams:

Belfast City Council and the Chinese Consulate currently have a positive working relationship, as highlighted by recent exchanges between the First and Deputy First Ministers and the Consul General. As a sign of this continuing positive relationship, the Consulate has now made planning and listed building applications for further development at its premises.

■ **Hong Kong: Human Rights**

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[138455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the UK's reputation (a) for defending democracy and upholding the rule of law and (b) generally of British barrister David Perry QC leading the prosecution of Jimmy Lai and eight other pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

Anyone working on cases involving Hong Kong politicians and activists will want to assure themselves that the very highest legal standards, including fairness, are being upheld. The Government has been clear that the Hong Kong authorities must end their targeting of pro-democracy voices.

■ **Iran: Nuclear Power**

Jack Lopresti:

[\[136501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of Iran's recent announcement of the installation of 1,000 additional centrifuges and increase in its supply of uranium concentrate powder.

Jack Lopresti:

[\[136502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what reports he has received on Iranian plans to construct a new heavy water reactor.

James Cleverly:

Iran's recent announcements regarding the installation of advanced centrifuges at Natanz and announcement that it will commence design work for a new heavy water reactor are of significant concern. It is imperative that Iran does not implement these measures and urgently returns to compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA.

■ Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[137256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department recognises Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe as a hostage of Iran as per the terms of the Taking of Hostages Act 1982.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government recognises that Mrs Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is under arbitrary detention and that treatment has been deplorable, including a lack of due process in proceedings against her. In exercising diplomatic protection in Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case we formally raised this to a State-to-State issue and continue to raise her case at the most senior levels. It is unacceptable for Iran to bring new charges against her and we have repeatedly called on Iran not to return her to prison.

■ Yemen: Food Supply**Harriett Baldwin:**[\[136513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the US Government designation of the Houthis as a terrorist group on food insecurity 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.

■ Zuhair Ashoor**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[138485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Bahraini counterpart on the status of Sheikh Zuhair Ashoor who has been detained incommunicado in Bahrain since July 2020.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of the case of Zuhair Ashoor and welcome the public statement from the National Institute Human Rights confirming both Mr Ashoor's wellbeing and his

personal decision not to communicate with anyone, including his family. We note family statements on social media that Mr Ashoor has now been in touch.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Philip Davies:

[\[135883\]](#)

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

Helen Whately:

The information is not available in the format requested.

■ Care Homes: Visits

Sir John Hayes:

[\[135805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help facilitate visits to care homes during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

As set out in the national lockdown guidance, visits to care homes can continue to take place with arrangements such as outdoor visiting, substantial screens, visiting pods, or behind windows. Close-contact indoor visits are not currently advised. Visits in exceptional circumstances including end of life should always be supported and enabled.

■ Contact Tracing: Computer Software

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[134587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to extend access to the NHS covid-19 to Apple iPhone and Android phones that do not support iOS 13.5 or Android 6.0 (Marshmallow) and higher.

Helen Whately:

The COVID-19 app works on the vast majority of smartphones, approximately nine out of 10 in the United Kingdom. Not all handsets can use the app as it requires Bluetooth technology provided by Apple and Google in the operating system. On 14 December 2020, Apple released a version of their operating system (12.5) that brings the exposure notification contact tracing technology to older iPhone models. However, the app also uses other software components that are not available in these older versions of the operating system. Whilst we do not have plans to re-design the app in order for it to work on older iPhone models, we will continue to look at options to increase uptake of the app.

■ Coronavirus: Birmingham

Jane Stevenson:

[\[134157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to reopen the Nightingale hospital in Birmingham for patients with covid-19.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The NHS Nightingale hospital in Birmingham stands ready to provide support to local services and accept patients if needed based on local clinical advice.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Rachael Maskell:

[\[136561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether a child who is the joint custody of two households can be collected from household one and transported to household two by someone from a third household who is in a support bubble with the residents of household two.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: As the regulations and published guidance make clear and under the current restrictions, there are still circumstances in which people are allowed to meet others from outside their household, childcare or support bubble in larger groups, but this should not be for socialising and only for permitted purposes. Permitted purposes include facilitating arrangements where children do not live in the same household as both their parents or guardians.

As such, someone who is in a support bubble with one of the child's parents or guardians could collect the child from another household in order to transport them to the household of their other parent or guardian. However, they should avoid mixing with the household they are not part of a support bubble with.

Steve McCabe:

[\[137872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has published on shielding for people who are classified as (a) clinically vulnerable and (b) extremely clinically vulnerable during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 January 2021]: Those considered clinically vulnerable should follow the national lockdown rules that are in place for everyone in England, which are available at the following link:

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

Guidance for those considered clinically extremely vulnerable during the period of national lockdown was updated on 7 January and is available at the following link:

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

We have also written to all 2.24 million people on the shielded patient list to inform them of the latest guidance.

■ Coronavirus: Funerals

Luke Pollard:

[134553]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has received advice from SAGE on an increased risk of covid-19 infection for people working in the funeral sector handling the bodies of people who have died from covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) has not made a specific assessment.

Public Health England has published guidance for the care of the deceased with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, which includes guidance for funeral directors. This guidance suggests that those handling bodies should be aware there is likely to be a continuing risk of infection from body fluids and tissues where the infection is present. While the risk of infectious transmission is lower than for living patients, action should be taken to mitigate the risk. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased/guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19>

■ Coronavirus: Hospitals

Helen Hayes:

[134008]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he is having with NHS leadership on occupational health support for (a) NHS and (b) outsourced staff working in hospitals who are experiencing symptoms of long covid.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Supporting the occupational health of all National Health Service (NHS) and outsourced staff working in hospitals is a priority for the Government. We know emerging evidence is showing a number of people who contract COVID-19 experience the effects of the virus months after initially falling ill and so additional support may be required. The NHS People Plan published in July commits to enhanced occupational health support for NHS staff to ensure they are supported to stay well at work.

NHS England has announced a £10 million investment to support people with Long COVID. On 18 December 2020 NHSEI NHS England and NHS Improvement also announced that 69 Long Covid assessment service centres were now operational across England to assess people with long-term effects of COVID-19 and direct them to effective treatment pathways.

■ Coronavirus: Kent**Tracey Crouch:**[\[136487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many pharmacies in (a) Chatham and Aylesford constituency and (b) Kent and Medway CCG area have been commissioned to administer vaccinations for covid-19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: The Department, NHS England and NHS Improvement, and community pharmacy representative bodies will be working together to establish how community pharmacies' role could be expanded further in the vaccination programme. This includes pharmacies in the Chatham and Aylesford constituency and the Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group area.

■ Coronavirus: Outdoor Recreation**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**[\[134364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of exempting (a) golf clubs, (b) tennis clubs and (c) other outdoor sports facilities from the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown restrictions in England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have introduced national restrictions to reduce social contact to suppress the spread of the virus across England. It is therefore necessary for sports facilities, such as golf clubs, tennis clubs, to close. Whilst these facilities are closed, it remains important for wellbeing to be able to exercise and enjoy outdoor recreation safely, therefore individuals can continue to do this in public outdoor places under the new restrictions.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Helen Hayes:**[\[82197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which (a) public bodies and (b) companies are carrying out covid-19 tests on behalf of the Government; and what the (a) sensitivity, (b) specificity and (c) cost is of those tests so delivered by those public bodies or companies.

Helen Whately:

Pillar 2 uses Lighthouse Laboratories and has partnership arrangements with public, private and academic sector laboratories. The Department cannot comment on individual contracts due to commercial sensitivity but public notices of the contracts have been published at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>

Sir George Howarth:[\[89614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to test staff employed at designated covid-19 testing stations to ensure that they are not carrying the virus.

Helen Whately:

We have a number of measures in place to maintain health and safety at site. This includes strict social distancing measures, ensuring sites are cleaned multiple times a day to ensure very high standards of hygiene and the use of personal protective equipment on site. As testing capacity increases, repeat testing of priority groups is under consideration and a decision will be made in due course on whether to make this available for testing centre personnel.

■ **Coronavirus: Staffordshire****Karen Bradley:**[\[91033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support Staffordshire County Council to tackle the rapid rise in demand for local testing for covid-19 in Staffordshire Moorlands.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: The NHS Test and Trace system has built a testing capacity of more than 700,000 tests a day, from a starting point of 2,000 a day in March. Community asymptomatic testing is a major new tool to help identify and isolate individuals who have COVID-19 but do not have symptoms and may inadvertently be spreading the virus. We are already working intensively with local authorities, including Staffordshire Moorlands, to ensure their community testing programmes are appropriately targeted during lockdown to continue to identify more positive cases and get them to isolate in order to break chains of transmission

On 10 January, it was confirmed that regular testing for people without symptoms of COVID-19 will be made available across the country from that week, with the eligibility of the community testing programme expanded to cover all 317 local authorities.

■ **Coronavirus: Sutton Coldfield****Mr Andrew Mitchell:**[\[126779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that everyone on the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation priority list is able to access covid-19 vaccines promptly in Sutton Coldfield constituency.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: Work has taken place to ensure we have the logistical expertise, transport and workforce to roll out a vaccine according to clinical priority, at the speed at which it can be manufactured. The phased vaccination programme, which began on 8 December 2020, will be expanded over the coming weeks and months so that by the end of January, everyone will live within 10 miles of

a vaccination centre. In a small number of highly rural areas, the vaccination centre will be a mobile unit.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Jon Trickett:

[\[135808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the total number of people per 100,000 of the population who have received a covid-19 vaccination, by UK region.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Daily data on the total number of vaccination doses has been published for England since 11 January 2021. This publication supports the weekly data that was already published which provided information on age and first and second doses. From 11 January 2021, this data has also included a regional breakdown. Since 18 January 2021, we will also publish monthly information with further detail, dependant on accuracy and availability of data.

Jon Trickett:

[\[135809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of including unpaid carers for individuals classed as clinically extremely vulnerable in the top Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation vaccine priority groups.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that for phase one of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, the vaccine first be given to care home residents and staff and those aged over 80 years old, followed by health and social workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors. Priority group six includes individuals aged 16 to 64 years old with certain underlying health conditions, which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality. Also in this priority group are those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person, whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill. These individuals should also be offered vaccination alongside those with underlying health conditions

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[135846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the priority given to frontline social workers as part of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government takes advice from the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) regarding who should be vaccinated first and this is kept under review. The JCVI has advised that the vaccine first be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people over 80 years old and health and social workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk.

All frontline social care workers directly working with clinically vulnerable people who need care and support will be a priority for phase one of the vaccine programme.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[135847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the priority given to frontline charity workers working with (a) people with learning disabilities, (b) homeless people and (c) other vulnerable groups as part of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[135850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the priority given to clinical staff working in private practices, as part of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[135852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the priority given to foster carers, as part of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that the priority for the current COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

All frontline social care workers directly working with people who are clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 and need care and support, irrespective of where they work, will be a priority for phase one of the COVID-19 vaccine programme.

