



Daily Report

Tuesday, 26 January 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 26 January 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 26 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

■ Arts: Visas

Catherine West:

[\[141566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, of he will publish all correspondence between his Department and their European counterparts on work visas for creative workers between 1 June 2020 and 24 December 2020.

Paul Scully:

This Government recognises the importance of the UK's thriving cultural industries, and that is why it pushed for ambitious arrangements to make it easier for performers and artists to perform across Europe as part of the negotiations on our future relationship with the EU.

This Government proposed to the EU that musicians, and their technical staff, be added to the list of permitted activities for short-term business visitors in the entry and temporary stay chapter of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. This would have allowed musicians and their staff to travel and perform in the EU more easily, without needing work-permits.

The UK's legal texts reflected this position, as the EU has now acknowledged. These texts are confidential negotiating documents and it is not appropriate for them to be published.

Catherine West:

[\[141567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish all correspondence between his Department and the (a) Cabinet Office, (b) Home Office and (c) Department for Culture Media and Sport on work visas for creative workers in the last six months.

Paul Scully:

This Government recognises the importance of the UK's thriving cultural industries, and that is why it pushed for ambitious arrangements to make it easier for performers and artists to perform across Europe as part of the negotiations on our future relationship with the EU.

This Government proposed to the EU that musicians, and their technical staff, be added to the list of permitted activities for short-term business visitors in the entry and temporary stay chapter of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. This would have allowed musicians and their staff to travel and perform in the EU more easily, without needing work-permits.

As with legal text shared in confidence with trading partners, publishing correspondence between departments related to the development of legal text for

trade agreements would not be appropriate as this correspondence would have been provided in confidence.

■ Conditions of Employment

Gavin Newlands: [\[139043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Prime Minister's answer to oral Question 910650 of 13 January 2021, how many meetings have taken place between Ministers in his Department and ACAS on fire and rehire employment practices.

Paul Scully:

BEIS Ministers meet with Acas monthly. These meetings cover a variety of employment matters.

Acas is holding independent and impartial discussions with a range of stakeholders on the use of fire and rehire practices to change contractual terms and conditions.

BEIS officials have met regularly with Acas to discuss insights from this work and the circumstances when fire and hire practices are used.

Claire Hanna: [\[141627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether future rulings on workers' rights by the Court of Justice of the European Union will be applied to Northern Ireland workers under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Paul Scully:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement provisions concerning employment standards do not require new judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union to be implemented in Northern Ireland or any other nation of the U.K.

■ Copyright

Daniel Zeichner: [\[139025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the end of the EU's orphan works exception on academic institutions; and whether his Department is making an assessment of ways in which UK regulations can be updated to enable research through an orphan works exception.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government engaged with stakeholders and published guidance in January 2020 on the removal of the exception for affected institutions during the transition period. The UK's orphan works licensing scheme continues to be available, as do exceptions to copyright for purposes including research and private study. The Government presently has no plans to update these.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Stephen Doughty:

[\[141475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to secure UK covid-19 vaccine manufacturing capacity and protect those manufacturing establishments from flood, fire, malfunction and other security threats.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government takes security extremely seriously and is ensuring all necessary steps are taken.

Mr William Wragg:

[\[141506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of the ministerial work of the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Business and Industry) comprises overseeing the (a) Vaccine taskforce and (b) Covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

I am fully committed to ensuring that the entire adult UK population has been offered a vaccine by Autumn 2021. We are working hard to meet the initial target of offering a first dose to all those in priority cohorts 1 to 4, as advised by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, by 15th February.

Ben Lake:

[\[141584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many (a) Pfizer/BioNTech and (b) Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines have been procured by the UK Government; how many of each vaccine have reached the UK to date; and if he will publish the number of doses of each vaccine which have been distributed to (a) England, (b) Wales, (c) Scotland and (d) Northern Ireland to date.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has procured 40 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech and 100 million doses of the AstraZeneca/University of Oxford vaccines.

The UK was the first country in the world to start a vaccination programme using these vaccines. Due to our swift and decisive action there has been a regular and steady supply of vaccine doses arriving into the UK since early December 2020.

As of 20 January 2021, almost five million people across the UK have been vaccinated with the first dose of the vaccine. We continue to work to meet our target of vaccinating all four priority groups, as advised by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, by the middle of February.

Vaccines are a precious resource in very high demand across the world; therefore, for security reasons it is not possible to provide detail about the size of our supplies and exact detail about deliveries.

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes:

[\[141543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) non-essential workers being asked to attend offices by employers, and (b) essential workers who can work remotely being asked to attend offices by employers; and what discussions he has had with trade unions on workers required to work in offices.

Paul Scully:

In the most recent data from the ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, covering the period 13-17 January, 45% of adults stated that they had worked from home because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in the last seven days. This figure is up from 43% the week previously, and up from 31% the week before that.

It is important that people stay at home wherever possible to minimise the risk of transmission and Government will continue to reinforce this message when engaging with businesses and representative organisations across a range of different sectors.

The Government has developed Safer Working Guidance alongside employers and trade unions, and employers are encouraged to discuss their Covid risk assessment and mitigation measures with trade unions.

■ Energy: Conservation

Stuart Anderson:

[\[139139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to put in place a long-term funding strategy for energy efficiency beyond the Green Homes Grant.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Ten-Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution committed to the extension of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) by a further 4 years from 2022 to 2026. The successor ECO scheme from 2022 will require larger energy suppliers to improve the energy efficiency of homes, focusing on those less able to pay across Great Britain.

The 2019 Conservative manifesto committed to a £3.8billion Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF). A £50 million SHDF Demonstrator was launched in 2020 to test innovative approaches to retrofitting social housing at scale and upgrading the energy performance of poorer-performing homes. A further £60 million has been allocated to continue the development of the SHDF in the next year.

■ Fuel Poverty

Helen Hayes:

[\[141542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) trends in the levels of fuel poverty and (b) potential effect of the third covid-19 lockdown on energy bills.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The trends in levels of fuel poverty from 2003-2018 are published on GOV.UK in these tables:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fuel-poverty-trends-2020>.

There is insufficient information available to assess the impact of this for the current lockdown in England. Household energy bills depend on a variety of factors including tariff prices; weather conditions; as well as time spent at home.

Green Homes Grant Scheme**Sir Christopher Chope:****[141391]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much money is remaining in the Green Home Grant Fund; and how many voucher requests to that fund are outstanding.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme launched on 30 September with initial funding of £1.5 billion. As of 22 January, 17,235 vouchers have been issued, corresponding to a total voucher value of £71.3 million. Funding will only be paid out once scheduled works are completed and vouchers redeemed.

Sir Christopher Chope:**[141392]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much money was in the Green Home Grant Fund at its launch; how many vouchers have been issued; and what the average value is of each voucher issued.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme launched on 30 September with initial funding of £1.5 billion. As of 22 January, 17,235 vouchers have been issued, with an average value of £4,138.

Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus**Dan Jarvis:****[141456]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions his Department has had with business leaders in the hospitality sector on developing a plan to re-open businesses that use the covid-19 personal protective equipment and safety measures businesses invested in during the tiered public health restrictions.

Paul Scully:

Over the course of the pandemic the government has worked closely with the hospitality sector to understand the impact of COVID-19 on their businesses and has responded with a substantial package of business support. We keep all restrictions under constant review.

■ Insolvency

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[138932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many businesses were declared insolvent in each of the last twelve months for which figures are available.

Paul Scully:

The Insolvency Service publishes insolvency statistics each month on GOV.UK:

Registered Company insolvencies in the UK

1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

	ENGLAND AND WALES	SCOTLAND	NORTHERN IRELAND
Jan 20	1,514	72	22
Feb 20	1,348	85	33
Mar 20	1,234	76	30
Apr 20	1,201	45	3
May 20	946	34	5
Jun 20	740	46	9
Jul 20	966	52	10
Aug 20	789	43	4
Sep 20	927	43	11
Oct 20	862	44	8
Nov 20	891	46	8
Dec 20	1228	57	9

The statistics for individual months have not been adjusted to account for seasonality in the data. The Insolvency Service separately publishes quarterly statistics that present seasonally-adjusted data and rates of insolvency per 10,000 active companies that allow for a like-for-like comparison over time. These statistics can also be found on GOV.UK.

■ Local Restrictions Support Grant: Wholesale Trade

Alexander Stafford:

[\[139180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of issuing guidance to local authorities on the eligibility of wholesale distributors for Local Restriction Support Grants.

Paul Scully:

Guidance to local authorities on the January Support Package for business was issued on 5th January. This guidance makes clear that only business premises that have been required to close due to Covid-19 restrictions will be eligible for Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) where they meet the criteria set out in the guidance.

I recognise that there are some groups of businesses that are not required by law to close, but which are severely impacted by Covid-19 restrictions. That is why the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced that a further £500m in discretionary grant funding via the Additional Restrictions Grant is being made available to local authorities, on top of £1.1bn already allocated in November, which will allow grant support to be provided to severely affected businesses in a way that suits local economies. It is for local authorities to determine the best use of the Additional Restrictions Grant in their area.

Alexander Stafford:[\[139181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the eligibility of wholesale distributors for Local Restriction Support Grants.

Paul Scully:

The scope of the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) has always been on those businesses required to close by law.

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced that a further £500m in discretionary grant funding via the Additional Restrictions Grant is being made available to local authorities, on top of £1.1bn already allocated in November, which allows local authorities to provide discretionary support to businesses not required to close but which are severely affected by the restrictions, including many wholesale distributors. It is for local authorities to determine the best use of the Additional Restrictions Grant in their area.

Alexander Stafford:[\[139182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Local Government Association on the eligibility of wholesale distributors for Local Restriction Support Grants.

Paul Scully:

There has been close engagement with the local government sector, including the Local Government Association, throughout the design and implementation of grant support for businesses during the local and national restrictions. Local Authorities are responsible for managing grants schemes locally and determining eligibility, including for discretionary grants for businesses that are severely impacted but not eligible for grants for closed businesses.

■ Shops: Confectionery

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[141464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reasons specialist confectionary shops that sell (a) fudge, (b) sweets or (c) chocolate are classified as essential retailers during the covid-19 lockdown.

Paul Scully:

The Government has ordered certain businesses and venues to close and has set out guidance on which organisations this requirement covers and what the exceptions are.

All food retailers, including food markets, supermarkets, convenience stores and corner shops are permitted to remain open.

■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

Nadia Whittome:

[\[140332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure wider access to Government support for small businesses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Government introduced an unprecedented and comprehensive package of business support measures to help as many individuals and businesses as possible during this difficult period. This support package included measures such as the small business grants, the coronavirus loan guarantee schemes, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), the deferral of VAT and income tax payments, and more. These measures were designed to be accessible to businesses in most sectors and across the UK.

Further measures were also announced by the Chancellor that build on the significant support already available as well as set out how current support will evolve and adapt. This includes the extension of the CJRS until the end of April 2021, the extension of the coronavirus loan guarantee schemes until 31 March 2021, and the introduction of Pay As You Grow measures, meaning businesses now have the option to repay their Bounce Back Loans over a period of up to ten years. Businesses who also deferred VAT due from 20 March to 30 June 2020 will now have the option to opt-in to a scheme to allow them to pay in smaller instalments up to the end of March 2022, interest free.

Business premises that are required by law to close during the current period of national restrictions which began on 5 January 2021 can also access grants of up to £4,500 per 6 weeks of closure under the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed). In addition, each closed business will be eligible for a one-off payment of up to £9,000 via the Closed Business Lockdown Payment. Local authorities have also been allocated a further £500 million in discretionary funding via the Additional Restrictions Grant to support businesses that are significantly impacted by the

restrictions even though not required to close. This is in addition to £1.1 billion already allocated in November 2020. Local authorities have discretion to use this funding to support businesses in the way they see fit.

Further initiatives include the BEIS-led Small Business Leadership Programme and Peer-to-Peer networks, to help businesses build resilience and grow. In addition, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced £20 million in July 2020 to help small and medium-sized businesses acquire new technology and seek advice on digital adoption in order to continue or diversify their business activities in light of the pandemic. This is provided through grants of between £1000 and £5000 and is fully funded by the Government with no obligation for businesses themselves to contribute financially.

Additionally, businesses are able to access tailored advice through our Freephone Business Support Helpline, online via the Business Support website or through their local Growth Hubs in England. The Government will also continue to work closely with local authorities, businesses, business representative organisations, and the financial services sector to monitor the implementation of current support.

■ Vaccination: Manufacturing Industries

Stephen Doughty:

[\[141474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answers of 19 January 2021 to Questions 137942 and 137941, if he will provide a breakdown of the £300 million invested in securing and scaling up UK manufacturing capacity by (a) type of capacity, (b) geographical location and (c) the date that investment was delivered.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government invested over £300 million in 2020 to secure and scale-up the UK's manufacturing capabilities to respond to this pandemic, including:

- £127 million towards the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult Braintree in Essex;
- £93 million to accelerate the completion and expanded role of the Vaccine Manufacturing Innovation Centre in Oxfordshire;
- £4.7 million for skills training through the Advanced Therapies Skills Training Network, which will be delivered through both virtual and physical centres;
- £8.75 million for the set-up of the rapid deployment facility at Oxford Biomedica in Oxfordshire; and
- £65.5 million for the manufacture of the University of Oxford / AstraZeneca vaccine.

In addition to the above, we have also funded the fill and finish of vaccines through a contract with Wockhardt in Wrexham, North Wales, as well as the expansion of the Valneva factory in Livingston, Scotland. However, we are not able to give further details on these two developments owing to commercial confidentiality.