The Government will set out plans for phase two of vaccination in due course, based on further advice from 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.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[135849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the priority given to dentists and clinical support staff, as part of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government takes advice from the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) regarding who should be vaccinated first and this is kept under review. The JCVI has advised that the immediate priority for the current COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

In phase one of the vaccination programme, all frontline healthcare staff who are eligible for seasonal influenza vaccination will be offered a COVID-19 vaccine. This includes doctors, dentists, midwives and nurses, paramedics and ambulance drivers, pharmacists, optometrists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and radiographers.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[135855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has issued to GP surgeries on ensuring that housebound (a) elderly and (b) vulnerable people are able to receive a covid-19 vaccine in the same time frame as other people in the same priority groups for the covid-19 vaccine who are not housebound.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Guidance has been issued to support local vaccination services to deliver the vaccine to housebound patients in the priority groups, as outlined by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisations (JCVI). Appendix E of the document: 'COVID-19 local vaccination services deployment in community settings', issued on 4 January 2021, provides guidance to Primary Care Network (PCN)-run local vaccination services sites on vaccinating housebound patients. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/standard-operating-procedure-covid-19-local-vaccination-services-deployment-in-community-settings/>

PCNs should use the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine to vaccinate housebound patients. General practice teams, alongside community teams, are to determine the approach to reaching housebound patients based on their knowledge of the patient and circumstances. This includes patients who are completely housebound and unable to travel to a PCN site.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[135889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support community pharmacies (a) in Brighton and Hove and (b) nationally with the roll-out of covid-19 vaccinations; when he plans for community pharmacies to begin vaccinating; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Community pharmacies that are providing the COVID-19 vaccination service will be eligible for support in the form of: training; funding for the service, including fee per vaccination; additional venue hire costs, and; pre-agreed, one-off set up costs and non-monetary support. This includes access to vaccines, consumables, personal protective equipment, and other equipment to operate the site.

Since 14 January 2021, some community pharmacies have already started to offer the COVID-19 vaccination service, with more pharmacies joining over the coming weeks. These sites have been designated by NHS England and NHS Improvement after an application process, as they fill the gaps left where there is no Primary Care Network (PCN) or the PCN offer is not enough, taking into consideration accessibility, especially in deprived populations. Some pharmacists and members of their team have been working with general practitioners to deliver the vaccine in many areas of the country as part of the PCN service.

Mrs Flick Drummond:

[\[135985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department is putting in place to provide covid-19 vaccinations to (a) hospice staff and (b) hospice volunteers.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that for phase one of the COVID-19 vaccine programme, the vaccine first be given to care home residents and staff and those aged over 80 years old, followed by frontline health and social care workers, and then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors.

As set out in Public Health England's Green Book, which contains the latest information on vaccines and vaccination procedures, frontline healthcare workers include those working in independent, voluntary and non-standard healthcare settings, such as hospices. Temporary staff, including those working in the COVID-19 vaccination programme, students, trainees and volunteers who are working with patients must also be included.

Emma Hardy:

[\[136040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, within what time frame people will receive their second dose of the covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Having studied evidence on both the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that we should prioritise giving as many people in at-risk groups their first dose, rather than providing two doses in as short a time as possible.

The National Health Service will prioritise giving the first dose of the vaccine to those in the most high-risk groups. Everyone will still receive their second dose, and this will be within 12 weeks of their first. The second dose completes the course and is important for longer term protection.

Chris Loder:

[\[136613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, where domiciliary carers sit on the priority list for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

Those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person, whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill, should also be offered vaccination in priority group six.

■ Department of Health And Social Care: Written Questions

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[138400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Named Day Question 128093, tabled on 15 December 2020 by the hon Member for East Londonderry.

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.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Layla Moran:

[\[138495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 103615, tabled on 14 October 2020 by the hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon.

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.

■ Eating Disorders: Health Services

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[134522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take in response to the finding of the Health Survey for England 2019 that 16 per cent of adults aged 16 and over screened positive for a possible eating disorder; and what steps he is taking to increase funding for adult eating disorder services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) on 11 January 2021 to Question 131380.

■ Health Services: North of England**Alexander Stafford:** [\[130880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to develop the NHS budget in the Northern Powerhouse to (a) increase prosperity, (b) tackle mental health challenges and (c) reduce the premature death rate in the North.

Edward Argar:

The Government has provided a long-term settlement that will rise to £33.9 billion of additional funding by 2023/24 to support the NHS Long Term Plan. This sets out clear actions the National Health Service will take to strengthen its approach on health inequalities. This includes tackling mental health challenges and reducing the premature death rate, consistently across every region, including in the Northern Powerhouse. These actions support the Government's commitment to 'level up' across the country. In addition, under a devolution deal, the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership has increased flexibilities over the £6 billion spent on health and social care in the area.

■ Lead: Poisoning**Luke Pollard:** [\[134123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to include information on (a) lead poisoning and (b) checking houses for lead to expectant mothers in their pregnancy pack.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Start4Life social marketing programme includes information on lead poisoning across its email and social media channels. Specifically, messaging is included in the pregnancy content of the Information Service for Parents email programme and via social media messaging.

■ Members: Correspondence**Mr John Baron:** [\[131183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 22 September 2020 from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay and follow up correspondence of 22 October 2020 and 25 November 2020 on a constituent with reference JB28915.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We replied to the hon. Member's correspondence on 14 January 2021.

■ Mental Health Services: Charities**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[136025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much of the additional funding allocated to mental health charities in response to the covid-19 outbreak has

been used to provide direct counselling support; and how many vulnerable people have been supported through that funding.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: We have invested more than £10 million in supporting national and local mental health charities, enabling them to continue their vital work in supporting people across the country during the pandemic. Data is not available showing how much of this funding has been used to provide direct counselling support or how many vulnerable people have been supported by these organisations.

■ **Mental Health Services: Coronavirus**

Munira Wilson:

[\[134598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown on the commitments set out in Staying mentally well: winter plan 2020 to 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 13 January 2021]: For those who need them, National Health Service mental health services remain open for business, providing support online and by phone where necessary.

All mental health trusts have established 24 hours a day, seven days a week urgent helplines where people with severe needs or experiencing a mental health crisis can access urgent support and advice. We urge everyone who is experiencing a mental health crisis to make contact with a health professional immediately.

■ **Out of Area Treatment: Scotland**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[134231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, who is responsible for the transport home of (a) residents of England treated in hospitals in Scotland and (b) residents of Scotland treated in hospital in England; and whether patients resident in England in hospital in Scotland or patients resident in Scotland in hospital in England can be charged for their transport home from hospital.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The provision of patient transport services (PTS) is the responsibility of local National Health Service commissioners and therefore to set appropriate expectations of services with their providers and agree the cost of PTS. In the case of cross-border cases, where patients' resident in England, receive treatment in Scotland, the English clinical commissioning group would be responsible and vice versa. Patients who are eligible for PTS are not charged.

■ Palliative Care

Jim Shannon: [\[135941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS clinical commissioning group areas provide (a) admissions seven days a week to specialist palliative care beds and (b) specialist palliative care services seven days a week in patients' homes.

Helen Whately:

This data is not held centrally.

Jim Shannon: [\[135942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what number and proportion of NHS hospitals provide face-to-face palliative care seven days a week.

Helen Whately:

According to the second round of the National Audit of Care at the End of Life 2019/2020, which was conducted in 2019, 99% of participating hospitals reported that they had access to a specialist palliative care service. More than a third of participating hospitals or 36% reported this to include a face-to-face specialist palliative care service available eight hours a day, seven days a week and 86% of participating hospitals reported having access to specialist palliative care service by telephone 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Applications**

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[138519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to speed up the processing of applications for asylum.

Chris Philp:

We are fixing a broken asylum system and creating a new one which will be fairer and firmer and compassionate towards those who need our help.

There are a number of factors that contribute to the length of time to process asylum claims but we are determined to clear the backlog, speed up decisions and prevent people becoming stuck in the system for long periods of time.

We are working to streamline cases and have already made significant progress in prioritising cases with acute vulnerability, those in receipt of the greatest level of support including, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, and those that require a reconsideration.

Asylum Operations has developed a recovery plan focused on returning interviews and decisions back to pre-COVID-19 levels as soon as possible. We are also seeking to secure temporary resources to assist from within the Home Office and other government departments, along with other potential options.

■ Asylum: Military Bases

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[138517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to ensure that asylum seekers at Penally Camp can register and receive primary care and GP services free of charge; and whether those arrangements will continue once a decision has been made on their claim.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[138518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to ensure that the asylum seekers at Penally Camp can receive mental health and specialist support from a GP, accompanied by a professional interpreter; and whether those arrangements are planned to continue when a decision has been made about those people's claims.

Chris Philp:

Refugees, asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers can register for and receive primary care free of charge in the same way as any other patient in any nation of the UK.

At Penally Training camp the Home Office have worked closely with the Local Health Board in Pembrokeshire to ensure that arrangements are in place for asylum seekers to access health care as required.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Daisy Cooper:

[\[138083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to issue EU nationals living in the UK under the EU settlement scheme with physical proof of their settled status.

Kevin Foster:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer I gave to UIN 48558 on 20 May 2020.

■ Metropolitan Police: Racial Discrimination

Daisy Cooper:

[\[136621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to investigate allegations of institutional racism in the Metropolitan police.

Kit Malthouse:

Racism, in any form, is abhorrent and has no place in our society.

The police's ability to fulfil their duties is dependent on their ability to secure and maintain public confidence and public support for their actions, as part of the model of policing by consent.

Police forces which reflect the communities they serve are crucial to maintaining public trust, in a modern, diverse society. The police have worked hard to improve equality and diversity - the workforce is now more diverse than it ever has been, but

there is no time for complacency. The Government, with senior police leaders, has stressed the need to increase diversity as part of the drive to recruit 20,000 officers. The Government will continue to work with the service to ensure that the right strategies are in place to recruit and retain officers, including those of a BAME background, as well ensuring that position action measures are being used.

The Government has put in place a number of measures to ensure that policing is subject to appropriate levels of transparency and accountability - including regular inspection on the way forces engage with communities, frequent publication of data on use of police powers and strengthening the police complaints and discipline systems.

Accountability is crucial to public confidence in the police. The Government overhauled the police complaints and discipline systems in February 2020, which included greater powers for the police "watchdog", the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) to investigate allegations against the police of its own initiative and without a referral from the police. All allegations of behaviour by the police which is aggravated by discrimination must, by law, be referred to the IOPC under its mandatory referral criteria.

■ **NHS: Migrant Workers**

Dan Jarvis: [\[138441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of the eligibility criteria for Adult Dependent Relative visas on retaining NHS workers that are sponsors of unsuccessful applicants for those visas.

Dan Jarvis: [\[138442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of broadening the eligibility criteria for Adult Dependent Relative visas where the applicant is an elderly dependent of an NHS worker.

Kevin Foster:

The family Immigration Rules were reformed in July 2012 to prevent burdens on the taxpayer, promote integration and tackle abuse, and thereby ensure family migration to the UK is on a properly sustainable basis which is fair to migrants and the wider community by not being reliant on access to public services funded by UK taxpayers. The route for adult dependent relatives was reformed because of the significant NHS and social care costs which can be associated with these cases.

The Rules seek to ensure only those adult dependent relatives who need to be physically close to and cared for by a close relative in the UK are able to settle here, and require individuals to demonstrate as a result of age, illness or disability, they need a level of long-term personal care which can only be provided for in the UK by their sponsor here and without recourse to public funds.

Adult dependent relatives can continue to visit a family member in the UK (for up to six months) but must return home at the end of their visit.

The Home Office continues to keep the Immigration Rules for adult dependent relatives under review and make adjustments in light of feedback on their operation and impact. However, our overall assessment is the rules represent a fairer deal for the UK taxpayer and are helping to ensure public confidence in the immigration system by providing assurance migration to the UK is not based on access to public services or welfare systems.