DEFENCE■ **Armed Forces Covenant Reference Group**

Stephen Morgan: [\[141600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many times the Armed Forces Covenant Reference Group met in (a) 2019 and (b) 2020.

Johnny Mercer:

The Armed Forces Covenant Reference Group met twice in 2019 and twice in 2020.

■ **Armed Forces: Career Development**

Fabian Hamilton: [\[138879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to ensure that his Department's review into promotion boards is published.

Johnny Mercer:

As part of the Ministry of Defence's ongoing commitment to maximising the full potential of all our personnel, the Chiefs of Staff announced last year an ambitious programme of policy and process reviews. In consultation with the single Services and on reviewing work already in progress, it was agreed that this review would focus on the processes and procedures that lead up to a Promotion Board rather than the Boards themselves. There is no intention to publish this review outside of the Department, rather, it will be used internally to further inform policy development to deliver on departmental ambitions.

■ **Armed Forces: Disinfectants**

John Healey: [\[132760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the armed forces units involved in the development of the Virusend disinfectant spray.

John Healey: [\[132761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much it cost to develop the Virusend disinfectant spray; and what the per bottle cost is of that spray.

Mr Ben Wallace:

[Holding answer 15 January 2021]: A range of personnel across Defence were involved in the trials and development of Virusend, along with Industry, other Government Departments, Academia and Public Bodies. It is not possible at this time to calculate the net cost, and the public price charged per bottle is determined by retailers.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[139161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress the Government has made in rolling out Virusend (a) in NHS settings and (b) for commercial use.

Mr Ben Wallace:

Defence is not responsible for Virusend's procurement by other Government Departments nor its availability for commercial use.

■ Armed Forces: Equality**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[138878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that each Front Line Command publishes its diversity and inclusion delivery plans, as set out in his Department's Maximising Talent Through Diversity and Inclusion news story, dated 24 July 2020.

Johnny Mercer:

Diversity and Inclusion Levels of Ambition (LoAs) and associated delivery plans to increase representation of underrepresented groups across race, gender, sexual orientation and those with a disability have been communicated internally by each organisation within Defence to hold leadership to account and demonstrate a wholeforce commitment to them. These plans also cover activity designed to increase engagement across our workforce and ensure each member of Defence feels valued. The Ministry of Defence has been transparent with our people on these LoAs and is taking the necessary actions and approaches to drive forward progress towards achieving them.

■ Low Flying**Hywel Williams:**[\[141397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many compensation payments and of what amounts were made by his Department in the financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2018-19, (c) 2017-18, (d) 2016-17 and (e) 2015-16 by (i) Low Flying Area and (ii) Tactical Training Area where data is available; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence's (MOD) expenditure on compensation claims arising from operational military low flying by Low Flying Area (LFA) for the financial years (FY) 2015-2020 is attached.

Tactical Training Areas are not designated on a permanent basis but limited in use to the published timetables. At all other times the same area is deemed to be the LFA in which it is contained.

In order to ensure that military low flying is as accountable to the public as possible the MOD provides the Low Flying Complaints Enquiry Unit, located at RAF Wittering, which allows the public to report low flying incidents which have raised concern.

Attachments:

1. MOD Compensation Claims from Low Flying [PQW 19-21_2021_00707.pdf]

Hywel Williams:

[141400]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the hours were of military low flying within the UK low flying system in financial year 2019-20; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

The military low flying statistics are published annually at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-pattern-of-military-low-flying-across-the-uk-index>

The hours for financial year 2019-20 are currently being collated and will be published later in 2021. Low flying training in the United Kingdom ensures our Armed Forces are fully competent in a wide range of flying skills and tactics before they deploy on operations.

Hywel Williams:

[141401]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many complaints his Department's low flying complaints and enquiries unit received in the 2019-20 financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

In calendar years 2019 and 2020, the Low Flying Complaints and Enquiries Unit (LFCEU) received 768 and 1,256 low flying complaints respectively. The figures are currently being collated by financial year for the Department's low flying official statistics return which is published annually at the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-pattern-of-military-low-flying-across-the-uk-index>

The Ministry of Defence takes its responsibilities to the general public very seriously and measures are taken to provide a balance between essential military training and the need to avoid excessive disturbance on the ground. Low flying activity is spread as widely as possible across the UK to minimise the impact on particular communities.

■ Military Aid: Coronavirus

Julian Sturdy:

[140798]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure there are adequate catering and food arrangements for armed forces personnel deployed at very short notice to assist with covid-19 testing and other covid-19 projects.

James Heappey:

Catering contracts have been established to support personnel deployed on COVID-19 tasks, to provide them with a balanced diet in line with the Joint Service Publication 456 (MOD policy). We ensure food options and menus are routinely monitored and scrutinised by military Food Service Warrant Officers to guarantee the highest standard of food is being delivered to our Armed Forces.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[140799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure the wellbeing of armed forces personnel deployed at very short notice to assist with covid-19 testing and other covid-19 projects.

James Heappey:

The safety and welfare of our personnel is paramount. Defence has numerous internal and external wellbeing measures in place to safeguard personnel deployed on COVID-19 tasks, including provisions for food, accommodation, and dedicated pastoral and welfare staff. Joint Service Publication 770 (MOD policy) sets out further details of the extensive wellbeing support available to deployed personnel.

■ Ministry of Defence: Databases

Chi Onwurah:

[\[138974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many information gateways there are in operation in his Department; and how those gateways are managed and monitored.

Jeremy Quin:

It has been assumed that "information gateways" refer to express statutory powers and obligations to share information.

Although there are no Ministry of Defence (MOD)-specific "gateways" or express statutory powers to share information with Other Government Departments (OGD) or outside bodies, the Department does provide information to OGDs in accordance with their statutory powers, where minimum personal information is disclosed in compliance with the terms of the Data Protection Act.

Information gateways for the MOD are managed and monitored by Defence Business Services; usually through a data sharing agreement or memorandum of understanding.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Arts: Advisory Bodies

Kevin Brennan:

[\[141402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent stakeholder representations he has received on establishing a UK Creators Council as a roundtable to improve dialogue between the Government and representatives of the creative workforce.

Caroline Dineneage:

We have not received any recent representations from stakeholders regarding the proposal of a UK Creator's Council.

Industry and Government engage regularly with a wide range of leading experts in the creative industries through the Creative Industries Council (CIC), a forum for

Government and Industry to convene and share information, discuss concerns and opportunities and muster action. The CIC is formed of a broad range of representative bodies across the sub-sectors of the creative industries.

As outlined in our previous response to the DCMS Select Committee response where this proposal was raised, we would need clear and robust evidence from the sector as to the purpose of a Creator's Council and why it would be different from the existing CIC.

■ Arts: UK Relations with EU

Alison McGovern:

[\[140804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what (a) working groups, (b) committees and (c) other forums there are in his Department for consultation with representatives of the creative industries on the Government's approach to the future relationship with the EU.

Caroline Dineneage:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has engaged with the creative sectors extensively throughout negotiations with the EU and since the announcement of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

At both a ministerial and official level, we hold roundtables to engage with the creative sectors on EU Exit and the UK-EU future relationship. We also engage directly with stakeholders together with Arm's-Length Bodies, on matters relating to EU Exit.

We are committed to continuing our close dialogue with the sectors to ensure they continue to have the support they need to navigate the changes to their ways of working resulting from the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

■ Arts: Visas

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[138459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the economic effect on the creative sector of the exclusion of creative professionals from the visa-free travel list in the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[140793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent economic assessment the Government has made of the effect on UK-based creative workers not being able to travel freely within the EU after 1 January 2021.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[140794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the economic effect on UK exports of musicians being unable to tour as freely in the EU after 1 January 2021 as they used to.

Caroline Dinenage:

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

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

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

Going forward we will continue to work closely with the sector, including with representative organisations, to assess impact and to ensure businesses and individuals have the advice and guidance they need to meet new requirements.

Conor McGinn:[\[140845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what his Department's policy is on enabling UK creative workers to travel to the EU for touring and entertainment purposes.

Caroline Dinenage:

The UK and EU have unilaterally decided not to impose visas on short-stay visitors. For short stays of up to 90 days in any 180-day period, UK nationals will not need a visa when travelling to and within the Schengen Area to undertake a limited range of activities, such as tourism, or attending business meetings, or cultural and sports events. However, Member States can require a visa for what they regard as "paid activity".

Therefore, UK cultural professionals, including musicians, seeking to tour within the EU will be required to check domestic immigration and visitor rules for each Member State in which they intend to tour. Although some Member States may allow touring without a visa or work permit, others will require musicians and other creative professionals to obtain a visa or work permit, in the same way that they are required for other international artists.

We recognise that this means there will be some additional processes for those in cultural and creative industries working across the EU. However this does not mean our sectors will not be able to work in the EU nor that our position has changed on being as welcoming as ever to talented EU artists and musicians wishing to perform in the UK.

We are delivering an extensive programme of engagement with the industry to assess impacts and support these sectors in understanding new requirements. The Secretary of State had a very productive discussion with representatives from across

the creative and cultural sectors on the issue on Wednesday 20th January. We have also published guidance online, signposting to official information provided by EU countries about their business travel routes, which is regularly updated.

We will also look at whether we can work with our partners in EU Member States to find ways to make life easier for those working in the creative industries in our respective countries.

■ Arts: Work Permits

Alison McGovern:

[R] [\[140801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he last held discussions with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office on work permits for creative workers after the end of the transition period.

Caroline Dinenage:

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

The Secretary of State had discussions with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster this week on the issues faced by creative workers and possible options to support the sectors.

The Government recognises the importance of touring for our world-leading cultural and creative sectors. We have been engaging extensively with the industry to assess impact and further understandings of new requirements for working in the EU. The Secretary of State held a very productive meeting with representatives from across the creative and cultural industries on Wednesday 20th January. Going forward, we are committed to continuing our close dialogue with the sector to ensure they have the support they need to thrive.

■ Internet: Advertising

Chris Elmore:

[\[139086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the forthcoming Online Advertising Programme will be used to place an obligation on digital platform providers to monitor the adverts that they carry to tackle online financial scam advertising.

Caroline Dinenage:

Fraudulent online financial advertising is illegal. Respondents to the Online Advertising Programme call for evidence highlighted that online fraud is among the top online harms in online advertising. We will consult this year on measures to address this and other harms identified.

■ Mobile Phones: Cybercrime

Chi Onwurah:

[135929]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to prevent corporate intelligence firms registered in the Channel Islands from accessing phones of UK citizens for surveillance purposes.

Matt Warman:

The Telecommunications (Security) Bill, currently before the House of Commons, will boost the security standards of our telecoms networks and services. The Bill will require that telecoms providers take measures to protect their networks and services from security compromises. This will provide extra protection to UK telecoms users - including from their data being accessed unlawfully.

The Channel Islands are self-governing, however they have committed to align their forthcoming telecoms security frameworks to the UK's Bill.

The National Cyber Security Centre works with providers in the UK and the Channel Islands to help protect their security. This includes the Active Cyber Defence programme that aims to protect the UK from the high-volume commodity attacks that affect people's everyday lives.

■ Musicians: Visas

Andrew Gwynne:

[140759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answers of 14 January 2021 to Question 135862 and of 20 January 2021 to Question 138408 on Musicians: Visas, for what reason those answers do not explain 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.

Caroline Dinenage:

During the negotiation, the EU tabled a declaration accompanying their proposals on visa-free travel. The declaration identified which paid activities could be allowed as part of visa-free visits. However, these proposals would not have addressed the creative and cultural sectors' concerns. The proposals were non-binding, did not include touring but only 'ad hoc' performances, did not include technical staff, and did not address work permits. The EU's proposals were also part of a package on visa-free travel that was not consistent with the UK's manifesto commitment to take back control of our borders.

The UK had proposed more comprehensive and binding provisions on touring musicians and their staff, which would have provided more flexibility and protection for musicians and staff than the EU proposals. These measures were developed following consultation with the UK's creative industries and would have allowed musicians and their technical staff to travel and perform in the UK and the EU more

easily, without needing work-permits. Regrettably, these proposals were rejected by the EU.

We have been engaging extensively with the sector to assess impact and are committed to continuing this close dialogue to ensure they have the support they need to thrive.

■ Public Lending Right

Patrick Grady: [141508]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing funding for the Public Lending Right.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Public Lending Right fund amount is set for the Spending Review period. The British Library administers the Public Lending Right Scheme on behalf of the government and the funding level of the PLR would form part of the consideration of British Library's overall funding at the next Spending Review.

Patrick Grady: [141509]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the maximum payment threshold for the Public Lending Right.

Caroline Dinéage:

DCMS will continue to work with the British Library, which administers the Public Lending Right on behalf of the Department, to consider the potential for future improvements to how PLR operates, including the maximum payment threshold. Any changes to this threshold would be considered at a future Spending Review.

Patrick Grady: [141510]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the rate of payment per book loan under the Public Lending Right.

Caroline Dinéage:

The rate per loan is reviewed annually by the government following a recommendation from the British Library Board. The Department holds a public consultation with major groups representing the interests of authors, library authorities and other stakeholders in the public library sector in the UK, and to the devolved administrations. The consultation, and outcome following Ministers' considerations, are posted on <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/public-lending-right-rate-per-loan-2019-to-2020-consultation>

Dr Rupa Huq: [141553]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to increase funding to the Public Lending Right fund.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Public Lending Right fund amount is set for the Spending Review period. The British Library administers the Public Lending Right Scheme on behalf of the government and the funding level of the PLR would form part of the consideration of British Library's overall funding at the next Spending Review.

Tech Nation: Pay**Chi Onwurah:**[\[140075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the gender pay gap is within Tech Nation.

Caroline Dinenage:

As of 22 January 2021, the gender pay gap at Tech Nation was -6% excluding executives and 7% including executives. 60% of Tech Nation's overall workforce and 50% of the exec team are female.

EDUCATION**Department for Education: Databases****Chi Onwurah:**[\[138968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many information gateways there are in operation in his Department; and how those gateways are managed and monitored.

Nick Gibb:

The information requested is not held centrally.

Erasmus+ Programme**Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[138912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the UK remains a partner country of the Erasmus Mundus+ masters degree scheme.

Michelle Donelan:

Partner country status under Erasmus+ provides varying levels of access to the programme depending on the region in which a third country is placed. The assignment of partner country regions is a unilateral matter for the European Union and, to date, no announcement has been made on this matter in relation to the United Kingdom.

Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes**Tracy Brabin:**[\[134044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to continue the contract with Edenred as the provider of Free School Meals vouchers.

Vicky Ford:

The national voucher scheme with Edenred re-opened on Monday 18 January 2021. Schools have begun ordering and families have already begun redeeming supermarket vouchers.

During the period of national lockdown, schools should continue to provide meal options for all pupils who are in school. Meals should be available free of charge to all infant pupils and pupils who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals who are in school.

Schools should also continue to provide free school meal support to pupils who are eligible for benefits related free school meals and who are learning from home. Extra funding will be provided to support schools to provide food parcels or meals to eligible children.

Schools are free to decide the best approach for their free school meal pupils. They can provide lunch parcels, locally arranged vouchers, or they can use the national voucher scheme. Further details are set out in the guidance here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus**Steve McCabe:****[138860]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason (a) nurseries and (b) early years providers have been excluded from the Coronavirus Workforce Fund available to schools.

Vicky Ford:

The Coronavirus Workforce Fund, available last term, was implemented to support schools and colleges with exceptionally high staff absence rates and significant financial pressures to remain open. Instead, the early years sector has benefitted from the continuation of early years entitlement funding during the COVID-19 outbreak. As private nurseries typically rely on private income for a significant proportion of their income - unlike most state-funded schools - they are also able to furlough their staff via the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme, which has also been available for maintained nursery schools. Eligible nurseries have also benefitted from a business rates holiday and access to business loans, as set out by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

■ Remote Education: ICT**Siobhain McDonagh:****[141390]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) laptops and tablets and (b) 4G wireless routers have been delivered to (i) schools, (ii) local authorities or (iii) academy trusts as of 21 January 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. As of Monday 25 January, we have delivered over 870,000 laptops and tablets to schools, trusts and local authorities.

More information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/laptops-and-tablets-progress-data-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Data on delivery of 4G wireless routers will be published in due course.

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

The Government is providing this significant injection of devices on top of an estimated 2.9 million laptops and tablets already owned by schools before the start of the outbreak.

We have partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online, as well as delivering 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home.

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

All four major mobile network operators - Vodafone, O2, Three and EE - have also committed to working together to make access to Oak National Academy free for school children. Additionally, the Department is grateful to BT and EE, who are making access to BBC Bitesize resources free from the end of January 2021 .

■ Secondary Education: Buildings**Christian Matheson:****[139033]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish the criteria for applications for the next round of secondary schools buildings funding programme.

Nick Gibb:

We are delivering on my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister's commitment to a 10-year school rebuilding programme, which will give long-term stability and certainty both to schools and the construction sector and support more efficient delivery.

The programme is launching with a commitment to 50 new school rebuilding projects a year, replacing many poor condition and ageing school buildings with modern, energy efficient designs, transforming education for thousands of pupils. Investment will continue to be targeted at school buildings in the worst condition across England – including substantial investment in the Midlands and the North. We will set out further details of the programme shortly.

Since 2015, we have allocated £9.5 billion to maintain and improve the condition of the school estate, including an additional £560 million in financial year 2020-21 for essential maintenance. A further £1.8 billion has been committed for 2021-22. On top of that the existing Priority School Building Programme is rebuilding or refurbishing buildings in the worst condition at over 500 schools across England.

■ Students: Fees and Charges

Ian Mearns:

[\[141432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to provide additional funding to higher education establishments to allow them to reduce the course fees charged for academic year 2020-21.

Michelle Donelan:

Universities are autonomous and responsible for setting their own fees, up to a maximum of £9,250 for standard full-time undergraduate courses offered by approved (fee cap) providers. However, the government has been clear that universities are expected to maintain quality and academic standards and the quantity of tuition should not drop. Universities should seek to ensure all students, regardless of their background, can access their studies remotely.

The government has provided significant support to the higher education sector during the COVID-19 outbreak. Alongside access to the business support schemes, we brought forward £2 billion worth of tuition fee payments, provided £280 million of grant funding for research and established a loan scheme to cover up to 80% of a university's income losses from international students for the academic year 2020/21, up to the value of their non-publicly funded research activity support research.

We are working closely with the Office for Students, and the sector to maintain an up-to-date understanding of issues arising during this academic year and are extremely grateful for the work of universities and other higher education providers.

■ Students: Housing

Ian Mearns:

[\[141431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that university students who have entered contracts for accommodation and who are now prevented from travelling to as a result of covid-19 restrictions are freed from their contractual obligation to pay.

Michelle Donelan:

The government plays no role in the provision of student residential accommodation. Universities and 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.

This has been a very difficult time for students, and we encourage universities and private landlords to review their accommodation policies to ensure that 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 has worked with the Office for Students to clarify that providers are able to draw on existing funds, worth around £256 million for the academic year 2020/21, towards hardship support. The government is making available up to a further £20 million on a one-off basis to support those that need it most, particularly disadvantaged students. As my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, said on 7 January, we are considering what more we can do to provide further support to students.

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

Students undertaking courses that would normally require attendance on-site, but for which learning has moved either fully or partially online due to the COVID-19 outbreak, will qualify for living costs support in the 2020/2021 academic year as they would ordinarily, provided that they continue to engage with their higher education (HE) provider. This also applies when the student is prevented from attending the course physically and is required to study online due to shielding.

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

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

■ Universities: Coronavirus

Hilary Benn:

[138877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the safety of university libraries for staff and students from the transmission of covid-19; and whether he has plans to review the covid-19 guidance on the opening of university libraries during the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

The safety and wellbeing of staff and students in higher education (HE) is always our priority and the government is doing all it can to minimise the risks to those working and studying in our HE providers in this unprecedented situation, while mitigating the impact on education. As stated in the spring term 2021 student return guidance

published on 7 January 2021, all HE providers should offer asymptomatic mass testing to all students on their return, which will help to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 and control outbreaks. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>.

Due to the national lockdown measures now in place, we must take further steps to reduce transmission, including by significantly reducing the number of students returning to university from their winter break accommodation, and limiting the number of people travelling to and from university facilities, including libraries. The majority of courses should be delivered online until at least mid-February. Providers are permitted to open facilities to support the teaching and learning of those students who can return for face-to-face teaching, and a limited number of other students who have an exceptional reason to return to university facilities, but these should be maintained for essential use only wherever possible. Our aim is to minimise the number of students who return to university to access university facilities.

Universities have worked extremely hard to put in place a wide range of measures to deliver a COVID-secure environment. Measures include enhanced cleaning and improved ventilation and changes to university lay-out to comply with social distancing guidelines. In addition, all universities have plans for managing and controlling outbreaks. These have been agreed with local directors of public health and continue to be reviewed and updated based on emerging lessons and local situations. Providers have carried out risk assessments for each setting including libraries, putting in place measures to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[138887]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that students returning to universities do not contribute to higher covid-19 transmission rates in the localities where their student accommodation is based.

Michelle Donelan:

Our top priority remains the welfare of students, staff, and the communities around higher education (HE) providers. To help providers make informed decisions about their provision, the government issued guidance on national restrictions and return of students in spring term for the sector based on the latest public health advice.

We are taking further steps to reduce transmission, including by significantly reducing the number of students returning to university from their winter break accommodation, and limiting the number of people travelling to and from university facilities. We are prioritising the return to face-to-face teaching for courses which are most important to be delivered in-person, predominately clinical based courses such as medicine and dentistry, in order to support the pipeline of future key workers. The guidance on which courses can return can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950583/Students_returning_to_and_starting_higher_education_in_Spring_Term_2021_FINAL_v3.pdf.

As stated in the spring term 2021 student return guidance, all HE providers should offer asymptomatic mass testing to all students on their return. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>. NHS Test and Trace is working with providers to support the roll-out of mass asymptomatic testing via lateral flow devices for all students on their return. This support will be in the form of personal protective equipment, testing kits, and cost recovery for workforce. Local community testing is also now available in some areas. HE providers should work with their local authority to consider how the local mass asymptomatic testing might help their students.

All universities have plans for managing and controlling outbreaks. These have been agreed with local directors of public health and continue to be reviewed and updated based on emerging lessons and local situations. We expect universities and other HE providers to continue to prioritise the health and safety of their staff, students, and local community by putting in place measures that apply to their individual circumstances.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Assistance Animals: Pet Travel Scheme

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[141554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support assistance dog owners travelling to (a) the EU and (b) Northern Ireland since the UK ended part one listed status under the Pet Passport Scheme.

Victoria Prentis:

I refer the hon. Member to the reply previously given on 21 January 2021, PQ 139081.

■ Biodiversity

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[141465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat the Government has committed to creating or restoring is in addition to or inclusive of replacing habitat lost as a result of the National High speed Rail Network.

Rebecca Pow:

HS2 is the first major infrastructure project to commit to seeking to deliver no net loss in biodiversity across the route. However, we can still go further and the Government is asking HS2 Ltd to look to identify opportunities to move towards gains in biodiversity, where it is reasonably practicable to do so. HS2 is also enhancing the Phase 2a scheme's existing No Net Loss objective, by working to identify and implement appropriate opportunities, where it is reasonably practicable, to move towards net gains in biodiversity.

We are still developing our monitoring approach for net gain and for wider commitments in the 25 Year Environment Plan such as the Nature Recovery Network, which incorporates the commitment to create or restore 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside protected sites.

We expect mandatory and voluntary net gain to contribute both to the Nature Recovery Network and to the long-term goal. As we develop our monitoring and delivery approaches to net gain and to the Nature Recovery Network more broadly, we will clearly need to consider how much of the habitat created is contributing to the goal.

■ Chemicals: Regulation

Ruth Jones:

[\[139136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the annual budget is for UK REACH for the financial year 2021-22.

Rebecca Pow:

We anticipate spending £20 million this financial year on the new regulatory system. This includes the development, operation and maintenance of the Comply with UK REACH IT service and staff resourcing across Defra, HSE and EA. The budget for the 2021-22 spend is still being finalised.

■ Coastal Erosion: Isle of Sheppey

Gordon Henderson:

[\[138940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect from cliff erosion homeowners living on the north coast of the Isle of Sheppey.

Rebecca Pow:

Under the Coast Protection Act 1949, Swale Borough Council is the maritime authority for the Isle of Sheppey coastline and takes the lead for coastal erosion. The Shoreline Management Plan, led and owned by the South East Coastal Group, was agreed by all local partners and signed off by Defra in 2010. The long term plan has identified that it is not viable to invest in sustaining defences on the coastline from Minster Slopes to Warden Bay. This is because a large coastal defence and surface water management scheme to reduce the rate of erosion in this location would not be economically justifiable due to the small number of properties that would be beneficiaries. In addition, the eroding cliffs are of national conservation, geological and landscape importance and are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

To help manage the impact on those directly affected by coastal erosion, the Environment Agency's Medway Estuary and Swale Flood and Erosion Risk Strategy has developed adaptation options to relocate or compensate affected properties. This strategy has been supported by key local partners including Swale Borough Council, Natural England and Defra. The Environment Agency will continue to work closely

with Swale Borough Council and the South East Coastal Group to support this approach and work with the local residents. The EA will also help explore funding opportunities for any property adaptation proposals which Swale Borough Council may bring forward.

■ **Delivery Services: Plastic Bags**

Julian Sturdy:

[138950]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reinstating the waiver on the plastic bag charge for home-delivery purchases that applied during the covid-19 lockdown announced in March 2020, to help prevent virus transmission via delivery drivers through allowing the doorstep deposit of delivered goods.

Rebecca Pow:

The obligation for supermarkets to charge for single-use carrier bags (SUCBs) supplied with online deliveries was temporarily removed in response to the first Covid-19 lockdown. This change was only temporary to allow retailers time to adapt their delivery systems, and the charge was reinstated in September 2020.

The department does not have any plans to further assess the need to reinstate the suspension of the charge for online deliveries. Since March, supermarkets have updated and improved their delivery systems to meet the increased demand due to the pandemic. They have also developed new practices to improve safety for both drivers and customers, and citizens are far more aware of the importance of social distancing. Retailers can still provide single-use carrier bags as a delivery option for customers so long as the charge is still in place.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Databases**

Chi Onwurah:

[138969]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many information gateways there are in operation in his Department; and how those gateways are managed and monitored.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra does not hold a consolidated, central register of information gateways although the scope of gateways and their current use is well understood by relevant policy and operational teams.

Although much Defra data is published freely for reuse, more restricted data sharing both within and outside Government is common for regulatory and other reasons. Data sharing requests are typically dealt with on a case by case basis and available gateways are considered as part of an overall evaluation of the purpose, risks and benefits of sharing.