■ Schengen Agreement: ICT

Paul Blomfield: [\[137189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to request access to the Schengen Information System SIS II.

Paul Blomfield: [\[137190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to put in place a real-time data alert system to replace SIS II; and what the planned timescale is for that alert system to be operational.

Paul Blomfield: [\[137191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made on the effect of losing access to SIS II on the effectiveness of border security.

Kevin Foster:

The UK has secured an agreement with the EU delivering a comprehensive package of capabilities relating to law enforcement and criminal justice co-operation. This will ensure we can continue to work with counterparts across Europe to tackle serious crime and terrorism - helping to protect the public and bring criminals to justice.

Sadly the EU took the position throughout the negotiations that it was legally impossible for any third country outside the Schengen area to continue cooperating through SIS II. We have therefore returned to tried and tested mechanisms of cooperation via Interpol and bilateral channels, which we already use with the rest of the world – and which we used with EU Member States until 2015. All incoming Interpol circulations (notices and diffusions) are available at the front line via UK border and policing systems. In addition to over 150,000 Interpol nominal circulations, the UK has direct access to 90 million suspect document records.

Our assessment is the UK was a safe country before joining SIS II in 2015 and we will continue to be one of the safest countries in the world, with border security set to be enhanced by our decision to end the use of EEA National ID Cards at the UK Border later this year.

The Government is investing in longer-term technical capabilities to support law enforcement data sharing by developing a single technical mechanism for law enforcement agencies to access and share alerts related to people, documents and

objects with international partners on a reciprocal basis. The programme is at an early stage of development.

■ **Visas: Applications**

Holly Lynch:

[\[138470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what effect the accidental loss of 150,000 arrest records has had on visa processing.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office temporarily suspended processing those visa applications which might have been impacted.

Once we were satisfied those applications could be processed without adverse impact on the decision-making process, visa operations resumed.

■ **Visas: Performing Arts**

Paul Blomfield:

[\[137186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with representatives from the music, cultural and performing industries on an EU-wide permit for touring and performing; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office engaged regularly with the creative sector as the plans for the UK's new immigration system were developed, this was focused upon the UK's inward offer for creatives travelling to the UK.

Officials and Ministers in DCMS have 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.

DCMS 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.

The Government knows 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 highly valued in the European Union as it is across the world.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Building Safety Fund****Hilary Benn:**[\[138396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether state aid forms are still required from leaseholders in respect of applications to the Building Safety Fund now that the UK has left the EU; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The EU State aid rules no longer apply in the United Kingdom, except for aid in scope of the Northern Ireland Protocol. Subsidies must instead meet the terms of the United Kingdom/European Union Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) as well as the other Free Trade Agreements we have reached with the rest of the world. Any changes to schemes or new schemes would need to be in line with the TCA Principles to the extent that these apply. The Government has published guidance on the subsidy control requirements from 1 January which is available on Gov.uk. The Department is considering the implications of the new subsidy control regime in regard to the Building Safety Fund and the Private Sector ACM Cladding Remediation Fund and will provide an update to applicants shortly.

■ Buildings: Insulation**Thangam Debbonaire:**[\[137953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what criteria the Government will use to determine financial support for leaseholders affected by ACM cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

Following the Department's intervention, the remediation of over 50 per cent of privately owned high-rise residential buildings with unsafe ACM cladding is being paid for by building owners and developers, or through warranty or insurance claims, without passing the costs to residents. For the remaining buildings the Government has stepped in with £600 million in funding in both the private and social sector ensuring that no leaseholders in these buildings will have to pay to replace unsafe ACM cladding. We are working on further financing solutions to fund wider remediation costs.

■ Business Premises: Coronavirus**Sir Alan Campbell:**[\[137886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans the Government has to introduce legislative proposals to further protect commercial tenants unable to trade throughout the covid-19 lockdown.

Luke Hall:

The Government recognises that Covid-19 is having a significant impact on businesses. The Government has announced an unprecedented package of support

for business in response to the Covid-19 crisis. The Chancellor announced on 5 January that closed businesses would be eligible for a further one-off payment of up to £9,000. This is the Closed Business Lockdown Payment. An additional £500 million in discretionary funding for local authorities is also being made available. This is in addition to £1.1 billion in discretionary funding that has also been allocated to local authorities to support businesses.

Government has introduced a range of legislative measures to protect commercial tenants.

Section 82 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 provides for a moratorium on forfeitures of commercial leases due to the non-payment of rent accrued during the pandemic. This means that landlords of commercial properties will not be able to evict tenants for not paying rent accrued since March 2020.

The Government has also extended the restrictions on the service of statutory demands and winding-up petitions implemented through the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 in line with the moratorium's new expiry date. This prevents creditors petitioning for a company to be wound up on the grounds it cannot pay its debts, unless the court permits and is satisfied that the inability to pay debts is not as a result of Covid-19.

The Government has also extended the restrictions on landlords' abilities to recover rental arrears through the seizure of tenants' goods through the use of Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery.

The Government has published a voluntary Code of Practice to encourage constructive dialogue between tenants and landlords; and is clear that those tenants who can pay in full should do so, those who cannot should pay what they can, and those landlords who can grant concessions should do so. We will publish further guidance to support negotiations between landlords and tenants in due course.

■ Evictions: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[\[136481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will amend the The Public Health (Coronavirus) (Protection from Eviction) (England) Regulations 2021 to restore the definition of substantial rent arrears to mean 9 months' arrears at the date on which the order for possession was granted and which pre-date 23 March 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has no plans to amend the definition of substantial rent arrears in the Public Health (Coronavirus) (Protection from Eviction) (England) Regulations 2021 at this present time, but the measures are being kept under review.

The Government believes that it is proportionate to widen the rent arrears exemption to the ban on the enforcement of residential evictions to cases where a court is satisfied that a possession order was granted on the grounds of rent arrears and

where more than six months of rent is outstanding. This change is intended to balance the effect of the ongoing restrictions on landlords with the need to continue to protect tenants.

Landlords must provide tenants with notice and obtain a possession order from the courts before bailiffs will enforce an eviction. Landlords are required to provide six months' notice in all but the most serious circumstances and the courts have put in place new rules and arrangements to respond to the pandemic. For the exemption from the ban on bailiff enforcement to apply, six full months of rent needs to be outstanding and the landlord must have a possession order granted under a rent arrears ground. Bailiffs have also been asked not to carry out evictions where someone is self-isolating or clinically extremely vulnerable.

These protections are on top of the unprecedented financial package the Government has put in place, including support for businesses to pay staff salaries and strengthening the welfare safety net with billions of pounds.

■ Homelessness: Coronavirus

Neil Coyle:

[\[136541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many of the 23,000 people supported into longer-term accommodation through the Everyone In scheme were in each (a) local authority and (b) type of tenancy or accommodation.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government published a breakdown by local authority of the people supported, including those who have been supported into longer-term accommodation as part of our data release in September. This is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-emergency-accommodation-survey-data-september-2020>.

We are funding both interim and long-term accommodation this year to make sure that as many people as possible who have been supported during the pandemic do not return to the streets. On the 29 October, we announced funding of more than £150 million to deliver more than 3,300 units of long-term, supported, move-on accommodation for rough sleepers across the country. We are now working with our delivery partners at Homes England and the Greater London Authority to ensure these schemes are delivered at pace.

We also announced the type of tenancy and accommodation will depend on the individual's needs. We will help ensure that people can access the services and support that are appropriate to their needs.

This individual approach is why local authorities are best placed to allocate individuals to appropriate accommodation. Interventions should be aimed at rapidly delivering outcomes which meet individuals' housing and support needs.

Neil Coyle:

[\[136542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 130094, how many and what proportion of the 29,000 people housed through the Everyone In scheme were subject to No Recourse to Public Funds restrictions.

Eddie Hughes:

Through Everyone In, by November we had supported around 33,000 people with nearly 10,000 in emergency accommodation and over 23,000 already moved on into longer-term accommodation. We are aware that some of these individuals housed during Everyone In will have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) restrictions. The data and breakdown requested is currently not available.

The rules as to eligibility relating to immigration status, including for those with NRPF, have not changed.

Local authorities must use their judgement in assessing what support they may lawfully give to each person on an individual basis, considering that person's specific circumstances and support needs.

Local authorities already regularly make such judgements on accommodating individuals who might otherwise be ineligible, during extreme weather for example, where there is a risk to life.

Local authorities may also provide basic safety net support if it is established that there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example, where there are community care needs, migrants with serious health problems or family cases where the wellbeing of a child is in question.

■ Housing: Insulation

Hilary Benn:

[\[138397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy of capacity in the building industry to replace unsafe cladding and (b) potential effect on that capacity of levels of availability of professional indemnity insurance; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

a) From the outset of the Building Safety Programme, the Department has engaged industry to ensure sufficient capacity exists to meet demand and to have arrangements in place to address any blockages in the supply chain.

We are providing £600 million to speed up the removal of the most dangerous ACM cladding, making homes safer, quicker. We are also providing £1 billion to remove other forms of unsafe cladding.

Where funding alone has not been enough to increase the pace of remediation we have provided direct expert support to projects

b) Government is aware that some construction professionals, and fire safety professionals in particular, are struggling to obtain appropriate professional indemnity insurance (PII). Fire safety professionals must have adequate PII cover to be able to undertake their essential role in helping to remediate multi-storey residential buildings with unsafe cladding.

Government is engaging with the insurance industry to investigate solutions that improve the availability of PII for key professionals.

■ Leasehold

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[138488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on leasehold reform.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government remains committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service

Legislation to set future ground rents to zero will be brought forward in the upcoming session of Parliament. This is the first part of seminal two-part reforming legislation in this Parliament. We will bring forward a response to the remaining Law Commission recommendations, including commonhold, in due course.

■ Local Government Finance: Leicestershire

Dr Luke Evans: [\[136299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much Rural Services Delivery Grant funding he has allocated to Leicestershire in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020; and what plans he has to increase that funding allocation.

Luke Hall:

The allocations of Rural Services Delivery Grant to local authorities in Leicestershire in the years 2018-19 to 2020-21 are published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/core-spending-power-provisional-local-government-finance-settlement-2021-to-2022> . I am pleased to say that under our

proposals as part of the provisional local government finance settlement for 2021-22, the national total for Rural Services Delivery Grant will be increased from £81 million to £85 million.

■ Local Government: Meetings

Layla Moran: [\[138494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether councils will continue meeting remotely after May 2021.

Luke Hall:

To extend the facility for councils to continue to meet remotely, or in hybrid form after 7 May 2021 would require primary legislation.

There is no option to extend the current regulations under the Coronavirus Act 2020 as section 78 (3) contains the sunset date of 7 May 2021.

There is considerable pressure on the Government's legislative programme, but the Government is carefully considering next steps in this area.

■ Planning Permission

Steve Reed:[\[138449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 133882 on planning permission, which planning applications the 31 referenced holding directions correspond to.

Christopher Pincher:

Of the 31 holding directions in place as of the 8 January, 3 are no longer in place.