Defra's arm's length bodies manage their own use of information gateways.

■ Fishing Catches

Sir John Hayes:

[\[138380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of monitored marine fish stocks were overfished in UK waters in each of the last five years.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK Marine Strategy undertakes an assessment of the percentage of marine fish stocks with set quotas of UK interest that have been harvested sustainably. This assessment is undertaken every six years, with the latest assessment published in 2019. This includes data from 1990 to 2018.

This assessment found that the percentage of fish stocks fished at or below levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield, and therefore not considered overfished, has increased from 9% in 1990 to 46% in 2015 and 51% in 2018.

■ Fishing Catches: Territorial Waters

Deidre Brock:

[\[141502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what quantities of each species of fish have been caught by vessels on the EU Vessels List in (a) Scottish waters, (b) English waters, (c) Welsh waters and (d) Northern Irish waters since 1 January 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK does not currently have access to a comprehensive feed of all data covering volumes of fish caught in the UK Exclusive Economic Zone by EU registered fishing vessels. The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement provides the framework for continued data exchange and we are currently engaged in ongoing technical conversations with the European Commission to rapidly establish a mechanism to allow sharing of this data moving forward.

■ Flood Control: Sefton

Bill Esterson:

[\[141433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the flooding in the Sefton Central constituency on 20 and 21 January 2021, if he will support previously submitted bids under the National Resilience Fund from the Environment Agency for full funding of flood defence schemes in Maghull; and what plans he has to announce a new flood recovery fund.

Rebecca Pow:

Starting in 2021, the Government will invest £5.2 billion in a six-year capital investment programme for flood defences, better protecting 336,000 properties from flooding and coastal erosion. The capital programme is allocated in accordance with the Partnership Funding Policy. The Partnership Funding policy clarifies the level of investment communities can expect from Defra so it is clear what level of funding they need to source from other sources to allow projects to go ahead.

The Environment Agency will continue to manage flood risk in Maghull, providing flood warning and maintaining existing assets and will continue to work with the local authorities to find alternative options to reduce the multiple sources of flood risk in Maghull.

With localised flooding incidents local authorities are expected to have well established contingency arrangements in place and to be able to respond and support their local communities from within existing budgets. Following severe weather with significant impacts across multiple local authorities, the Government is able to deploy the Flood Recovery Framework. We will continue to monitor the situation and assess whether further support is needed in the event that flooding impacts increase.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Richard Thomson:

[\[139160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to reply the correspondence dated 8 September 2020, 30 October 2020 and 10 December 2020 from Stewart Stevenson MSP, regarding development of a contingency sheep compensation scheme.

Victoria Prentis:

I apologise for the delay in responding. A reply has been prepared and will be issued very shortly.

■ **Neonicotinoids**

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[139012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the economic effect of virus yellows on sugar beet farmers in (a) 2019 and (b) 2020.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[139013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential economic effect of virus yellows on sugar beet farmers in 2021 in the event that neonicotinoid use (a) is permitted and (b) is not permitted.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[139017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what alternative disease and pest management practices were considered in the decision to grant an authorisation for neonicotinoid use for sugar beet farmers in 2021; and what evidence he received which led him to conclude that those practices would not be adequately effective.

Victoria Prentis:

Husbandry approaches and alternative pesticides were considered in the assessment of the application for emergency authorisation of the neonicotinoid product Cruiser

SB. The evidence, including experience in 2020, suggests that these will not be adequate to protect the emerging sugar beet crop this year.

The incidence of virus yellows in sugar beet was low in 2019 and consequent production losses are estimated to have been low. Virus levels were much higher in 2020 and yields are expected to be down by around 25%, equating to an economic loss of the order of £50 million. Other factors may have contributed to this loss, but the level of virus infection was key.

At this stage, it is not possible to assess the economic impact virus yellows will have in 2021. If, as is likely, winter temperatures are not sufficiently low, the high virus reservoir legacy numbers from 2020 could mean that the incidence rate remains high in 2021. Without effective aphid control, that is likely to translate to significant economic loss. The authorisation provides that likely pest pressures for 2021 will be modelled using data on temperatures over this winter. Only if this indicates that crop infection rates are expected to exceed a 9% threshold will the seed treatment be permitted for use.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[139014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of UK scrutiny measures for emergency authorisations of neonicotinoid use since the UK's departure from the EU.

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. 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.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[139015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps have been taken by (a) his Department and (b) the British sugar beet industry to develop alternative sustainable approaches to protect crops without the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[139016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the British sugar beet industry's strategy to move away from a reliance on emergency authorisations of neonicotinoid use.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[139018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the compatibility of its conclusion that emergency authorisations for neonicotinoid seed treatments for sugar beet may be needed for three

years, and HSE application guidance stating that it would not generally be expected that there will be requests for emergency authorisations that have been previously granted to be renewed.

Victoria Prentis:

The sugar beet industry has been developing alternative approaches including improved husbandry, plant breeding to develop new varieties and potential new insecticide products. Their forward plan, included in their application for emergency authorisation, maps out the route to develop each of these areas further so that economic production is possible without neonicotinoid seed treatments.

There is no conflict between the positions of Defra and HSE on the issue of repeat emergency authorisations. Emergency authorisations reflect special circumstances and so should not be repeated indefinitely; those seeking emergency authorisations need to formulate a clear plan to find a permanent solution. It is, however, accepted that it will not always be possible to deliver that plan in a single year.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[139019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what evidence his Department has received to suggest that 22 months and 32 months for oilseed rape are sufficient time periods to prevent the contamination of flowering crops following the use of neonicotinoids for sugar beet.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[139020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the restrictions the conditions placed on the authorisation of neonicotinoid use for sugar beet will have on normal crop rotations followed by farmers.

Victoria Prentis:

The restrictions on the planting of following crops mean that no flowering crop will be planted until spring 2023 and no oilseed rape will be planted until spring 2024 (as oilseed rape is overwhelmingly autumn-sown, little will be planted until August/September 2024). There is data on the rate at which thiamethoxam breaks down in soil over time and so we know that these periods will result in substantial reductions in the quantities available for uptake by flowering crops.

These restrictions will be manageable for most growers within their own crop rotation plans. Where this is not the case, farmers have the option not to grow sugar beet or to do so without the neonicotinoid seed treatment.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[139021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential adverse effects on (a) bees and pollinators and (b) other invertebrates of the measures proposed in the 2021 neonicotinoid authorisation for sugar beet to prevent the take-up of neonicotinoids by wildflowers and flowering weeds, including the (i) use of additional herbicides and (ii) removal of flowering weeds as a source of food.

Victoria Prentis:

Young sugar beet plants are vulnerable to competition from weeds and so effective weed control is a normal part of growing this crop. The measures proposed as requirements for the emergency authorisation are in line with normal guidance to growers and so will not have additional effects on pollinators or other invertebrates.

Daniel Zeichner:[\[139022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether in the decision to approve the 2021 emergency authorisation of neonicotinoid use for sugar beet an assessment of risk to (a) mammals, (b) soil dwelling organisms and (c) aquatic invertebrates was undertaken.

Daniel Zeichner:[\[139023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's policy is on acceptable risk to aquatic invertebrates; and how the 2021 emergency authorisation of neonicotinoid use for sugar beet met that criteria.

Victoria Prentis:

The assessment carried out by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) included consideration of risks to the environment. Potential risks to mammals, soil-dwelling organisms and aquatic invertebrates were included in that assessment. In respect of aquatic invertebrates, the HSE assessment indicated that the normal standards for authorisation under the relevant legislation were met.

Daniel Zeichner:[\[139024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the reduced application rate will be in the 2021 emergency authorisation of neonicotinoid use for sugar beet; and what evidence his Department holds on that rate reducing risk of harm to the environment, including to aquatic invertebrates.

Victoria Prentis:

The emergency authorisation will limit the application rate to 45 grammes of thiamethoxam per 100,000 seeds. There is evidence that this rate, which is 25% less than that previously authorised, will be sufficiently effective in controlling the target pest. The consequence of the lower rate will be that less thiamethoxam will remain in the soil and water and so the potential for harm to aquatic invertebrates and other creatures will be reduced.

■ Office for Environmental Protection: Location**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[141411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the answer given to WPQ 54035 on 8 Jn 2020, if he will confirm the location of the new Office for Environmental Protection.

Rebecca Pow:

We want to ensure that the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) is located in a place that contributes to the Government's objectives. Upon considering wider

locations, we have decided that Worcester will be an excellent location for the headquarters of the OEP allowing it to have a long term home that will attract the best staff. This is part of the Government's commitment to ensuring that opportunities are spread fairly across the country.

■ **Wholesale Trade: Coronavirus**

Bob Blackman:

[\[138930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021 on the level of stocks retained by food service wholesalers.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[139179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced on 4 January 2021 on the level of stock held by food service wholesalers.

Victoria Prentis:

I refer the hon. Members to the reply previously given on 25 January 2021, PQ 138473.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-15/138473>

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Developing Countries: Coronavirus**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[140905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the oral contribution of 19 January 2021 of the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, Official Report column 759, on the Covax facility helping to vaccinate 500 million people in 2021, what the total population is of those 92 developing countries.

Wendy Morton:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The goal of the COVAX Facility is to secure access to 2 billion doses by the end of 2021. The COVAX Facility aims to vaccinate up to 20 percent of all participating countries in the Advance Market Commitment (AMC), proportional to their populations, and initially prioritising healthcare workers then expanding to cover vulnerable groups. Further doses will be made available based on vaccine availability, country need, vulnerability, and COVID-19 threat. A humanitarian buffer within the COVAX AMC aims to provide 5% of available doses for use in fragile and conflict settings.

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, estimates that the total population of the 92 AMC countries is 3.9 billion people.

■ Hong Kong: HSBC**Sarah Owen:**[\[141615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the freezing of assets and bank accounts of pro-democracy activists by HSBC in Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

We are aware of these reports but do not comment on individual cases. The Government engages in regular dialogue with businesses in Hong Kong and as a matter of course monitors the operation of the financial sector and its participants. Financial institutions operating in Hong Kong do so within a strict legal and regulatory framework. We are concerned that a number of recent decisions by the authorities in Hong Kong are further evidence of a determined campaign to stifle opposition and silence dissent. As a signatory to the Sino-British Joint Declaration, China must abide by the legally binding commitments it made to uphold fundamental rights and freedoms, and respect Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy for at least 50 years from 1997. The UK will continue to pursue an approach in Hong Kong that is rooted in our values, defends the rights of the people of Hong Kong and respects the provisions of the Joint Declaration.

■ Iran: Baha'i Faith**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[138888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations his Department has received on the judgments of Branch 54 of the Special Court for Article 49 of the Constitution, issued on 1 August 2020 and a further extraordinary session of the Court of Appeal on 13 October 2020, on the expropriation of properties and farms owned by a community of Bahá'ís in the village of Ivel; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

We remain deeply concerned by the continuing systematic discrimination, harassment and targeting of the Baha'i community in Iran. On 26 October 2020, we made a statement calling on Iran to ensure members of all religious and ethnic groups are treated equally before the law and allowed to participate fully in society. We support the assessment made by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, that discrimination against the Baha'is is sanctioned by a lack of constitutional recognition. The Government continues to raise our concerns on this and other persistent human rights violations with Iran, and maintains close engagement with the Baha'i community.

■ Israel: Military Bases

Jim Shannon:

[138982]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department holds data on military bases with missiles that are within range of Israeli territory.

James Cleverly:

Israel is an important strategic partner for the UK and we collaborate frequently on issues of defence and security. Our commitment to the security of Israel is unwavering. All countries, including Israel, have a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend their citizens from attack. However we cannot comment on intelligence and security matters.

■ Marine Environment

Stephen Doughty:

[140106]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his priorities are for (a) ocean conservation, (b) the promotion of marine biodiversity, and (c) the role of sustainable oceans policy in relation to climate change, ahead of COP26.

James Duddridge:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The Government recognises that a healthy ocean is vital to life and livelihoods on Earth. Ocean conservation and protection of marine biodiversity is particularly important for building resilience and adapting to the impacts of climate change, as well as supporting mitigation.

That is why we are leading efforts to secure international agreement to protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030 (30by30) as part of the new Global Biodiversity Framework. The framework is due to be agreed at the next meeting of the Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2021.

To support this ambition the UK has set up and leads the Global Ocean Alliance and has joined the High Ambition Coalition as Ocean Co-Chair. The UK is also pushing for other ambitious and transformative targets as part of the new post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Marine biodiversity priorities include targets on ecosystem restoration, pollution reduction, sustainable use of biodiversity, reform and elimination of harmful subsidies and nature-based solutions.

We are also playing a leading role in negotiations for a new agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (the BBNJ Agreement). This would enable, in particular, the designation of Marine Protected Areas in the high seas - essential to implementing the 30 by 30 target. The final round of negotiations is planned for August and the UK wants to see an ambitious agreement concluded this year.

We have committed to establishing a new £500 million Blue Planet Fund using ODA to support developing countries protect the marine environment and reduce poverty.

This will contribute to the UK's commitment to spend at least £3 billion of international climate finance to protect and restore nature and biodiversity over the next 5 years.

Through the £25 million Blue Belt programme, we have protected over 4 million square kilometres of ocean around our Overseas Territories, ranging from the Southern Ocean to the tropics.