There are currently (as at 18 January 2021) 28 Article 31 holding directions in place, which relate to the following planning applications

LPA	LPA APPLICATION REFERENCE
Bristol City Council	20/01930/F
East Lindsay District Council	S/090/00615
	N/031/01113/20
	S/002/01542/20
	S/002/01541/20
	S/002/00079/20
	N/031/01131/20
	N/031/01128/20
	N/031/01119/20
	N/134/00775/20
	S/090/01117/20
	N/084/00587/20
	N/031/1127/20
	S/090/01122/20
	N/031/01129/20

LPA	LPA APPLICATION REFERENCE
	S/090/00771/20
	S/090/01120/20
	S/090/00613
	N/110/00906/20
Enfield Borough Council	19/01988/FUL
Greater London Authority	PA/14/2425 4172
Halton Borough Council	17/00468/FUL
Hammersmith & Fulham Borough Council	2020/01283/FUL
Havering Borough Council	P1604.17
Luton Borough Council	19/00428/EIA
North Warwickshire Borough Council	PAP/2018/0140
Stevenage Borough Council	19/00743/FPM

■ Regional Planning and Development

David Linden:

[\[138018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the contribution of 5 October 2020 of the Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government, Official Report, Column 599, when he plans to publish the Devolution and Local Renewal White Paper; and whether that White Paper will apply to Scotland.

Luke Hall:

Levelling up all areas of the country remains at the centre of the Government's agenda. We want to devolve and decentralise to give more power to local communities, providing an opportunity for all places to level up. That is why we intend to bring forward the English Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper in due course, detailing how the UK Government will partner with places across the UK to build a sustainable economic recovery.

■ Shared Ownership: Insulation

Mr Simon Clarke:

[\[137298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to help people with shared ownership of a property who are unable to dispose of the property as a result of remedial action being needed by the landlord owing to the presence of combustible cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

It is unacceptable for leaseholders, including those in shared ownership, to have to worry about the cost of fixing historic safety defects in their buildings that they did not cause.

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

The Government is determined to remove barriers to fixing historic defects and identify financing solutions that help to protect leaseholders, including those participating in shared ownership schemes, whilst also helping to protect the taxpayer. The Government has asked Michael Wade to accelerate work on a long-term solution. We will provide an update as soon as we are in a position to do so.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Arms Trade: Colombia

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[138880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps he is taking to ensure that UK arms sold to Colombia are not being used against the civilian population.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Arms exports require an export licence, and all export licence applications are assessed against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the “Consolidated Criteria”).

The Consolidated Criteria take into account our obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty and other relevant rules of international law. They provide a thorough risk assessment framework and require us to think hard about the possible impact of providing equipment and its capabilities. These are not decisions we take lightly and HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria, including if there is a clear risk, that the items might be used for internal repression.

In addition, HM Government is able to review licences – and suspend or revoke as necessary – when circumstances require, and this is done in line with the Consolidated Criteria.

■ Imports: VAT

Hywel Williams:

[\[137887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with HMRC to simplify the application of VAT charges on imported goods.

Greg Hands:

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), HM Treasury and the Department for International Trade work closely together to ensure the interests of traders are taken into account in developing HM Government's policies on Value Added Tax (VAT) and helping businesses understand the policies.

Following the end of the transition period, businesses can account for import VAT on goods from European Union (EU) and non-EU countries through their periodic VAT returns, helping with their cash flow. Changes to other VAT rules on the import of goods have been made to address non-compliance and ensure UK high street businesses are not disadvantaged by competition from overseas businesses bringing in VAT-free imports.

■ Iron and Steel: USA

Alexander Stafford:

[\[136673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to secure an exemption for UK steel exports from the US 232 tariffs.

Greg Hands:

The Government's objective is to secure the swift removal of unjustified measures on exports of steel and aluminium. The Government has rolled over EU rebalancing tariffs in response to the 'Section 232' measures, and will launch a consultation to ensure these tariffs are shaped to UK interests and tailored to the UK economy. We want to de-escalate the conflict and come to a negotiated settlement so we can deepen our trading relationship with the US.

■ Overseas Trade: Africa

Jim Shannon:

[\[137209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent steps she has taken to improve trade with African countries.

Greg Hands:

On 1 January 2021 the United Kingdom introduced its own Generalised Scheme of Preferences that provides duty-free, quota-free access to the United Kingdom's market for more than thirty African countries and tariff reductions for other eligible African countries. This year we will launch improvements to the scheme, which will offer the lowest income countries improved terms when trading with the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom has also secured eight Free Trade Agreements with African regions and countries including the Southern African Customs Union and

Mozambique; Eastern and other Southern African states; Cote d'Ivoire; Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya, Morocco and Tunisia.

The Department has launched an online investment platform for African projects and the Africa Investment Group, which brings together investors and representatives of the United Kingdom's Government, to drive collectively more investment flows into Africa.

JUSTICE

■ Administration of Justice: Postal Services

Alex Cunningham: [\[137922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what evidence he has that charges sent by post for single justice procedure offences have been received by the respective defendants.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice does not keep evidence that charges sent by post for Single Justice Procedure offences have been received by the defendant. The Criminal Procedure Rules (Part 4) only require the court to be satisfied of service, and not receipt of the Single Justice Procedure Notice. It is the responsibility of the prosecutor to prove service to the satisfaction of the court.

■ Courts

Rachel Hopkins: [\[136678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many hearings have taken place (a) physically, and (b) virtually in court in each of the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The following table sets out the number of physical compared to remote hearings in 2020. This data is unpublished and for internal management purposes.

	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Physical	6,927	22,642	51,201	57,012	81,267	87,427	84,853	67,004
Remote	49,857	96,511	94,292	83,410	91,473	86,316	85,008	60,453

Cloud Video Platform (CVP) has been rolled out to over 150 Magistrates and 70 Crown Courts nationally. As of 8 January 2021, there have been over 70,000 hearings over CVP in the magistrates' and Crown Court.

The decision to deal with a hearing or part of a hearing remotely is a matter for the judiciary, who have been considering restrictions, transmission rates, social distancing concerns and the nature of audio and video since the beginning of the pandemic.

■ Driving under Influence: Death

Jake Berry:

[\[136509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Government plans to increase to life imprisonment the maximum penalty for people who cause death by dangerous driving and death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs.

Chris Philp:

As set out in the government's white paper, *A Smarter Approach to Sentencing*, published on 16 September 2020, we will be increasing the maximum penalties for causing death by dangerous driving and causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs to life imprisonment. We will also create a new offence of causing serious injury by careless driving.

We will introduce legislation on these changes in the near future.

■ Five Wells Prison

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[136677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the agreement of the G4S board to a £3.8bn takeover bid from Allied Universal, what assessment he has made of (a) the ability of Allied Universal to operate HMP Five Wells and (b) the potential merits of awarding the contract to run HMP Five Wells to the public sector.

Lucy Frazer:

We are working closely with G4S to ensure there is no impact or disruption to the delivery of the services and obligations under each of G4S' contracts with the Ministry of Justice and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service. This includes the mobilisation of HMP Five Wells to the agreed delivery plan, ready to accept its first prisoners in January 2022. We will also continue to work closely with the Cabinet Office to ensure we understand and can consider any implications that arise through the takeover process.

■ Prisoners' Transfers

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[136679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners have been transferred (a) between prisons and (b) from prison to court in each of the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) use private contractors to transfer prisoners across the prison estate. A breakdown of the numbers of transfers between prison establishments, and between prisons and courts that took place in each month during the last year is set out in the table below. The data for December 2020 has not yet been collated and therefore not currently available.

	DEC 19	JAN 20 20	FEB 20	MAR 20	APR 20	MAY 20	JUN 20	JUL 20 20	AUG 20	SEP 20	OCT 20	NOV 20
Inter Prison Transfer	4722	5496	5059	4930	972	2375	2776	3198	3509	4099	4434	4414
Prison to Court	11178	13655	12739	9938	523	1310	2691	5552	7300	6910	7788	7457

Private providers continue to play an important role in the prison estate. HMPPS continues to closely monitor the performance of all providers.

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 upon reception at prison establishments continues to be conducted, along with the use of Reverse Cohorting Units to limit possible spread from new arrivals.

■ Prisons: Coronavirus

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[136634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the rate of covid-19 infection in prisons.

Lucy Frazer:

The safety of our staff and those under our supervision remains our top priority. We have taken quick and decisive action – backed by Public Health England and Wales – to limit the spread of the virus.

Our measures have included restricting regimes, minimising inter-prison transfers and compartmentalising our prisons into different units to isolate the sick, shield the vulnerable and quarantine new arrivals. A comprehensive regular testing regime of both staff and prisoners is also in place and is key in helping to 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 deaths and the transmission of the virus in prisons.

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>). This involves restrictions to reduce contact between people and therefore reduce the chance of transmission. We are keeping the level of restriction necessary under close review. We must continue to respond in a measured way in line with public health advice to ensure our approach is proportionate and legitimate, as we have done throughout.

This is now a familiar way of working for the operational line and wider stakeholders, and it also appropriately balances our different risks, including the physical and mental health of staff and prisoners; violence and major disorder; and the loss of staff confidence.

■ **Television Licences: Non-payment**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[138439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the average number of people how many people prosecuted for non-payment of the TV licence fee who do not enter a plea.

Chris Philp:

80% of defendants dealt with at the magistrates' courts for TV licence evasion entered no plea in the year to September 2020 (latest available).

Plea information at magistrates' court is published as part of the Criminal Court Statistics annually released 'magistrates' timeliness tool' which is available at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2020>

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Steven Bonnar:

[\[910932\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with devolved Administrations on the December 2020 Northern Ireland Protocol agreement with the EU.

Mr Robin Walker:

I was pleased that we could agree a fantastic deal on the Protocol in December. It delivers on the commitments we made to the people of Northern Ireland, maintaining unfettered access, protecting Northern Ireland's place in the UK Customs Territory, and ensuring that Great Britain to Northern Ireland trade flows as smoothly as possible.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is in constant contact with the Executive on matters relating to the Protocol, as was the case throughout the Transition Period. This includes regular engagements with the First and deputy First Ministers, as well as cross-Government forums like the EU Exit Operations Committee and JMC(EN).

Simon Jupp:

[\[910937\]](#)

What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on potential opportunities for Northern Ireland at COP26.

Mr Robin Walker:

We are working closely with colleagues across Government and the NI Executive to support opportunities for Northern Ireland at this important event. This Government has announced a number of initiatives to promote Northern Ireland's potential as a leader in innovative technology, especially in green and clean technologies. This includes the £400 million investment through the New Deal for Northern Ireland.

I recently attended a meeting with the COP President and pressed for continued engagement with the Executive and NI businesses in order to promote Northern Ireland's interests. I also met with Laura Sandys, our former Hon. Friend, to discuss her work as an adviser to NI's energy strategy.

■ Borders: Northern Ireland**Sammy Wilson:**[\[910951\]](#)

What recent assessment the Government has made of the effect of implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol on Northern Ireland's economy.

Mr Robin Walker:

Whilst the Northern Ireland economy is facing significant challenges, particularly due to Covid-19, I am confident that Northern Ireland has a promising economic future.

Through the Northern Ireland Protocol, local businesses have unfettered access to the rest of the UK Market whilst also retaining access to the EU Single Market for goods.

The unique opportunities afforded by the Protocol allow Northern Ireland to be promoted as a great place to live and work, strengthening and growing its economy as a competitive and world class base for global businesses.

■ Business: Northern Ireland**Andrew Griffith:**[\[137360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent assessment his Department has had made of the adequacy of the economic support available for Northern Irish businesses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Robin Walker:

The pandemic has posed an unprecedented challenge to the Northern Ireland economy and to the UK as a whole. Throughout the crisis the Government's priority has been to protect lives and livelihoods.

We have taken robust action to support individuals and businesses in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland businesses and individuals have benefited from UK-wide support schemes and policies, including the Job Retention Scheme, Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, the 5% reduced rate of VAT for the hospitality sector, and government backed loan schemes, such as Bounce Back Loans and the Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Around one in four jobs in Northern Ireland have been supported by the UK Government's employment support package, with around 250,000 people benefiting from the furlough scheme and almost 80,000 self-employed supported through SEISS. In addition, £1.3bn in government-backed loans has been issued to almost 35,000 businesses in Northern Ireland.

The UK Government has also provided £3 billion in additional funding to the Northern Ireland Executive to support its response to Covid-19. This has funded a range of economic interventions locally, including business rates relief, grants for businesses, and tailored support for certain sectors, such as hospitality, which have been disproportionately impacted.

These policies have kept people in work, supported their incomes and supported businesses, delivering one of the most generous and comprehensive packages of support globally.

As measures to control the virus change, it is right that Government support should also evolve. The Government keeps all policies under review, and will continue to work with businesses and representative groups to inform our efforts to support businesses.

Lia Nici:

[\[910933\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to help Northern Ireland businesses adjust to the new trading arrangements with the EU.

Mr Robin Walker:

My Department is in constant dialogue with businesses in Northern Ireland to support them in adapting to new processes. The Northern Ireland Protocol means that there are no checks or controls when trading with the EU.

The Government has published extensive guidance for traders in Northern Ireland and Great Britain, and work is ongoing to ensure businesses are fully aware of the flexibilities and mitigations in place.

We are also backing Northern Ireland's success with over £1 billion of investment to deliver the Trader Support Service, develop new technology, contribute to the PEACE PLUS Programme, and further support businesses and communities as part of the 'New Deal for Northern Ireland'.

■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Jack Lopresti:

[\[137179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what plans the Government has to bring forward legislative proposals to address the legacy of the Troubles and protect veterans who served in the armed forces in Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government has been clear that it will bring forward legislation to address the legacy of the Troubles that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims, and ends the cycle of investigations, which is not working for anyone.

We are determined to deliver on our commitments to veterans who served in Northern Ireland, and provide a fair, balanced, and proportionate system for all those who have been affected by the events of the past.

Despite the challenging circumstances caused by the ongoing Covid-19 situation, we will continue to seek to make progress on this as quickly as possible, working with all parts of the community in Northern Ireland.

Tony Lloyd:

[\[910941\]](#)

What progress he has made on bringing forward legislative proposals on dealing with legacy issues in Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

This Government has been clear that it will bring forward legislation to address the legacy of the Troubles that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims, and ends the cycle of investigations that is not working for anyone.

While the challenges presented by the pandemic have affected progress, work on this - including engagement with key stakeholders - continues to take place, and we remain committed to moving forward as quickly as possible.

SCOTLAND

■ Business: Scotland

Andrew Griffith:

[\[137357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent assessment his Department has had made of the adequacy of the economic support available for Scottish businesses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Treasury is providing unprecedented support for jobs and businesses across the UK in the face of coronavirus, including an unprecedented £8.6bn upfront guarantee to the Scottish Government. Scotland's Budget will increase by over £2.4bn during the next financial year.

This is on top of the UK-wide schemes, such as the support for workers, self-employed people and the British Business Bank-administered business loan schemes.

Where policy responsibilities are devolved, the Scottish Government can use this very substantial additional funding to grow the economy, improve public services and support people and businesses across Scotland. I urge the Scottish Government to take swift action to make sure that the funding is made available as soon as possible.

The unprecedented package of measures we have put in place to support all parts of the country shows the clear benefits for Scotland of being part of a strong United Kingdom.

■ Climate Change Convention

Andrew Griffith:

[\[137358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the business opportunities for Scotland arising from COP26.

Mr Alister Jack:

I have frequent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the opportunities which COP26 offers for businesses in Scotland and the whole of the UK. The Government is committed to delivering an 'all of UK' COP26 in Glasgow. All parts of the UK will have important roles to play in ensuring the summit's success. We are working with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive to ensure an inclusive and ambitious summit for the whole of the UK.

The UK Government is committed to leading the way in tackling climate change working with all countries and with civil society, companies and people on the frontline of climate change, in the UK and globally, to inspire action ahead of COP26. The COP26 Business Leaders group brings together key internationally focused businesses across a broad range of sectors who are taking positive climate action. We are inviting businesses from every corner of the UK to join us in the Race to Zero. Race To Zero is a global initiative, backed by science-based targets, to commit businesses, cities, regions, investors and universities to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 at the very latest.

I am encouraged by the engagement that we have seen so far and look forward to continuing to work with businesses to maximise the opportunities which the summit brings.

TRANSPORT

■ Bus Services: Staffordshire

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[138528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to bus services in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire.

Rachel Maclean:

Local bus journeys remain central to public transport choices. The Government provides an annual £43 million directly to local authorities through the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) to support local bus services.

Last year, Stoke-on-Trent City Council received £29,618 and Staffordshire County Council £699,869 from this grant. In addition to this, an extra £30 million was provided to local authorities in financial year 2020/21 to improve current bus services, or restore lost services where needed. Stoke-on-Trent City Council received £124,233 and Staffordshire County Council £583,372.

We have provided local authorities with the tools they need to improve local bus services through the Bus Services Act 2017 and we have committed to implement England's first-ever long-term Bus Strategy.

Our Better Deal for Bus Users package will help begin to transform bus services across the country and additional investment of £5 billion announced by the Prime Minister last year, will overhaul bus and cycle links for regions outside London.

We have now delivered on innovative technological solutions, like our Bus Open Data Service which lays the foundation for app developers to provide passengers with the information they need to travel with confidence.

■ Driving Tests: Administrative Delays

Dan Jarvis: [\[138443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to reduce the backlog of driving tests due to covid-19 public health restrictions.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has several measures in place to increase the number of driving tests available, once it is safe for tests to resume.

These include offering overtime and annual leave buy back to examiners, asking all those qualified to carry out tests (warrant card holders) to do so, and conducting out of hours testing (such as on public holidays).

A recruitment campaign is underway to increase the overall number of driving examiners available for testing and the DVSA continues to assess further options for increasing testing capacity and reducing the backlog as quickly as possible. Ensuring a COVID-secure service is maintained for its staff and candidates remains a priority.

■ Railways: Infrastructure

Jim McMahon: [\[137994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the (a) environmental and (b) economic benefits to (i) passengers and (ii) taxpayers of taking a whole life asset approach to rail infrastructure including rolling stock.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In line with our published guidance on how to assess costs and benefits of government schemes and policies, DfT do take into account a whole life asset approach for estimating environmental and economic impacts including for rail infrastructure and rolling stock appraisals where appropriate. We are unaware of any recent assessment of the whole life asset approach itself, it is industry best practice.

■ Roads: Dudley North**Marco Longhi:** [\[137336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his department is taking to (a) improve road safety for pedestrians and (b) tackle pavement parking in Dudley North constituency.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department recently consulted on proposed changes to The Highway Code. These include clarifying existing rules on pedestrian priority on pavements and providing more clarity on the need for drivers and riders to give way to pedestrians crossing or waiting to cross the road. The consultation closed on 27 October 2020 with over 20,000 responses received and we are currently undertaking a full analysis of all replies.

The Department also carried out a public consultation on possible solutions to the complex pavement parking problem, which closed on 22 November 2020 with over 15,000 responses received. The Department is now carefully analysing the responses and the results will inform future policy decisions.

■ South Western Railway: Catering**Marsha De Cordova:** [\[139132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with South Western Railways on the provision of catering services following the operator's decision to terminate its contract with Elior.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

There have been no further discussions to date with South Western Railway.

■ Specialised Committee on Road Transport**Angus Brendan MacNeil:** [\[138409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Specialised Committee on Road Transport is planned to meet.

Rachel Maclean:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement establishes a standard set of committees to oversee its operation. This includes a Partnership Council, providing political strategic oversight across the relationship. The Government is currently considering carefully the process around the establishment of the Partnership Council.

Once the Partnership Council has been established, a series of specialised committees will be established including the Specialised Committee on Road Transport.

■ Train Operating Companies: Redundancy**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[139134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the (a) payment of a management fee to a train operating company and (b) payment of a permitted dividend by the operator to its parent company is still permitted by his Department if a train operating company is responsible for (i) direct or (ii) indirect job losses.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As set out in the Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs), fees are calculated based on actual performance and financial efficiency. The ERMA's require train operating companies to act efficiently. If operators perform poorly then fees can be reduced to nil, dividends not permitted and potentially, further penalties incurred.

■ Transport: Exhaust Emissions**Andrew Griffith:**[\[138542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to decarbonise the transport network.

Rachel Maclean:

We are developing a bold and ambitious Transport Decarbonisation Plan to achieve net zero emissions across all modes of transport, which we expect to publish in Spring 2021. It will set out a credible and ambitious pathway to delivering transport's contribution to carbon budgets and meet net zero by 2050.

We have already taken significant steps and 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. Between 2030 and 2035, any new cars and vans sold that emit from the tailpipe must have significant zero emission capability, for example plug in and full hybrids.

TREASURY**■ Aerospace Industry and Aviation: Coronavirus****Jack Lopresti:**[\[137180\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has for sector-specific support for the aviation and aerospace industries to offset the effect on them of national lockdowns and travel bans during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the challenging circumstances facing the aviation industry as a result of Covid-19 and firms experiencing difficulties can draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor, including schemes to raise capital and flexibilities with tax bills. The aerospace sector and its aviation customers are being supported with over £11 billion support through the

Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility, grants for research and development, and committed loan guarantees for aviation and aerospace exporters. This includes over £8bn of UK Export Finance Guarantees.

The Chancellor also announced on 17 December that the CJRS will be extended until April, with employees receiving 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. This will continue to protect jobs and businesses across the UK in light of recent developments in the path of the virus.

The Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme announced on 24 November will also provide support for eligible businesses, up to the equivalent of their business rates liabilities in the 2020/21 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £8m. This is intended to help reduce cash burn and could unlock shareholder and lender support.

■ Bank Services: Internet

Jim Shannon:

[\[137207\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to improve online banking security.

John Glen:

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) requires banks to maintain effective systems and controls to prevent the risk that they might be used for financial crime. The protection for consumers who fall victim to fraudulent transactions is set out in the Payment Services Regulations 2017. The Regulations state that a customer who claims that they did not authorise a transaction on their account must receive a refund from their bank, unless the bank has reasonable grounds to suspect that the customer is liable for the transaction (for example due to customer fraud or gross negligence).

Several regulatory and industry initiatives are currently being implemented with the aim of improving online banking security and reducing fraud.

Payment service providers, which include banks, are introducing new online security procedures in response to regulatory rules known as Strong Customer Authentication. These rules intend to ensure that the person requesting access to an account, or trying to make a payment, is securely authenticated, thereby reducing the risks of fraud. The FCA is responsible for making and enforcing these rules, and providing guidance on their implementation.

Another example of improved security in online banking has been the introduction of Confirmation of Payee, a new industry initiative that aims to reduce authorised push payment scams by checking that the account name and details entered by the payer match those of the intended payee. The payer is notified if the details do not match the name they have entered, and they can choose not to proceed with the payment. This service aims to help consumers and businesses avoid making misdirected payments to the wrong account holder, as well as providing additional protection against fraud. In August 2019, the Payment Systems Regulator issued a specific

direction which required the UK's six largest banking groups to fully implement Confirmation of Payee.

■ Child Benefit

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[138520\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of households where total earnings are over £50,000 but where each member of the household earns less than £50,000 they are not subject to the High-Income Child Benefit Charge.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested could only be made available at disproportionate cost.