Tackling climate change itself is vital for ocean health. As COP26 Presidency we are pushing for ambitious and accelerated action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

■ New Zealand: Coronavirus

Sarah Owen:

[140943]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his New Zealand counterpart on that country's managed (a) quarantine and (b) isolation border policy during the covid-19 pandemic; and efficacy of those policies with comparison to the UK's air corridor policy.

James Duddridge:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The Foreign Secretary last spoke to his New Zealand counterpart on 12 November 2020. They discussed COVID-19 in relation to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisations, and protecting vulnerable countries. As one of our closest international partners, UK Government officials have frequent contact with New Zealand counterparts on a range of COVID-19 issues, including border policy. The UK has some of the strongest safeguards against importing COVID-19. We have taken decisive action in relation to new variants identified in South Africa and South America. We have also, as a precautionary measure, suspended the travel corridors and ensured that we have a system in place requiring a pre-departure negative test. In addition, we have reintroduced quarantine on arrival, backed up by increased enforcement by both Public Health England and Border Force.

■ Overseas Aid

Sarah Champion:

[138448]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve access to ODA for local organisations based in-country as part of his plans to improve his Department's delivery of aid.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO is committed to ensuring that both local and UK-based civil society organisations are paid the true cost of work on behalf of the FCDO. This includes paying our fair share of overhead costs and we have recently revised our Humanitarian Funding Guidelines to ensure all partners pass on a fair portion of overhead costs to local organisations. This effectively means FCDO is increasing its financial commitment to local organisations allowing them to play a decisive role in humanitarian response.

Our 10-year partnership with Comic Relief focusses on building the capacity and sustainability of locally-led NGOs in Ghana, Zambia and Malawi. Local organisations based in country are also eligible for funding for project activities through UK Aid Direct.

■ Overseas Aid: Coronavirus

Stephen Doughty:

[140103]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of investments by the Commonwealth Development Corporation has been redirected since January 2020 to supporting the global response to the covid-19 pandemic.

James Duddridge:

In response to COVID-19 the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) quickly pivoted all of its investment activities to help tackle the economic and healthcare impacts of the pandemic in Africa and South Asia. Since April 2020 100% of CDC's new investment commitments have been approved under its COVID-19 investment response strategy.

This investment response strategy consists of three pillars. First, to preserve the positive development impact of its current investee businesses affected by the crisis by providing additional finance and technical support. Second, to strengthen economic resilience by providing systemic liquidity to keep economies functioning and making targeted investments to increase access to healthcare and basic services. Third, to help rebuild economies and ensure their recovery is sustainable and inclusive by providing long-term patient capital in a counter-cyclical way.

More information on CDC's response to the COVID-19 pandemic can be found on its website - <https://www.cdcgroup.com/en/covid-19-response/>.

■ Pakistan: Abduction

Jim Shannon:

[138986]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to encourage the Pakistani Government to investigate and prevent cases of enforced disappearances and extra-judicial killings in (a) Sindh, (b) Baluchistan, and (c) Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa provinces.

Nigel Adams:

The UK strongly condemns any instances of extrajudicial killings or enforced disappearances. On 16 November 2020, the Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised concerns about the human rights situation in Pakistan with Dr Shireen Mazari, Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights. On 7 December 2020, he also raised the human rights situation in Pakistan with the Special Advisor to the Prime Minister (SAPM) to the Interior, Shahzad Akbar. On 8 June 2020, the British High

Commissioner to Pakistan, Dr Christian Turner CMG, raised issues regarding civic freedoms and legislation on enforced disappearances with Dr Mazari.

■ **Pakistan: Forced Marriage**

Jim Shannon:

[138984]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Pakistani counterpart on (a) Maira Shahbaz, (b) Arzoo Raja and (c) other girls who have been kidnapped, forcibly converted and married in Pakistan.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from religious minorities in Pakistan. We regularly raise our concerns on these issues with the Government of Pakistan. The Minister of State responsible for South Asia and Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised our human rights concerns, including Freedom of Religion or Belief, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights on 16 November. On 7 December, Lord Ahmad raised the human rights situation in Pakistan with the Special Advisor to the Prime Minister to the Interior, Shahzad Akbar. Lord Ahmad also raised our concerns about child, early and forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from minority religious communities, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights on 19 October.

Through the UK's development support, we are encouraging policy reform at federal and provincial level to strengthen child protection laws in order to prevent child marriage. The UK's Strengthening Rule of Law in Pakistan programme aims to increase public confidence and trust in the Rule of Law. It focuses on delivering outputs that improve the justice system for victims, witnesses and offenders, including vulnerable women and girls.

Jim Shannon:

[138985]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to support girls who have been subject to forced conversions and marriages in Sindh, Pakistan.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from religious minorities in Pakistan. We regularly raise our concerns on these issues with the Government of Pakistan. The Minister for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised our human rights concerns, including Freedom of Religion or Belief, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights on 16 November 2020. On 7 December 2020, Lord Ahmad raised the human rights situation in Pakistan with the Special Advisor to the Prime Minister to the Interior, Shahzad Akbar. Lord Ahmad also raised our concerns about child, early and forced marriage and forced conversion of women and

girls from minority religious communities, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights on 19 October 2020.

The British High Commission in Islamabad meets frequently with minority religious communities in Pakistan to understand the pressures they face. We also engage with the Parliamentary Committee on Forced Conversions, the Council of Islamic Ideology, and civil society organisations to influence awareness and policy on these issues, including in Sindh.

Furthermore, through the UK's development support, we are working with the Government of Pakistan to strengthen and improve Pakistan's police and judicial systems. The UK's Strengthening Rule of Law in Pakistan programme aims to increase public confidence and trust in the Rule of Law. It focuses on delivering outputs that improve the justice system for victims, witnesses and offenders, including vulnerable women and girls.

■ **Palestinians: Remote Education**

Robert Halfon:

[140776]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education's report on the content of educational material published by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency during the Covid-19 pandemic to assist remote learning, published in January 2021.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The UK government has zero-tolerance to incitement of violence, and we have raised this issue with UNRWA. We understand that as soon as the mistake was identified, UNRWA took swift action to correct the issue and conducted a thorough review to address any education materials in breach of its policies. We continue to monitor the situation to ensure self-learning materials remain in line with UN values. No UK funds were used for the development of UNRWA's self-learning material.

■ **Ramy Kamel**

Jim Shannon:

[138983]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 8 June 2020 to Question 51598, what recent representations he has made to his Egyptian counterpart on Rami Kamil.

James Cleverly:

We are following the case of Ramy Kamel closely. Our Embassy in Cairo is in regular contact with his lawyer and has expressed our concern at his ongoing detention to the Egyptian authorities. Most recently, our Ambassador to Egypt raised his case with the President of Egypt's National Council for Human Rights on 18 November 2020.

■ Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu**Stephen Doughty:** [\[141476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Government of Uganda to secure the release from house arrest of Robert Kyagulanyi and his family.

James Duddridge:

I welcome the High Court of Uganda's decision of 25 January that the detention of Robert Kyagulanyi was unconstitutional and unlawful and their order for security personnel to vacate his premises. The treatment of Robert Kyagulanyi has been unacceptable and I expressed my concerns about this in a tweet on 19 January. The British High Commission Kampala continues to press the Ugandan authorities to end all of these unacceptable restrictions on Robert Kyagulanyi's liberty.

■ Schengen Agreement: Borders**Hilary Benn:** [\[138870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK nationals have contacted a UK Embassy after having been refused entry at the Schengen border since 1 January 2021.

Hilary Benn: [\[138871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with (a) the European Commission and (b) Governments of EU member states on UK nationals with residence rights in the EU protected by the Withdrawal Agreement being refused entry at the Schengen border since 1 January 2021.

Hilary Benn: [\[138872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the European Commission on whether UK nationals with rights of residence in the EU protected by the Withdrawal Agreement are exempt from EU temporary travel restrictions resulting from covid-19, in order to (a) travel to their country of residence and (b) transit through an EU Member State in order to reach their country of residence.

Hilary Benn: [\[138873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the European Commission on whether the Schengen Border handbook lists the documents that each Member State accepts as proof of residence from 1 January 2021; and when the latest edition of the Schengen Border handbook was made available to border officials in all EU Member States.

Wendy Morton:

The Government is aware of disruption at the Schengen border experienced by a relatively small number of UK nationals living in the EU since 1 January 2021. The

Government is monitoring the situation closely and actively working with the European Commission, Member States and carriers to ensure the correct rules are applied. The EU has also confirmed that UK nationals protected by the Withdrawal Agreement and their family members are exempt from the EU's temporary restrictions on non-essential travel due to Covid-19 and have a right to enter, exit and transit within the EU.

We have raised concerns with the European Commission who have reminded border authorities across EU Member States that are part of Schengen to comply with the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement and guidance in the Schengen handbook. An English version of the guidance was made available to border authorities in Member States on 4 December 2020 and in all other languages on 23 December 2020. The handbook lists the documents that should be accepted as proof of status under the Withdrawal Agreement and includes guidance on other evidence that can be accepted, provided it credibly evidences residence in the EU before the end of the transition period.

We are also actively engaging bilaterally with Member States via our network of Embassies and High Commissions, and through their missions in London, reiterating the need for compliance and clear communication with their carriers. Since 1 January, less than 200 UK nationals have contacted our European network of Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates regarding this disruption and the steps taken by the Government have resulted in a reduction in enquiries.

■ Sri Lanka: Human Rights

Stephen Kinnock:

[140111]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken towards securing a new resolution on human rights in Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council in March 2021.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The UK has long supported efforts to promote accountability, reconciliation and human rights in Sri Lanka, including in our role as penholder on Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). We firmly believe that UNHRC resolution 30/1, and its successor resolutions 34/1 and 40/1, remain the best framework for establishing truth and achieving justice and lasting reconciliation following the conflict in Sri Lanka. We have made this clear in statements delivered on behalf of the Core Group on Sri Lanka at the UNHRC in February, June and September 2020.

The Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, has raised the importance of justice and accountability on several occasions with the Sri Lankan High Commissioner and the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, most recently on 21 December and 22 January respectively. The UK's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka also regularly raises human rights issues in her discussions with the government of Sri Lanka.

Ahead of the March 2021 session of the UNHRC, the UK are working closely with international partners on our approach, and have discussed this with representatives of the Sri Lankan Government.

■ Sub-saharan Africa: Christianity

Preet Kaur Gill:

[139091]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the 2021 Open Doors World Watch List, what steps he is taking to address the rise in violence against Christians in sub-Saharan Africa.

James Duddridge:

The UK is committed to defending Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. We remain deeply concerned about violations and abuses of FoRB in many parts of the world, including in sub-Saharan Africa. Where we have concerns, we raise them directly with governments, including at ministerial level. The Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, underlined the UK's commitment to FoRB for all in a number of international meetings in November 2020, speaking at the Ministerial to Advance Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Ministers' Forum of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance. We have also reviewed and taken note of the 2021 Open Doors World Watch List.

On 20 December 2020, the Prime Minister reaffirmed his commitment to FoRB by appointing Fiona Bruce, MP for Congleton, as his Special Envoy for FoRB. Mrs Bruce will work with ministers, officials and others to deliver the Government's goal of seeing everyone, everywhere able to have and practise a faith, belief, or no religious belief, in accordance with their conscience. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon will also be working alongside her to drive forward the implementation of the Bishop of Truro's recommendations on FCDO support for persecuted Christians in a way that improves the lives of those persecuted for their faith, belief, or for not holding a religion.

■ Uganda: Elections

Harriett Baldwin:

[138955]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the UK Government provided (a) directly and (b) through partners to evaluate whether the recent presidential election in Uganda was free and fair.

James Duddridge:

The UK has consistently supported the development of democracy in Uganda as a vital part of it being stable and prosperous. We urged that the recent elections should be credible, including through my tweet on 13 January. I also spoke with Ugandan Foreign Minister Kutesa and the Ugandan High Commission on 12 January about the importance of ensuring that the UK was able to deploy election observers. To that end we deployed 15 teams consisting of a total of 51 Election Observers across

Uganda on election day. They observed and evaluated over 120 polling stations and reported back to the British High Commission. We continue to consult with the diplomatic community in Kampala, civil society actors, other international observers, and the Government of Uganda to ensure we have a comprehensive and accurate picture of both the election and post-election period. We have also urged the Government of Uganda to respond to the concerns raised. We would also like to commend the Ugandan media for their reporting on the elections. The UK, as part of the Media Freedom Coalition underlined on 8 January the importance of the media's ability to provide accurate and reliable information, for journalists to be accredited ahead of Uganda's elections - and urged the Ugandan authorities to address restrictions. We will continue to work with Ugandan partners to build long-term political freedoms.

■ **Uganda: Overseas Aid**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[141582]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will list the training for Uganda's (a) police and (b) prison service that has been funded by UK Official Development Assistance since 2019.

James Duddridge:

Since 2018, the UK has provided civil society organisations with £55,450, through UK Official Development Assistance, to train the Uganda Police Force and Uganda Prison Service in taking a human rights based approach when working with minority groups. Police officers work through domestic and international human rights legislation, the implications for their work, understanding the right of individual vulnerable groups and understanding their role in promoting human rights. Frontline prison workers are taught about the rights and needs of vulnerable prisoners and helps to change attitudes and practices towards vulnerable persons in detention. To date, over 2000 police and prison staff have been trained under this initiative.