■ Children: Day Care

Rosie Cooper: [\[137164\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the options available to a customer whose funds have gone missing after deposit into their tax-free childcare account.

Steve Barclay:

Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) is delivered from GOV.UK alongside other government digital services through the secure Government Gateway. Parents apply for TFC through the online Childcare Service, which HM Revenue & Customs deliver in partnership with National Savings & Investment.

If parents suspect their account is being misused they should contact the Childcare Service helpline to report their concerns. The Childcare Service will investigate the matter immediately.

Rosie Cooper: [\[137165\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many reports he has received of deposited funds not appearing in tax-free childcare accounts; whether those incidents have been resolved; and what steps he is taking to prevent such incidents.

Steve Barclay:

Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) is delivered from GOV.UK alongside other government digital services through the secure Government Gateway. Parents apply for TFC through the online Childcare Service, which HM Revenue & Customs deliver in partnership with National Savings & Investment (NS&I).

There have been two incidents of deposited funds not appearing in TFC accounts since the scheme started in April 2017. In August 2019 3,074 TFC customers were affected by a system error, of which all funds were remediated to the correct account. Since this incident, NS&I introduced a number of additional controls; including automated system scripts which alert them to any missed or unprocessed files. When alerted NS&I evoke their industry standard Incident (ITIL) process and conform to a Service Level Agreement set with HMRC, which has a range of response and

resolution times depending on the scale of the incident (such as the number of customers impacted).

More recently in December 2020 198 customers were affected by a different processing issue, which is currently being remediated.

If parents suspect their account is being misused they should contact the Childcare Service helpline to report their concerns. The Childcare Service will investigate the matter immediately.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Ruth Jones:

[138071]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the proportion of jobs supported by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) most recently published statistics about the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) on 17 December 2020. They can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-december-2020>.

The statistics report that as at 31 October, the most recent date for which figures are available, 2,399,600 employments were supported by the CJRS. This figure represents 8% of the 30,353,200 employments eligible for support.

The next release of these statistics is scheduled for publication on 28 January.

Barbara Keeley:

[138424]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to publicly funded workers who are not critical workers but cannot work from home where the worker has (a) childcare responsibilities and (b) health conditions.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention scheme (CJRS) has been available to the employers of anyone who has been unable to work, including from home, due to caring responsibilities arising from COVID-19, such as caring for children who are at home as a result of school and childcare facilities closing, or caring for a vulnerable individual in their household.

If someone is clinically extremely vulnerable, they are encouraged to talk to their employer as soon as possible to discuss and agree options. The CJRS is available to all employers and employees providing they meet the eligibility criteria, and this includes the clinically extremely vulnerable.

The Government does not expect the CJRS to be widely used by public sector organisations, as most public sector employees have continued to provide essential public services or contribute to the response to the coronavirus outbreak.

Where employers receive public funding for staff costs, and that funding is continuing, the Government expects employers to use that money to continue to pay staff in the

usual fashion; and correspondingly not to furlough them through the CJRS. This also applies to non-public sector employers who receive public funding for staff costs.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Pregnancy**

Marsha De Cordova: [\[137303\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to (a) reports of pregnant women being unlawfully sent home on statutory sick pay or unpaid leave during the covid-19 lockdown announced in March 2020 rather than being suspended on full pay or furloughed and (b) guidance published by the Department for Health and Social Care and the Health and Safety Executive on 23 December 2020 stating that women in their third trimester are at greater risk of severe illness if they catch covid-19, for what reason HMRC's guidance, Claim for wages through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, updated December 2020, does not provide guidance on pregnant women.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) guidance is clear that those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, or at the highest risk of severe illness from coronavirus and following public health guidance, are eligible for the CJRS. It is for the employer to decide whether to offer to furlough an employee.

Queries about the definition of the clinically extremely vulnerable group should be directed towards the Department for Health and Social Care in England, or the appropriate devolved authorities for the equivalent most at-risk groups in other UK nations.

While there is no obligation for employers to take up the scheme, the scheme has been open to all UK employers provided they meet the eligibility criteria.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Ruth Jones: [\[138070\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the devolved Administrations on the adequacy of the level of Government financial support provided in response to the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Steve Barclay:

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic and following discussions with the devolved administrations for additional borrowing powers, the UK Government announced the unprecedented Barnett guarantee in July 2020.

These uplifts have given the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive the certainty to ensure they can plan for coronavirus response in the months ahead. It will continue support people, businesses and individuals across the devolved administrations, and it further demonstrates our unwavering support for all parts of the Union.

The devolved administrations have also benefitted from UK-wide support programmes including through Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and business lending schemes.

■ **Duty Free Allowances: Northern Ireland**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[138401]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 30 September 2020 to Question 906670 on Duty Free Allowances: Northern Ireland, what guidance was issued, on what date that guidance was issued, and to whom that guidance was issued.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC published guidance in the fourth quarter of 2020 relating to tax arrangements under the Northern Ireland Protocol, including duty free allowances, on GOV.UK. This guidance can be found through the following links:

General guidance with respect to VAT:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accounting-for-vat-on-goods-moving-between-great-britain-and-northern-ireland-from-1-january-2021>

General guidance with respect to excise:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/moving-excise-goods-as-freight-under-the-northern-ireland-protocol-from-1-january-2021/moving-excise-goods-as-freight-under-the-northern-ireland-protocol-from-1-january-2021#excise-movements-from-great-britain-to-northern-ireland-via-the-eu>

Guidance on duty-free allowances: <https://www.gov.uk/duty-free-goods>

Public notice on UK customs information:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/948077/UK_customs_information_Northern_Ireland.pdf

■ **Lendy: Insolvency**

Seema Malhotra:

[138445]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Financial Conduct Authority on its investigation into the circumstances that led to the collapse of firms with company numbers 743416 and 622666, currently known as Lendy Ltd.

Seema Malhotra:

[138446]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to undertake an independent review of the conduct of the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to the collapse of firms with company numbers 743416 and 622666, currently known as Lendy Ltd.

John Glen:

The FCA is an independent non-governmental body responsible for regulating and supervising the financial services industry. Although the Treasury sets the legal framework for the regulation of financial services, it has strictly limited powers in

relation to the FCA. The Treasury has no general power of direction over the FCA and cannot intervene in individual cases. This matter is the responsibility of the FCA.

There are currently no plans to undertake a review of the conduct of the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to the collapse of the firms known as Lendy Ltd.

■ NHS: National Insurance Contributions

Simon Jupp:

[\[136660\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to prevent temporary NHS staff being charged employer National Insurance Contributions by umbrella recruitment companies.

Jesse Norman:

Umbrella companies, like all employers in the UK, are responsible for paying employer NICs.

Umbrella companies are paid a fee by an employment agency to supply a worker to its end client. From that fee they pay their own liabilities such as employer NICs. The remainder after those payments forms the worker's gross pay, from which the worker pays Income Tax and employee NICs. Like other employers, an umbrella company is required to account for the Income Tax and employee NICs directly to HMRC under Pay As You Earn.

In April 2020 the Government legislated to introduce a key facts page for agency workers to clarify how their terms of engagement affect their pay prospects. The key facts page must explain the deductions from pay.

Further information is on GOV.UK: www.gov.uk/government/publications/providing-a-key-information-document-for-agency-workers-guidance-for-employment-businesses.

■ Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus

Marco Longhi:

[\[137335\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect in Dudley North on confidence among high street businesses and shoppers of extending business rates relief for the hospitality, retail, and leisure sector for an additional year.

Jesse Norman:

This year the Government has provided an unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties due to the direct adverse effects of COVID-19, worth about £10 billion, and has frozen the business rates multiplier for all businesses for 2021-22.

The Government is also considering options for further COVID-19 related support through business rates reliefs. In order to ensure that any decisions best meet the evolving challenges presented by COVID-19, the Government will outline plans for 2021-22 reliefs in due course.

■ Off-payroll Working

Anneliese Dodds: [\[138496\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has received any representations on delaying the introduction of IR35 from April 2021.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[138497\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to delay the introduction of IR35 from April 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has been clear that the reform of the off-payroll working rules will be introduced on 6 April 2021. The Government remains committed to introducing this policy in order to address the unfairness of non-compliance with the existing off-payroll working rules. Organisations should continue to prepare for the implementation of the reform. Since the reform was delayed in April 2020, Parliament has passed legislation enacting the reform from April 2021.

Many businesses have already made significant preparations to ensure they are ready for the reform and HMRC are committed to supporting businesses and individuals in the run up to and beyond the reform being implemented. HMRC are providing webinars, workshops and one-to-one calls as well as publishing updated guidance and factsheets to enable businesses to prepare.

The Government regularly engages with a range of stakeholders to inform policy making. The Government continues to engage with key stakeholders and affected organisations in relation to their preparations for the forthcoming reform.

■ Pool Re

Jamie Stone: [\[138482\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue is received by the Exchequer from underwriting the insurance of Pool Re.

John Glen:

HM Treasury received £270m in 2019 and £224m in 2020 from Pool Reinsurance Company Limited. This is compensation for taxpayers for the continued provision of the guarantee.

■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy: [\[137291\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support his Department is providing in response to the covid-19 outbreak to self-employed people who do not have a business premises.

Jesse Norman:

The Government remains committed to supporting the self-employed population during the COVID-19 pandemic through a substantial package of support.

Self-employed people who do not have a business premises may be eligible for the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). The Government recently increased the funding available under this scheme to £1.6 billion across England. It is up to each local authority to determine eligibility for this scheme based on their assessment of local economic need; however, the Government encourages local authorities to support businesses which have been affected by COVID-19 restrictions but which are ineligible for the other grant schemes.

Moreover, eligible self-employed individuals 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, can claim the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant.

The third SEISS grant covers the three-month period from November 2020 until January 2021. It is a taxable grant calculated at 80 per cent of three months' average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment and capped at £7,500 in total.

In addition, the Government has made available other elements of support. 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 and self-isolation support payments.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Mortgages

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[138920\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of receipt of support from the Self Employment Income Support Scheme on recipients' ability to get a mortgage; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

Treasury ministers are in regular conversations with mortgage lenders about market conditions. Ultimately, the decision of a lender to offer products to customers is a commercial one, determined by their risk appetites, in which the government does not seek to interfere. Lenders will take into account the circumstances of individual customers, such as the security of their income (for which they may consider Self Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) payments); not having significant other debt; the borrower's credit score and the loan to value of their mortgage.

The Government is clear that lenders should treat customers fairly, especially in the current context of Covid-19 and will continue to monitor the mortgage market and engage with industry on the availability of mortgage products.

■ **Small Businesses: Coronavirus**

Barbara Keeley:

[\[138426\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support is available to owners of small businesses which are legally permitted to remain open during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown but are closed due to staff health concerns.

Kemi Badenoch:

Throughout this crisis, the government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK. To do this, the government has put in place an economic package of support which will provide businesses and individuals with certainty over the coming months, even as measures to prevent further spread of the virus change. The government has spent over £280 billion this year to provide this support.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was introduced to help employers whose operations have been affected by COVID-19 retain their employees and protect the UK economy. All businesses across the UK can access the scheme, which will run until the end of April 2021, with employees receiving 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to £2,500 per month. The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will also run until the end of April.

Local authorities will receive an additional £500 million, to a total of £1.6 billion, of discretionary funding through the Additional Restrictions Grant to allow them to support their local businesses, including businesses that are adversely impacted but not forced to close by COVID-19 restrictions.

Businesses have also received billions in loans, tax deferrals, Business Rates relief, and general and sector-specific grants. Individuals and families have benefited from increased welfare payments, enhanced Statutory Sick Pay, a stay on repossession proceedings and mortgage holidays.

■ **Stamp Duty Land Tax: Coronavirus**

Marco Longhi:

[\[137334\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend stamp duty holiday period beyond 31 March 2021 to protect employment in the property industry.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary SDLT relief was designed to create 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 it.

■ Students: Private Rented Housing**Clive Lewis:**[\[137247\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to provide financial assistance to students in private rented accommodation who are unable to pay their rent as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Steve Barclay:

This has been a very difficult time for students and we encourage universities and private landlords to review their accommodation policies to ensure they are fair, clear and have the interests of students at heart.

We recognise that in these exceptional circumstances some students may face financial hardship. The Department for Education has worked with the Office for Students to clarify that providers are able to use existing funds, worth around £256 million for academic year 2020/21, towards hardship support. The Government has also made available a further £20m to support those that need it most, particularly disadvantaged students. The funding has been distributed to approved fee cap providers, who have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to students in a way that will best prioritise those in greatest need.

Clive Lewis:[\[137248\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on providing a rebate to students renting private rented accommodation but not living in that accommodation as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Steve Barclay:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer speaks regularly to the Secretary of State for Education on matters of shared interest.

Private accommodation providers are autonomous and are responsible for setting their own rent agreements. Whether a student is entitled to a refund or to an early release from their contract will depend on the specific contractual arrangements between them and their provider.

We recognise that in these exceptional circumstances some students may face financial hardship. Higher Education providers are able to use existing funds, worth around £256 million for academic year 2020/21, towards hardship support. The Government has also made available a further £20m to support those that need it most, particularly disadvantaged students.

■ Tax Avoidance**Daisy Cooper:**[\[138085\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the fairness of differential settlement terms being offered by HMRC to people affected by the loan charge with (a) open offers and (b) closed years.

Jesse Norman:

In 2017, HMRC offered settlement terms to taxpayers who used disguised remuneration (DR) tax avoidance schemes and who may have been liable to pay the Loan Charge unless they settled with HMRC. Taxpayers who provided the necessary information by 5 April 2019 and worked with HMRC to conclude settlement by 30 September 2020 were able to settle under these 2017 terms, enabling them to avoid the Loan Charge. HMRC continued settlement discussions beyond 30 September 2020 with a minority of taxpayers who could not meet this deadline for reasons beyond their control, for example, recent hospitalisation.

HMRC published further settlement terms in August 2020 for those taxpayers who did not settle under the 2017 terms. These terms were updated in November 2020 to include all outstanding DR liabilities, including the Loan Charge. Both sets of terms allow taxpayers to make voluntary payments of tax for unprotected years (sometimes called 'closed years'), which enable them to benefit from double taxation relief against any future income tax charges on the same underlying income.

HMRC settle cases in accordance with their Litigation and Settlement Strategy (LSS), which requires that HMRC only settle for an amount that is consistent with the law. The LSS is available on GOV.UK. HMRC's settlement terms help to maintain a consistent approach to settling tax disputes with taxpayers.

Dr Julian Lewis:[\[138366\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people have been actively pursued for payment of the Loan Charge (a) in each lockdown period and (b) overall since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak; what estimate he has made of the numbers of (i) bankruptcies and (ii) suicides associated with Loan Charge payment demands; what steps HMRC has taken against companies which advised their clients to use disguised remuneration schemes; and what data has been collected on contractors who worked for HMRC while utilising disguised remuneration schemes.

Jesse Norman:

Taxpayers had until 30 September 2020 to file and pay the Loan Charge or agree a Time to Pay arrangement. Since then, HMRC have contacted taxpayers with a Loan Charge liability to establish what, if any, support they need to pay the amount due. HMRC's helpline and the dedicated Loan Charge helpline are available to support taxpayers in managing their debt and agreeing arrangements to pay their liability, including referral for independent debt advice and explaining guaranteed Time to Pay criteria.

HMRC do not want to make anyone bankrupt, and insolvency is only ever considered as a last resort. HMRC will work with individuals to reach sustainable and manageable payment plans wherever possible. In line with current practice, HMRC will pause recovery action where a taxpayer has no ability to pay, until there is a significant change of circumstances. HMRC are not always the only creditor and some individuals may choose to enter insolvency themselves based on their overall

financial position. HMRC have not made an estimate of the number of people who may become bankrupt and have a Loan Charge liability.

HMRC records show that in six cases taxpayers have very sadly taken their lives and have also been identified as having used a disguised remuneration scheme. On each occasion HMRC referred the case to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), and HMRC undertook an internal investigation. Four investigations have been concluded and in all no staff misconduct was identified which might warrant disciplinary action.

In March 2020, HMRC published on GOV.UK their strategy for tackling promoters of tax avoidance schemes, including those who promote disguised remuneration schemes. The strategy sets out HMRC's work to date and outlines how HMRC will continue to take robust action against promoters of tax avoidance.

HMRC collect certain details of all the contractors they engage as contingent labour, including names, National Insurance numbers and engagement periods. As with other taxpayers, HMRC also hold information returned through PAYE. HMRC maintain a compliance database with information on both individuals and employers who are associated with known avoidance schemes. HMRC do not engage in, or enter into, disguised remuneration schemes. It is possible for a contractor providing services to HMRC to use a disguised remuneration scheme without HMRC's knowledge or participation.

■ Tax Avoidance: West Midlands

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[136587\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people in (a) Edgbaston, (b) Birmingham and (c) the West Midlands are (i) subject to the Loan Charge or (ii) have settled to avoid it.

Jesse Norman:

Information on the number of individuals subject to the Loan Charge or who have settled their disguised remuneration use is not held at constituency, borough or regional level.

However, in December 2020, HMRC published a report to Parliament on the implementation of recommendations from the Loan Charge Review. The report contains information at UK level and is available on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-loan-charge-review-hmrc-report-on-implementation/independent-loan-charge-review-hmrc-report-on-implementation>.

■ UK Trade with EU: France

Dr Julian Lewis: [\[138365\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of current practice by French customs authorities requiring (a) UK Export Declaration documentation to be terminated on arrival of UK goods at their

point of entry into France and (b) fresh Transit documentation to be initiated at that point of entry in order for UK goods to proceed through France to other destinations within the EU; for what reason goods imported from the EU to the UK require only EU Export Declaration documentation to proceed through the UK; how many EU countries apply this asymmetric arrangement to their trade with the UK; what estimate he has made of the competitive disadvantage to UK exporters of having to pay additional charges both to (i) obtain and (ii) terminate the extra documentation required for transiting through France to another EU destination; and for what reason that additional paperwork is required for the high proportion of UK exports to EU countries which are zero-tariff rated.

Jesse Norman:

Customs formalities apply on both sides of the UK-EU border. This involves an export declaration in the country of dispatch and an import declaration in the country of destination. UK import controls are similar to those of the EU. However, recognising the impact of COVID-19 on businesses' ability to prepare and following the announcement in February 2020 that the Government will implement full border controls on imports coming into GB from the EU, the UK Government has taken the decision to introduce new border controls in stages up until 1 July 2021. Until 30 June 2021 traders (or their intermediaries) can import non-controlled goods from the EU by making a declaration in their own records at the point the goods enter GB followed by a delayed supplementary declaration.

The Government also successfully negotiated the UK's accession to the Convention on Common Transit. This procedure can facilitate border crossings and defer payment of import duties while the goods travel under it throughout the Common Transit Area. Goods moving under a transit declaration do not need to undertake import and export procedures at every border. Instead the goods are exported once in the country of dispatch before being declared into transit. The goods may then cross over multiple customs territories before arriving at their final destination. The goods then will only need to be imported once they reach their final destination. The transit procedure is not mandatory but may be particularly helpful if the goods are for an EU country other than the one in control of the border where they arrive.

■ **UK Trade with EU: Non-tariff Barriers**

Ruth Jones:

[\[138072\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the economic effect of non-tariff barriers on levels of trade between the UK and the EU.

John Glen:

The Government has not made an assessment of the economic effect of non-tariff barriers because as we have consistently said it would be impossible for us to calculate an exact model, number or scenario to capture the complexity of the varying impacts felt across different parts of the economy as a result of the Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement.

Whilst leaving the EU's customs union and single market on the 1st January has changed the way we trade with the EU, businesses overall have been adjusting well and continue to trade effectively. This is in no small part to the extensive preparations we have made over the last year and the continuing dialogue we are in with businesses about our new trading relationship with the EU.

Furthermore, the agreement we have successfully negotiated, is one which not only guarantees zero quotas and tariffs but also contains wide-ranging provisions on Technical Barriers to Trade which facilitates trade by avoiding unnecessary regulatory barriers. Together these mean that the UK trading relationship with the EU will remain strong well into the future.

■ VAT: Coronavirus

Ruth Jones: [\[138068\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to instruct HMRC to cancel VAT repayments owed by businesses under the VAT deferral scheme.

Jesse Norman:

There are no plans to cancel VAT payments deferred as a result of COVID-19. As part of the Winter Economy Plan, the Government announced further support for those with deferred VAT, allowing them to spread what they owe over smaller monthly payments. More information is available at www.gov.uk/hmrc/vat-deferral.

Ruth Jones: [\[138076\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions has he had with HMRC on not categorising VAT repayments made by businesses under the VAT deferral scheme as a debt.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC have ringfenced deferred VAT in order to allow VAT repayments to continue to be made to businesses with outstanding VAT as part of the VAT Deferral Scheme.

■ Welsh Government

Ruth Jones: [\[138073\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with Ministers in the Welsh Government.

Steve Barclay:

As Chief Secretary to the Treasury, I am the Minister responsible for leading the Treasury's interest in devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

I regularly engage with my counterpart in the Welsh Government on a wide range of issues as part of the ongoing collaboration between our governments, most recently last month.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Covid Winter Grant Scheme

Daniel Zeichner:

[136543]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much of the £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme available to local authorities in England has been allocated to (a) people in need directly in cash grants and vouchers and (b) emergency food aid charities.

Will Quince:

The Covid Winter Grant Scheme gives local authorities the flexibility to decide how best to identify and support those most in need in their local area, as set out in the guidance available which was published on gov.uk on 24 November.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-winter-grant-scheme>

■ Employment and Support Allowance

Ian Murray:

[138432]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to enable claimants who are almost at the 365 day limit for Employment and Support Allowance to continue to receive benefit.

Ian Murray:

[138433]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what guidance his Department has provided to benefit assessment companies to ensure they are proactively seeking further medical evidence from claimants who are almost at the 365 day limit for Employment and Support Allowance and have not yet been assessed.

Ian Murray:

[138435]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will extend the 365 day limit for those claiming Employment and Support Allowance who have not had a face-to-face assessment.

Justin Tomlinson:

There are no plans to extend the time limit for people claiming contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) who reach their 365-day limit and have not had a Work Capability Assessment (WCA).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic face-to-face assessments for sickness and disability benefits remain suspended. We are continuing to assess as many people as we are able to on paper evidence or via telephone assessments. Claimants are encouraged to provide all the evidence they have that is relevant to their case at the outset of their claim, including evidence supplied by their GP or other professionals, such as support workers, carers and community mental health nurses. The healthcare professionals who carry out assessments are expected to seek further evidence

where it would help them provide advice to a DWP decision maker on a person's claim.