■ **Western Sahara: Politics and Government**

Kim Johnson:

[139168]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will seek clarification from the United Nations on which Government has Administering Power of Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

The UK takes note of the UN's definition of Western Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory. We regard the status of Western Sahara as undetermined and we fully support the UN's efforts to achieve a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

■ Western Sahara: Trade Agreements

Kim Johnson:

[\[139167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Saharawi people in (a) occupied Western Sahara and (b) refugee camps were asked whether they agreed with the non-self governing territory of Western Sahara being included in the UK-Morocco Association Agreement.

James Cleverly:

Western Sahara is not within the territorial scope of the UK-Morocco Association Agreement, as is clear from the territorial application article of the Agreement. The UK-Morocco Association Agreement applies in the same way as the EU-Morocco agreements. The UK is clear that the application of parts of the UK-Morocco Association Agreement to certain products originating in Western Sahara, in line with European Court of Justice's ruling on that issue, is without prejudice to our position on the status of Western Sahara, which we regard as undetermined.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Acute Beds

Philip Davies:

[\[135880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS beds in acute hospitals were available for use on 31 December in each of the last 10 years.

Edward Argar:

The total number of National Health Service beds available in acute hospitals is not available in the format requested.

■ Alzheimer's Disease and Multiple Sclerosis: Research

Valerie Vaz:

[\[137917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much money from the public purse has been allocated to research into (a) Parkinson's disease, (b) Alzheimers Disease and (c) Multiple Sclerosis in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

The Government is committed to supporting research into Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease and multiple sclerosis. The Department funds research into these areas through the National Institute for Health Research. Additionally, UK Research and Innovation funds research into these areas primarily through the Medical Research Council, the Biotechnology Biological Sciences Research Council, and the Economic and Social Research Council.

The attached table shows funding allocated through these routes, not including wider funding that contributes to research in these areas. Figures for research into Alzheimer's disease are only part of overall dementia research spending.

R values refer to total spend. UKRI values refer to allocated / committed funding.

Attachments:

1. Funding [PQ 137917 table formatted.docx]

■ **Ambulance Services: Coronavirus**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[134377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional logistical support to areas with long ambulance waiting times as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The provision of additional logistic support is already utilised to assist areas with long ambulance waiting times. Ambulances are diverted and patients redirected to alternative hospitals where clinically appropriate; ambulance staff are used to support hospital handover delays and crews are allowed to handover patients so that they are available to respond to incoming 999 calls.

Support is also provided through mutual aid arrangements with other local providers, coordinated through the National Ambulance Coordination Centre. Each acute trust, with support from the NHS England and NHS Improvement region, regularly makes an assessment as to whether diverts and deflects should be put in place to support hospital capacity. These assessments form part of regular escalation discussions.

■ **Antidepressants**

Jon Trickett:

[\[135813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were prescribed antidepressants in (a) 2010, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Jo Churchill:

The following table shows the number of unique patients prescribed antidepressants on a National Health Service prescription and dispensed in the community in England for the calendar years 2019 and 2020 to October, which is the latest data held. No patient level data is held for 2010.

CALENDAR YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF UNIQUE IDENTIFIED PATIENTS
2019	7,800,136
2020 to October	7,473,047

Note:

NHS Business Services Authority holds patient identifiable data relating to drugs prescribed in England and dispensed within a community setting. No data is captured on the prescription form about the clinical indication for which a prescription is intended. The list of antidepressants which have been identified for this response is

based on British National Formulary (BNF) chapter 04 section 03 (Antidepressant Drugs) using the classification system prior to BNF edition 70.

■ Bread: Vitamin D

Luke Pollard: [\[133168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of fortifying bread with Vitamin D in England.

Jo Churchill:

Companies are free to fortify certain products with vitamin D and already do so for a number of foods, including many fats and spreads, breakfast cereals, and some powdered milk.

In the United Kingdom everyone is advised to take a daily vitamin D supplement in autumn and winter to protect their general health in particular bone and muscle health. This is because during the autumn and winter we cannot make vitamin D from sunlight.

■ Cancer: Drugs

Martyn Day: [\[134503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of outcome-based payment for cancer medicines.

Jo Churchill:

Outcome-based payment arrangements are one type of commercial flexibility that NHS England and NHS Improvement can choose to utilise when negotiating with pharmaceutical companies on new innovative cancer and non-cancer treatments.

The final NHS Commercial Framework for Medicines, which will be published shortly, outlines how commercial flexibilities can be negotiated to accommodate the unique circumstances of each topic the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is appraising, on a case-by-case basis.

■ Carers: Coronavirus

Bambos Charalambous: [\[141579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of prioritising the covid-19 vaccine for full time unpaid carers of elderly relatives or those who are shielding.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the 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 have 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 in receipt of a carer's allowance, or 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. This includes unpaid carers.

■ **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Research**

Darren Jones:

[\[134061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase biomedical research on the causes and treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis in the UK.

Edward Argar:

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). In 2020, the NIHR and the Medical Research Council, through UK Research and Innovation, came together to fund the world's largest genome-wide association study of myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME), sometimes referred to as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). This £3.2 million study, 'DecodeME', will analyse samples from 20,000 people with ME/CFS to search for genetic differences that may indicate underlying causes or an increased risk of developing the condition. DecodeME is a partnership between biomedical scientists at the University of Edinburgh and ME/CFS charities and people with lived experience of ME/CFS. It is hoped that the outcomes of this study will aid the development of diagnostic tests and targeted treatments.

■ **Contact Tracing: Consultants**

Andy Slaughter:

[\[103453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many consultants are currently employed on the Government's Test and Trace programme; what the total expenditure on these consultants has been to date; which firms are providing those consultants; and how many consultants each such firm has provided at what cost.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 October 2020]: As of the beginning of November 2020 there were over 2,300 contractors and consultants working for 73 different suppliers for the Test and Trace programme. The total expenditure on these contractors and consultants to date has been approximately £375 million.

The pay rates of individuals engaged from each supplier is commercially sensitive information.

■ **Coronavirus**

Andrew Percy:

[\[138918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has been made on the ability to transmit covid-19 by people who have (a) contracted covid-19 and recovered, and (b) been vaccinated against it; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) has made no such assessment. Due to the time taken to develop antibodies after vaccination, PHE does not yet hold data to determine the ability to transmit COVID-19 by people who have been vaccinated against it.

Stephen Doughty:[\[141472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cases have been recorded in the UK of the variants of covid-19 that originated in (a) South Africa and (b) Brazil since 1 December 2020.

Jo Churchill:

As of 20 January 2021, there were 71 cases of the COVID-19 variant that originated in South Africa and 10 cases of the COVID-19 variant that originated in Brazil recorded in the United Kingdom.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[139072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to prevent transmission of covid-19 at vaccination centres.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 21 January 2021]: All sites are designed to ensure they are COVID-19 secure. Guidance has been provided by the National Health Service to ensure social distancing is in operation, sanitising stations are readily available, facemasks worn at all times, healthcare professionals are wearing appropriate personal protective equipment and vaccinations should be deferred for those with confirmed COVID-19 infection.

Sir Christopher Chope:[\[139974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 131167 on Coronavirus: Research, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of relaxing restrictions on the freedom of movement for those identified by the SIREN study as having antibodies to covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: Participants in COVID-19 related research who have received a positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test result within 90 days of a previous positive PCR test result and are asymptomatic, are exempt from the need to self-isolate.

SARS-CoV-2 Immunity and REinfection Evaluation (SIREN) participants are monitored by PCR every two weeks and by antibody tests every four weeks. The SIREN interim results suggest that those who had antibodies upon enrolment had a rate of becoming (re)infected that was 83% lower than that among those who had no antibodies upon enrolment.

Ongoing work by SIREN will clarify the duration of protection from both infection and COVID-19 carriage and vaccine efficacy.

■ **Coronavirus: Greater London**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[138933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people who have received the first covid-19 vaccination in the (a) London Borough of Barnet and (b) Hendon constituency.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[139171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have received both the first and second dose of a covid-19 vaccine in (a) Leicester and (b) the UK to date.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with voluntary community and social enterprise partners, inclusion health providers and others to develop an accessible model for delivery of the vaccine to people from inclusion health populations. We are considering a number of options and will co-design these with partners.

In the immediate period we are asking partners to support their clients and service users to register with a general practice, where they are not already and if they have health conditions that would make them clinically vulnerable/clinically extremely vulnerable, that this is recorded to ensure they receive the vaccine in line with the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisation's advice on prioritisation.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[138934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the timeframe to administer the covid-19 vaccine to all consenting persons over the age of 50 in (a) the London Borough of Barnet and (b) the Hendon constituency.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government's top priority is to ensure that everyone in cohorts one to four is offered the opportunity to receive their first dose of vaccination against COVID-19 by 15 February 2021. It will likely take until spring to offer the first dose of vaccination to the priority groups across the United Kingdom.

The Government will consider all relevant data and set out plans for phase two of vaccination once all at-risk groups have been offered their first dose of vaccine.

■ **Coronavirus: Hospital Beds**

Grahame Morris:

[\[133784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many beds there are in Nightingale Hospitals; and what proportion of those beds have been occupied in each week in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Nightingale hospitals are activated based on local clinical decisions in response to patient demand. The National Health Service will flex Nightingale capacity to address demand as has been done throughout the pandemic.

As at week commencing 18 January 2021, the NHS Nightingale Hospital Exeter is providing inpatient services to COVID-19 patients from 48 beds. The NHS Nightingale Hospital North West and the NHS Nightingale Hospital London are providing 'step-down' care to non-COVID-19 patients and provide 36 and 64 beds respectively. Other Nightingale sites at Harrogate and Bristol are supporting NHS elective and diagnostic services but are not providing inpatient services.

■ Coronavirus: Isle of Wight**Bob Seely:**[\[140249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people on the Isle of Wight are in each of the top four priority groups for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England does not hold the information in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Medical Treatments**John Redwood:**[\[133606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the progress that has been made in the testing of (a) anti-viral treatments, (b) immune modulators and (c) other existing medicines to help provide improved treatments for covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

The Department is carefully considering all available evidence from clinical trials in the United Kingdom and overseas around the potential of different drugs across a variety of different modes of action for use in treating COVID-19.

On 7 January 2021, the REMAP-CAP clinical trial published results showing that two immunomodulators, tocilizumab and sarilumab, reduced the relative risk of death by 24% for critically ill patients and time spent in intensive care by up to 10 days.

The UK national priority platform clinical trials - RECOVERY, REMAP-CAP and PRINCIPLE - can test both licensed and unlicensed drugs. These are adaptive trials, meaning that results are monitored on an ongoing basis and treatments which are clearly ineffective will be discontinued. Trials may also add new potential treatments if other evidence suggests promise.

■ Coronavirus: Personal Care Service

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[134018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the decision to restrict medical massage practitioners in areas of Tier four covid restrictions on the (a) physical and (b) mental health of people with chronic pain.

Edward Argar:

Access to defined healthcare is not restricted either under the previous Tier 4 arrangements or the current national lockdown. Where services are commissioned by the National Health Service, any decisions on changes to provision is a matter for the local NHS. Where health services are privately provided, such decisions are a matter for the individual practitioner or the organisation they are employed by.

The Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council has set out advice for its members on the circumstances in which it understands massage therapy would meet the definition of healthcare set out in the legislation. It is however for individual practitioners and their employers to ensure that practice is within the current legislation.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Catherine West:

[\[139084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a requirement for people to wear a mask in outdoor markets during the covid-19 outbreak similar to that requirement having been made by Borough Market in London.

Jo Churchill:

There is no legal requirement for either staff or members of the public to wear face coverings outdoors, including at outdoor markets. This is because there is strong scientific evidence that the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is higher in enclosed spaces compared to outdoors - it is this risk of transmission that wearing a face covering will help reduce. The most effective actions members of the public can take to protect themselves and others are to avoid leaving home unless absolutely necessary, and to practice social distancing indoors and outdoors together with good hand hygiene.

The Government is guided by the advice of its scientific and medical experts and is keeping the evidence on face coverings under constant review. Further action will be taken if needed.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[141462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made since the publication the Government's personal protective equipment (PPE) strategy in September 2020 of the (a) adequacy and (b) appropriateness of the four months' stockpile of PPE pledged for winter 2020-21 to (i) protect healthcare workers and (ii) meet demand, in the context of recent increases in covid-19 cases.

Jo Churchill:

Since February 2020 we have ordered almost 32 billion items of personal protective equipment (PPE), the majority of which has already been delivered or is on its way and by December we had built a four-month stockpile of all COVID-19 critical PPE. We are confident we have secured enough PPE for the ongoing challenges of COVID-19 and that we have the processes and logistics in place to distribute PPE to where it is needed.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Stella Creasy:****[96883]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2020 to Question 89688 on Coronavirus: Screening, what the performance standards are that Deloitte is expected to meet under the terms of its contract relating to its involvement in the provision of covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: All arrangements for Deloitte's support to Test and Trace are subject to Crown Commercial Services terms. Each workstream has a comprehensive service description and is subject to regular performance monitoring and management to ensure they are delivering in line with the programme's objectives.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Jonathan Ashworth:****[113101]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to ensure the rapid distribution of a covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

An enormous amount of 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. Over 6.5 million people across the UK have now received their first dose of a COVID vaccine and nearly half a million have received their second dose. There are now over 2700 sites across the UK already offering vaccines to those at risk by age and clinical priority.

Daily updates on vaccine doses are available here:

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/healthcare>

The UK Vaccine delivery plan was published on 11 January 2021 and can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951928/uk-covid-19-vaccines-delivery-plan-final.pdf

Emma Hardy:**[121908]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the planned timescale is for the first rollout of a covid-19 vaccination; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The United Kingdom has a very successful record delivering vaccination programmes, but this is the biggest vaccination programme in National Health Service history. We have an ambitious timetable. By 15 February we aim to have offered a first vaccine dose to everyone in the top four priority groups identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Jane Stevenson:[\[121918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with local authorities on the use of civic buildings for the covid-19 vaccination rollout.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The identification of appropriate venues for the delivery of COVID-19 vaccinations has been led locally by the National Health Service, working with partners including local authorities and local resilience forums. In many cases, this does or will include local authority owned or operated facilities. The Department for Health and Social Care, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and NHS England and NHS Improvement are in regular contact with the Local Government Association and other relevant groups to ensure local authorities have the information they need to support the vaccine programme, as well as to feed back any issues or improvements that could be made.

Caroline Lucas:[\[125982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) identify and (b) reach people who are homeless and eligible to be on the priority list for the covid-19 vaccine; and if he will make a statement.

Cat Smith:[\[131333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure the covid-19 vaccination programme will reach all homeless people.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with voluntary community and social enterprise partners, inclusion health providers and others to develop an accessible model for delivery of the vaccine to people from inclusion health populations. We are considering a number of options and will co-design these with partners.

In the immediate period we are asking partners to support their clients and service users to register with a general practice, where they are not already and if they have health conditions that would make them clinically vulnerable/clinically extremely vulnerable, that this is recorded to ensure they receive the vaccine in line with the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisation's advice on prioritisation.

Alex Sobel:

[126123]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how his Department plans to contact frontline health and social care workers who do not work in an NHS setting in order for them to receive a covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 10 December 2020]: Local vaccination providers, including hospital trusts and Primary Care Networks, are working with employers of eligible health and social care staff, as well as other frontline occupations specified in the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations' guidance, to arrange vaccinations. Nationally the Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement are also working with staff groups and representative bodies to ensure that both employers and staff receive accurate information about the delivery mechanisms and the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine.

Marsha De Cordova:

[129105]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the definition of frontline health workers prioritised in the covid-19 vaccination programme will include people undertaking non-clinical roles such as hospital cleaners and porters.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 17 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) is the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI have advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

The Committee considers frontline health and social care workers who provide care to vulnerable people a high priority for vaccination. Non-clinical staff in secondary or primary care/community healthcare settings are also included in the definition of front-line health workers. This includes non-clinical ancillary staff who may have social contact with patients but are not directly involved in patient care. This group includes some receptionists, ward clerks, porters and cleaners .

Derek Twigg:

[132772]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the data on the number of people who have received the covid-19 vaccine in each (a) clinical commissioning care group and (b) local authority area will be made available.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Since 24 December, we have published weekly data on the total number of vaccinations among those aged over 80 years old and under in England. From 11 January, daily data for England has been published showing the total number vaccinated to date, including first and second doses. From 14 January, NHS England and NHS Improvement have published more detailed weekly data of vaccinations in England, including by region.

Caroline Nokes:

[\[132874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of deploying (a) buses and (b) other such vehicles as mobile vaccination centres in order to facilitate the roll out of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Vaccination for at-risk groups will take place at the most appropriate settings to encourage uptake.

The mobile model, where 'roving' vaccination teams bring the vaccine directly to individuals, is being used to support the vaccination of care home residents and workers. This could be extended to more groups in time such as those experiencing homelessness, those escaping abuse in refuges, or communities with lower vaccination rates. Mobile models will also take the vaccine to those in the detained estate. The mobile model will also help more remote rural communities, particularly those at risk of isolation where public transport is limited.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[132893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what date he estimates that (a) all members of the phase one priority group identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation will have received the covid-19 vaccine and (b) it will be safe to begin easing covid-19 restrictions.

Nadhim Zahawi:

By 15 February we aim to have offered a first vaccine dose to everyone in the top four priority groups identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

As large numbers of people from at risk groups are given an effective vaccine, we will be able to gather the evidence to prove the impact on infection rates, hospitalisation and reduced deaths. If successful, this should lead to a substantial reassessment of current restrictions.

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[133611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason pharmacies have not been used to administer covid-19 vaccinations; and if he will make it his policy to utilise the pharmacy network for that purpose.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: As from 26 January 2021, 65 community pharmacies have started to offer the COVID-19 vaccination service, with more pharmacies joining the service over the coming weeks.

Some pharmacists and members of their team have also been working with general practitioners (GPs) to deliver the vaccine in many areas of the country.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with all the national pharmacy organisations on plans to ensure that community pharmacies are used to optimal

effect in the COVID-19 vaccination programme, starting with the sites that can do this at scale.

There is now a list of vaccine sites on the NHS website regularly updated as they come on stream, so you can check what services are available in your constituency including pharmacy sites. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/hospital-hubs-and-local-vaccination-services/>

Sir Christopher Chope:

[133629]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it the policy of the Government to issue (a) green passports to people who have been vaccinated against covid-19, (b) temporary green passports valid for six months to people who have recovered from covid-19 and (c) proof of vaccination documents for people wishing to travel overseas.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We have no plans to introduce COVID-19 vaccine passports. As with other vaccination programmes, vaccine record cards are issued to patients with the relevant details about the vaccine including the date of their vaccination and their vaccine type. This does not constitute an immunity passport and will not be used as a form of identification.

Julian Sturdy:

[133821]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to utilise community pharmacies in the roll-out of covid-19 vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

As from 26 January 2021, 65 community pharmacies have started to offer the COVID-19 vaccination service, with more pharmacies joining the service over the coming weeks.

Some pharmacists and members of their team have also been working with general practitioners (GPs) to deliver the vaccine in many areas of the country.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with all the national pharmacy organisations on plans to ensure that community pharmacies are used to optimal effect in the COVID-19 vaccination programme, starting with the sites that can do this at scale.

There is now a list of vaccine sites on the NHS website regularly updated as they come on stream, so you can check what services are available in your constituency including pharmacy sites. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/hospital-hubs-and-local-vaccination-services/>

Debbie Abrahams:

[133850]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to train health care professionals on communicating the (a) safety and (b) effectiveness of the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Public Health England produces comprehensive training and information materials for COVID-19 vaccinators. This includes information about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines and key messages for healthcare professionals to convey to those being vaccinated. All vaccinating staff involved in the deployment programme are required to complete training that includes modules on the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. Communicating about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine is a component of the process for gaining informed consent.

Martyn Day:

[134505]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will assess the approved covid-19 vaccines' level of protection for those who are vaccinated and registered as clinically vulnerable by monitoring antibody levels.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) will be using existing surveillance systems and enhanced follow-up of cases to monitor how effective the vaccine is at protecting against a range of outcomes including infection, symptomatic disease, hospitalisations, mortality and onwards transmission.

There are a number of studies and surveillance systems that monitor rates of infection in the population through repeat respiratory swabs and blood tests to monitor the development of antibodies against the virus - antibodies due to infection can be distinguished from antibodies due to vaccination. PHE will monitor rates of infection in vaccinated individuals compared to unvaccinated individuals to understand how effective the vaccine is at preventing infection.

To monitor the effectiveness of the vaccine at preventing onwards transmission PHE will look at laboratory markers of infectiousness in vaccinated compared to unvaccinated cases and follow-up household contacts of cases to understand whether vaccination reduces onwards transmission within the household. The impact of the vaccination programme on COVID-19 activity at a population level will be monitored to understand the direct and indirect effectiveness of the vaccine.

Vaccine effectiveness will be monitored in different population groups to understand how the effectiveness varies by age, presence of other medical conditions and other factors. Surveillance systems will remain in place for the long-term to monitor how long protection lasts to inform the need for booster doses.

Andrew Griffith:

[136683]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to minimise the risk of covid-19 vaccines expiring before they are administered.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England (PHE) manages vaccine stocks by 'first expiry first out'. This means that stock with the shortest expiry date is identified against orders and sent to National Health Service sites for administration into patients before longer dated stock. This is a standard process employed across all vaccine stocks managed by PHE for the national immunisation programme.

Justin Madders:[\[137952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what advice he has received from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on increasing the time period between the administration of the first and second dose of covid-19 vaccine for NHS and social care staff.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 19 January 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations (JCVI) advises the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation. After studying all the available data, the JCVI concluded that the first dose of both vaccines currently deployed provides substantial protection within two to three weeks of vaccination from severe COVID-19 disease. The second vaccine dose is important to sustain the protection and extend its duration. However, in the short term, the additional impact of the second dose is likely to be modest and most of the initial protection from clinical disease is after the first dose of vaccine. The four UK Chief Medical Officers agreed with the JCVI that at this stage of the pandemic prioritising the first doses of vaccine for as many people as possible on the priority list would protect the greatest number of at-risk people in the shortest possible time.

Operationally this means that second doses of both vaccines will be administered towards the end of the recommended vaccine dosing schedule of 12 weeks. This will maximise the number of people getting the vaccine and receiving protection within the next 12 weeks. The JCVI's statement on changing the dose interval is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/prioritising-the-first-covid-19-vaccine-dose-jcvi-statement/optimising-the-covid-19-vaccination-programme-for-maximum-short-term-impact

Jon Trickett:[\[138388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will list the names and locations of the pharmacies in the Wakefield local authority area that are administering covid-19 vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

There are five local vaccination sites within the NHS Wakefield Clinical Commissioning Group area:

- Castleford Civic Centre in Castleford;
- King's Medical Practice in Normanton;

- Sandal RUFC in Wakefield;
- Church View Health Centre in Pontefract; and
- St Swithun's Community Centre in Wakefield.

More community pharmacies will begin to administer the COVID-19 vaccine from the weeks commencing 18 January and 25 January. There is now a list of vaccine sites on the NHS website regularly updated as they come on stream, including community pharmacy sites at the following link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/hospital-hubs-and-local-vaccination-services/>

Daniel Zeichner:

[138457]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether healthcare students on placements will receive priority access to the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the 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 have 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.

Frontline healthcare workers are staff who have frequent face-to-face clinical contact with patients and who are directly involved in patient care in either secondary or primary care/community settings. Temporary staff, including those working in the COVID-19 vaccination programme, students, trainees and volunteers who are working with patients must also be included.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[138462]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the ethical implications for people who received a first dose of the Pfizer covid-19 vaccine, but had their second dose postponed or cancelled.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The four United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers agree with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation that prioritising the first doses of vaccine for as many people as possible on the priority list will protect the greatest number of at risk people overall in the shortest possible time. It will have the greatest impact on reducing mortality, severe disease and hospitalisations and protect the National Health Service and equivalent health services.

On 11 January, NHS England set out operational guidance on the need to reschedule all appointments to receive the second dose in the twelfth week. This will help deliver the public health duties identified above and to vaccinate as many people, as quickly as possible, including frontline health and care workforce.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[138531]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, following vaccination of the key priority groups which the Government has outlined, if he will (a) prioritise people working in emergency call operating centres and (b) publish a timescale for the roll-out of that vaccine to that group of people.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

If emergency call operating centre workers are captured in phase one due to their age, or clinical risk factors they will be prioritised. However the Government, as advised by of the JCVI, are not considering vaccinating emergency call operating centre workers as a phase one priority at this stage. Prioritisation decisions for next phase delivery are subject to of the surveillance and monitoring data and information from phase one, as well as further input from independent scientific experts such as the JCVI. Phase two of the roll-out hopes for further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services.

Julian Sturdy:

[138949]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of (a) fill-finish capacity and (b) the effect of that capacity on plans to upscale vaccine rollout.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

The Government has also invested over £300 million in securing and scaling up the UK's manufacturing capabilities to be able to respond to this pandemic, which includes investments in Wockhardt where the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is filled and finished. As of 25 January 2021, 6,573,570million people in the UK had been vaccinated with the first dose of the vaccine. We continue to plan to hit our target of vaccinating all four priority groups by 15 February.

Christian Matheson:

[139032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the rationale for the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's decision not to prioritise people with learning disabilities in the roll out of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are an independent expert advisory committee which advise the Government on vaccination. The JCVI advised that the priority for the first phase of the COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of mortality from COVID-19. The JCVI have advised that adults with severe and profound learning difficulties should be prioritised for vaccine in the first phase of the programme.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[139066]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that directly employed personal assistants carers are aware they can access covid-19 vaccines as frontline social care staff.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the 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 in receipt of a carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill, will be offered vaccination in priority group six in line with the JCVI's advice.

Information on identifying and vaccinating social care workers, including those providing direct care to people who need care and support, was published on 14 January and is available at the following link:

www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/vaccinating-frontline-social-care-workers/

Charlotte Nichols:

[139162]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing (a) retail workers and (b) other workers in public facing roles to be prioritised for the covid-19 vaccine once everyone over the age of 50 has been offered it.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the 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 have 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.

Prioritisation decisions for next phase delivery are subject to of the surveillance and monitoring data and information from phase one, as well as further input from independent scientific experts such as the JCVI. Phase two may include further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[139973]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what impact assessment he has made of exempting from covid-19 regulations meetings held exclusively between individuals who have already been vaccinated against covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We will closely monitor the impact of vaccinations on individuals, on National Health Service pressures and on the spread of the virus. However, at this stage, we do not know what impact the COVID-19 vaccine will have on transmission.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[140919]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to implement the recommendation of the British Society of Immunology and introduce a high-profile, multifaceted engagement programme to build public understanding and confidence in the covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The Department of Health and the NHS and PHE are providing advice and information at every possible opportunity to support those who have been prioritised to receive a vaccine and anyone who has questions about the vaccination process.