Furthermore, we now have a ring-fenced operational team in place to identify contributory ESA claims that we can progress in the absence of face-to-face assessments – for instance, those where further evidence might exist on other DWP benefit systems. If claimants have further evidence they think might help progress their claim, they should contact the Department.

Where an individual's contributory ESA ends, their income is reduced because they cannot work due to disability or a health condition and they require further financial support, they may be able to claim Universal Credit, depending on their personal circumstances.

Ian Murray:

[138434]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have (a) not been assessed for Employment and Support Allowance and are close to reaching the 365 day limit, (b) been placed in the Limited Capability for Work group at the end of 365 days and (c) been placed in the Support group in each of the last two years.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

Quarterly Employment and Support Allowance caseload statistics to May 2020, by duration and phase of claim are published here:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance for users is available at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

Employment and Support Allowance Work Capability Assessments statistics by month of claim start (to March 2020) for initial assessment outcomes including those still in progress, and assessment outcome by month of decision to June 2020, are published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/esa-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessments-including-mandatory-reconsiderations-and-appeals-january-2021>

■ Employment Services: Young People

Seema Malhotra:

[137934]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many youth hubs have been opened to date; and in which (a) regions and (b) nations of the UK those youth hubs are based.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 19 January 2021]: Youth Hubs are not currently operating a physical face to face service due to national lockdown restrictions, however 15 were

open in the months ahead of this. Youth Hub locations are external partner owned premises who have the overall autonomy in the decisions for physical opening and offering of face to face appointments.

Support is currently being provided digitally through Work Coaches linked to existing and planned hubs across the UK, to make sure that young people who are unemployed continue to receive help whilst restrictions are in place.

When fully implemented, hubs will be located in every Jobcentre Plus district across England, Wales and Scotland.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[137183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many young people have (a) applied for and (b) started a Kickstart scheme placement in (i) Nottingham, (ii) East Midlands and (iii) the UK.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: Eligible young people are referred to the Department for Work and Pensions' Kickstart Scheme by their Work Coach. The Work Coach will work with the young person to find Kickstart jobs that might be a good fit, and they will be able apply for the position.

As of 15/01/21, there has been 6368 applications with potential of hundreds of thousands of roles and 1868 new starts in the UK. We are not yet able to break starts data down below regional level.

■ Universal Credit

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[136533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claimants were subject to a deduction; and what the average sum deducted was in (a) South Shields and (b) the UK, in the most recent month for which data is available.

Will Quince:

The Department's deductions policy strikes a fair balance between a claimant's need to meet their financial obligations and their ability to ensure they can meet their day-to-day needs. It maintains our policy to enforce social obligations such as the payment of court fines, ensure Government debt is recovered and vitally to safeguard claimants from the potential impacts of not repaying priority debts, such as homelessness or loss of utilities. Since October 2019, Universal Credit deductions are a maximum of 30% of a claimant's standard allowance down from 40% previously. The Budget 2020 also set out that the maximum level will be further reduced, so that standard deductions will not exceed 25% of a claimant's Standard Allowance from October 2021.

For Universal Credit payments due during August 2020:

- a) 4,700 of 8,600 claims in the South Shields parliamentary constituency had a deduction, with £73 on average being deducted from these claims.
- b) 1,847,000 of 4,536,000 claims of all GB claims had a deduction, with £70 on average being deducted from these claims.

Notes:

1. The number of claims per constituency are rounded to the nearest 100, total claims at GB level rounded to the nearest 1,000.
2. Deductions include advance repayments, third party deductions and all other deductions, but exclude sanctions and fraud penalties which are reductions of benefit rather than deductions.
3. Numbers are affected by the impact of the temporary suspension of some deduction types due to Covid-19. During April 2020, government deductions were temporarily suspended and only began to be reinstated from July.
4. Figures are provisional and are subject to retrospective change as later data becomes available.

■ Universal Credit: ICT**Neil Gray:**[\[134450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people submitted a Subject Access Request to obtain additional personal information held on universal credit IT systems in January 2020.

Will Quince:

There were 2153 Subject Access Requests received by DWP during January 2020; and those generated 979 contribution requests. We cannot immediately identify which of those 979 requests included Universal Credit records, as to gather this information would require manual intervention on each of the 979 cases. This could only be provided at disproportionate costs.

■ Universal Credit: Young People**Gavin Robinson:**[\[137944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing the universal credit standard allowance for claimants aged under 25 who live independently to align with the amount received by claimants aged over 25.

Will Quince:

The £20 per week uplift to everyone on 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.

The lower rates for younger claimants under 25 years reflects the fact that they are more likely to live in someone else's household and have lower living costs and lower earnings expectations. It also reinforces the stronger work incentives that Universal Credit creates for this age group which have been aided by the Department's £2bn Kickstart scheme which is already creating thousands of high-quality jobs for young people.

For claimants who live independently, Universal Credit already includes separate elements to provide support for housing costs, children and childcare costs and support for disabled people and carers.

Care leavers up to the age of 22 are exempt from the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Shared Accommodation Rate and are entitled to the higher, one bed LHA rate.

For those who require additional support Discretionary Housing Payments are available. Since 2011 we have provided over £1 billion in DHPs to local authorities to support households with their housing costs.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

EDUCATION

■ Education Update

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):

[\[HCWS723\]](#)

On 15th December 2020 we announced that we would be deploying the latest rapid-result coronavirus tests using Lateral Flow Devices to secondary schools and colleges from 4 January to enable weekly screening of staff and daily contact testing of both staff and students who are a close contact of a positive case. This will help us to find those who have the virus but are not displaying symptoms and isolate them quickly.

The asymptomatic testing programme does not replace current testing policy for those with symptoms. Anyone with symptoms, whether they are involved in the rapid asymptomatic testing programme or not, will still be expected to obtain a PCR test and follow NHS Test and Trace Guidance, self-isolating until they have received their results.

This testing programme, alongside other protective measures such as social distancing and handwashing, can support school leaders to maintain the continuity of education through the pandemic.

We can confirm that, as planned, the rapid asymptomatic testing programme in schools and colleges is being expanded to twice-weekly testing of primary school staff. Primary schools, including attached early years settings, should expect to receive initial deliveries of home testing kits to offer regular testing to all staff from the week commencing 18 January. Deliveries to maintained nurseries will be slightly later – dates to be confirmed.

Primary school staff will be asked to take tests at home rather than take them on-site following the recent approval of home-test kits from the MHRA (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency).

Primary school staff will be supplied with Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kits, which enable self-swabbing. They will be advised to test in the morning before coming into school twice a week (3-4 days apart). The LFDs supplied do not require laboratory processing and can provide a quick result in up to 30 minutes. Staff will then upload the outcome of their test (positive, negative or void) on the gov.uk website.

Taking part in the testing is not mandatory for staff and they will not be expected to provide proof of having taken a test, to enter the school. However, testing is strongly encouraged, and we expect all primary schools to offer tests to staff.

Those who test positive will need to self-isolate in line with the [stay-at-home guidance](#).

As with all policy, this will be kept under review in light of scientific evidence, and the government will provide further advice if necessary.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Covid-19 Update**

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock): [\[HCWS724\]](#)

On 5 January 2020, the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020 (All Tier Regulations) were amended. These amendments instructed people across England to stay at home and only to leave where they have a legally permitted reasonable excuse, as well as requiring the closure of many businesses and venues.

Although we are getting the virus under control, the numbers of Covid-19 cases, hospital and ICU admissions, and deaths remain extremely high nationally. As a result, our hospitals are now under more pressure from Covid than at any time since the start of the pandemic.

The weekly case rate in England is 520 per 100,000 for all ages and 414 per 100,000 in people aged 60 and over. There are 127 local authorities with case rates greater than 500 per 100,000. Overall positivity for England is 14.4%, with rates remaining high across all regions and continuing to increase in the North East, West Midlands and South West. The highest positivity is in London (21.7%) and lowest in the South West (9.5%).

These figures are significantly higher in comparison to early December and there still remains considerable pressure on NHS systems nationwide as hospitalisations continue to increase. General and acute bed occupancy for COVID-19 across England has risen by 1,786 to 31,459 from 29,673 last week. Mechanical ventilation bed occupancy for COVID-19 across England has similarly risen to 3,570 from 2,310 in the previous week. Deaths within 28 days of a positive test remain high at 887 on January 13th, the last day of complete reporting.

In line with our commitments, I have kept the measures in place for the national lockdown under ongoing review. On 19 January I completed a review of both the geographical allocations and the restrictions as required by the regulations and have determined that the measures remain necessary and proportionate for all areas in England. Whilst there are early indications that new infections may have started to decline in those areas which have been under stricter measures for the longest, scientific advice and the latest epidemiological data is clear that lifting restrictions now would be too early. The restrictions are kept under continual review and will be lifted as soon as it is safe to do so.

On 18 January the Government made some minor technical amendments to the All Tier Regulations to clarify policy and ensure consistency. The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) (Amendment) 2021 were laid before Parliament on 19 January and will come into force on 20 January.

HOME OFFICE**■ Tackling Drug Misuse and Project ADDER****The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):**[\[HCWS725\]](#)

My right hon Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock) and I have today announced the investment of £148m to dismantle criminal gangs, reduce the demand for illegal drugs and help those in treatment and recovery, to make communities safer.

This Government is determined to take concerted action to address drug misuse, given its associated harms and that it is a significant driver of crime. This funding, which includes the largest increase in drug treatment funding for 15 years, will see more illegal drugs taken off the street and communities made safer, delivering on our pledge to 'Build Back Safer' from the pandemic.

This £148m package comprises of £40 million for financial years 21/22 to tackle drug supply and take down county lines gangs and £80 million for financial years 21/22 for drug treatment services across the country. Additionally, £28m over three years will be directed towards Project ADDER (Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement and Recovery), an innovative and targeted project to reduce drug-related offending, drug deaths and prevalence of drug use.

Funding will be directed to key local areas, to help drive down the prevalence of drug misuse and drug-related deaths in the community. Project ADDER will trial a new system-wide approach to drug misuse, which combines a targeted police approach with enhanced treatment and recovery services. It brings together the police, local councils and health services, to reduce drug-related offending, drug deaths and drug use and will run for three financial years in five areas, including Blackpool, Hastings, Middlesbrough, Norwich and Swansea Bay. These areas will benefit from the £28m funding which will allow local police to ramp up activity to target local gang leaders driving the drugs trade and enable enhanced treatment and recovery services to help those people affected by drug use.

£40m of the funding will be used to disrupt drug supply and 'roll up' county lines. This will stop communities being blighted by drug-related crime. This funding, which doubles our investment from last year, will allow us to continue and enhance our response to county lines. That response is already delivering real results: since November 2019 more than 3,400 people have been arrested, more than 550 lines have been closed, and more than 770 vulnerable people have been safeguarded as a result of this work. The new funding will also allow us to take wider action against the highest harm criminals involved in trafficking drugs to the UK, including through enhanced work with international partners.

And an extra £80m will also be invested in drug treatment services across England to give more support to people struggling with drug addiction, which we know can fuel crime. This funding will increase the number of treatment places available, including to divert offenders into tough and effective community sentences, and also to make sure that prisoners get into treatment on release. By providing treatment and saving lives,

former offenders will also have the chance and support to break the cycle of crime and addiction.

Together the funding will help to drive down crime and violence in communities affected by the scourge of illegal drugs as we build back safer from the pandemic.