The latest advice and information is available on the National Health Service website and GOV.UK and our social media channels are regularly publishing fact cards, films and interviews about vaccine safety and answering frequently asked questions about vaccine production. In addition, senior clinicians are giving media interviews and taking part in live question and answer sessions with the public about COVID-19 vaccines.

Senior clinicians, Ministers and officials are also holding regular briefing sessions with stakeholders, medical charities, faith groups and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) community leaders about the vaccines authorised for use.

Additionally, the Government is sponsoring content on social media channels and a range of news media outlets to provide information and advice to communities across the country. This includes targeted information and advice via TV, radio and social media, translated into 13 languages. Print and online material, including interviews and practical advice, has appeared in 600 national, regional, local and specialist titles

Barry Gardiner:

[141386]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS healthcare workers had received the (a) first and (b) second dose of the covid-19 vaccine by Wednesday 20 January 2021.

Barry Gardiner:

[141387]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many non-frontline workers in the NHS had received a (a) first dose and (b) second dose of the covid-19 vaccine by 5pm on 20 January 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: This information is not available in the format requested.

Chi Onwurah:

[141451]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether covid-19 vaccine supply will be prioritised to regions according to (a) local population size, (b) local vulnerable population, (c) local population in the top four priority categories and (d) proportion of the local population already vaccinated.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to work with vaccination sites across the country to ensure an adequate and consistent supply of vaccine. Each Primary Care Network site receives their own supply and work has been carried out with local clinical commissioning group colleagues to ensure that vaccine supply aligns with the number of registered patients in the priority cohort groups. Where sites may progress through their supply more quickly than others, NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with sites to ensure that supplies are replenished.

■ **Coronavirus: Vitamin D**

Stuart C McDonald:

[135966]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of a person's vitamin D levels on the severity of covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) supported the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) to review emerging evidence on vitamin D and the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 in spring 2020. The review concluded that there was currently no robust evidence to support taking vitamin D supplements to reduce the risk or severity of COVID-19. The review is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sacn-rapid-review-vitamin-d-and-acute-respiratory-tract-infections>

In autumn 2020, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and PHE were asked to re-consider the evidence on vitamin D and COVID-19. The resulting rapid guideline on vitamin D and COVID-19 reiterated existing advice for everyone to take a daily 10 microgram supplement of vitamin D during winter months and noted that there was not enough evidence on vitamin D and the prevention or treatment of COVID-19. However, NICE, PHE and the SACN will monitor emerging evidence on this issue. The guideline on vitamin D and COVID-19 is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng187>

■ Coronavirus: West Midlands

John Spellar:

[128052]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason what (a) Birmingham and (b) Sandwell are excluded from the first wave of covid-19 vaccinations.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 15 December 2020]: Initially there was a complex and difficult logistical challenge to deliver from the manufacturers Pfizer and it was important that hospital hubs were fully prepared with the appropriate plans in place to administer that vaccine. The first phase of delivery went to 50 hospital hubs across the United Kingdom, which is just one part of the range of vaccination services which will cover the entire country.

Due in part to the recent authorisation of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, this capacity has now increased. Alongside University Hospitals Birmingham, 29 other hospital hubs in the region are administering vaccinations, as well as 148 local vaccination services across the Midlands, including 20 in Birmingham and Solihull. Millennium Point in Birmingham also began administering vaccines on 11 January 2021 meaning a greater proportion of the at-risk population in the Midlands will have access to the vaccines.

■ Dental Services

Justin Madders:

[140151]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent comparative assessment he has made of the level of access to routine dental check-ups for NHS and private patients.

Jo Churchill:

No such assessment has been made. Data is not collected on private dental provision.

■ Dentistry

James Wild:

[\[122903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many university places were available to study dentistry in each year since 2015.

Jo Churchill:

The attached table shows the intake of dental students in England for each academic year since 2015.

Attachments:

1. Initial Intake Figures [PQ122903 TABLE.docx]

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Climate Change Convention

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[140786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Departmental staff will be attending COP26 in an official capacity with their expenses covered.

Edward Argar:

Numbers on Departmental staff attending COP26 are still to be determined. In line with the Department's travel and expenses policy, staff attending the conference in an official capacity will be able to reclaim costs incurred.

■ Diabetes

Emma Hardy:

[\[134076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support people living with the effects of diabetic foot disease on their (a) economic, (b) social, (c) mental health and (d) personal wellbeing; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

This Government is committed to supporting everyone's mental health and wellbeing and ensuring the right support for those with diabetic foot disease. All mental health trusts have established 24 hours a day, seven days a week urgent mental health helplines where people experiencing a mental health crisis can access support and advice but also face to face appointments where appropriate.

Evidence suggests that multidisciplinary footcare teams play a major role in a good diabetes footcare pathway and can significantly reduce amputations and subsequently the financial burden of diabetic foot disease. The proportion of hospitals offering access to multidisciplinary footcare teams has increased from 5 % in 2011 to 82% in 2019.

■ Emma Stanton**Dan Carden:**[\[138493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2021 to Question 129095 on Emma Stanton, who made the decision to reduce the lobbying ban to just four months.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 20 January 2021]: The business appointment rules decision regarding Dr Emma Stanton's appointment with Oxford Nanopore were made by the Department's Human Resources Director in consultation with the Permanent Secretary. The period of any conditions relating to business appointment rules are always proportionate to the circumstances and in this case reflected Emma Stanton's short Civil Service appointment with NHS Test and Trace.

The overarching business appointment rules will continue to apply for any new employment for two years after the last day of Emma Stanton's Civil Service employment with any related conditions decided for each new employer and the related circumstances, as required.

■ Fertility: Clinics**Steve McCabe:**[\[139977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS fertility clinics have paused services during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021 as a result of (a) staff redeployment and (b) other covid-19-related issues.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: Following the national lockdown in March 2020, all fertility clinics were able to re-open from May 2020, provided that they could demonstrate to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) that they could offer a safe service for patients and clinic staff during the ongoing pandemic.

The HFEA has advised that, as of 20 January 2021, a small number of clinics have been affected by staff redeployment and other COVID-19 related issues. This has resulted in less than 10% of clinics either temporarily suspending services, re-prioritising activity, or working with other local clinics to ensure patient treatment is not affected.

■ General Practitioners: Yorkshire and the Humber**Jon Trickett:**[\[134350\]](#)

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

Jo Churchill:

In the Yorkshire and the Humber region there were 863 practices active in 2010 and 668 in 2020.

■ Glaucoma: Drugs

Fleur Anderson:

[\[134218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure adequate supplies of glaucoma medication procured from EU suppliers.

Jo Churchill:

Our priority is to ensure that patients continue to have access to the medicines they need, including glaucoma medication. We continue to work closely with the pharmaceutical industry, the National Health Service, and others in the supply chain to deliver the shared goal of continuity of safe patient care under all circumstances.

■ Health Professions: Training

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[138991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the amount of financial support (a) nursing, (b) midwifery and (c) allied health profession students need to complete their university degrees.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 January 2021]: The Government keeps the funding arrangements for all pre-registration undergraduate and postgraduate NHS health professionals' education under review, to ensure that students are appropriately supported.

Full-time nursing, midwifery and allied health profession students qualify for up-front fee loans to meet the full costs of their tuition, partially means-tested loans as a contribution towards their living costs and, where applicable, additional grants for students with disabilities and those with adult or child dependants. Additional means-tested living costs support is available for full-time students whose courses require more than 30 weeks and three days attendance in an academic year.

In addition to student loans, since September 2020, all eligible pre-registration nursing, midwifery and allied health students have been able to access a non-repayable training grant of at least £5,000 per academic year through the NHS Learning Support Fund.

■ Health Services

Neil O'Brien:

[\[136051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the CRITCON level for each hospital for which data is available on each day in the last three months.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: CRITCON scores are used as part of operational data to support the day to day delivery of services. These scores are a snapshot and can change rapidly within hours of being recorded. In this context this data is not routinely published.

The 'Urgent and Emergency Care Daily Situation Report', highlighting pressures on the National Health Service is published at trust level and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/uec-sitrep/urgent-and-emergency-care-daily-situation-reports-2020-21/>

■ HIV Infection: Disease Control

Scott Benton:

[137339]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking with the Department for Health and Social Care to help prevent new HIV cases by 2030.

Jo Churchill:

In 2019 the United Kingdom met the UNAIDS target for the third consecutive year, with 94% of people living with HIV being diagnosed, 98% of those diagnosed being on treatment and 97% of those on treatment having an undetectable viral load. As well as developing a new sexual and reproductive health strategy, this year we have also committed to publish a HIV Action Plan which will set out actions to reach zero new HIV transmissions in England by 2030. This work will be informed by the report and recommendations of the independent HIV Commission. The Department will work in collaboration with key partners including the Government Equalities Office on both the strategy and HIV Action Plan.

■ HIV Infection: Drugs

Scott Benton:

[137340]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure equitable access to the anti-HIV drug PrEP for all groups who could benefit from it.

Jo Churchill:

In March 2020, we announced that pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) will be routinely available across England in 2020/21 as part of the Government's aim to end HIV transmission by 2030. This year we provided £11 million to local authorities for routine commissioning of PrEP and this is already in place in the majority of areas. Routine commissioning of PrEP will benefit tens of thousands of people and, along with other measures, will take us closer to our ambition of zero HIV transmissions by 2030.

Public Health England, in collaboration with stakeholders, is currently developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the routine commissioning of PrEP. This will use established surveillance systems and include measures of PrEP need and use among key population groups to inform equitable delivery and access.

■ Hospitals: Modernisation

Navendu Mishra:

[140299]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to modernise hospital estates.

Edward Argar:

The Health Infrastructure Plan (HIP) will deliver a long-term, rolling five-year programme of investment in health infrastructure, including capital to build new hospitals. The Prime Minister confirmed 40 hospitals will be built by 2030, with funding of £3.7 billion confirmed over the next four years. An open competition will be run to identify eight further new schemes.

The HIP will modernise estates by more than delivering new hospitals; the Government has committed £450 million to upgrade accident and emergency departments, £400 million to eradicate dormitory accommodation from mental health facilities and £600 million to upgrade and refurbish National Health Service hospitals. In addition, local health systems will shortly be receiving confirmation of their capital envelopes for 2021-22 and the settlement from HM Treasury has enabled us to protect the level of capital funding for trusts which enables them to progress priority investments agreed with local health partners.

■ Hospitals: Parking

Anne Marie Morris:

[138997]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of suspending hospital car parking enforcement at hospitals distributing the coronavirus vaccine.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 21 January 2021]: Car parking regulations are enforced at National Health Services sites where they are distributing the COVID-19 vaccine and elsewhere to ensure parking remains safe and available for all users. Suspending such enforcement would have a detrimental effect on car parking users and their access to such facilities. However, NHS organisations will consider the appropriateness of taking action, for example issuing Parking Charge Notices, with regard to the local circumstances.

■ Infant Foods: Marketing

Alison Thewliss:

[141507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to fully implement the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes.

Jo Churchill:

There is strict legislation currently in place through the overarching Food for Specific Groups legislation (Retained Regulation No 609/2013) and specifically Retained Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/127. These regulate, labelling and

marketing of infant formulae and follow-on formulae so as not to discourage breastfeeding. The legislation gives effect to the principles and aims of the 1981 World Health Organization Code on the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes by restricting the labelling, presentation and advertising of infant formula so as not to discourage breastfeeding.

These are enforced by the Food for Specific Groups (Food for Special Medical Purposes for Infants, Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula) (Information and Compositional Requirements) (Amendment etc.) (England) Regulations 2020. Similar legislation applies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

■ Infectious Diseases

Philip Davies:

[\[135879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the ratio of covid-19 (a) hospital admissions to (b) community infections in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England has not yet conducted an analysis of the ratio of COVID-19 hospital admissions to community infections.

■ Kidneys: Transplant Surgery

Dan Jarvis:

[\[83816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people awaiting a kidney transplant who were not offered an operation because of (a) capacity and (b) safety concerns due to the covid-19 outbreak in each of the last six months.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 September 2020]: During the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of kidney transplant centres closed, although four centres remained open throughout. Due to the different practices established across the United Kingdom and across organ groups with regards to waiting list management, it is not possible to give an accurate number for the number of patients who were suspended or did not receive an offer for a transplant.

■ Liver Diseases

Sir David Amess:

[\[134327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of hospital admissions as a result of alcohol-related liver disease.

Jo Churchill:

As part of the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England and Improvement, with support from Public Health England (PHE), is helping acute hospitals with the highest rates of alcohol harm to establish or improve specialist alcohol care teams.

PHE is supporting work to increase opportunities for the earlier detection of alcohol-related liver disease in people drinking at or above high-risk levels. This includes a new commissioning for quality and innovation scheme to incentivise increased cirrhosis and fibrosis tests for alcohol dependent patients in acute and mental health services.

■ **Meat: Standards**

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[135891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has undertaken of the cost effectiveness of the procurement of privatised services by the Food Standards Authority to deliver veterinary official controls in meat establishments.

Jo Churchill:

The contract to deliver veterinary services or official controls for approved meat establishments was most recently tendered in 2019 with a three year contract awarded in 2020. Assurances were given at contract award recommendation stage to a selected private service delivery partner as this option met the tender exercise strategic objectives of:

- Maintaining operational performance - the supplier provided the best technical submission so will provide the best operational performance;
- Delivering a financially sustainable contract - new contractual provisions support a more commercially robust contract, as a result of improved Food Standards Agency (FSA) understanding of costs and financial pressures in the market; and
- Delivering value for money to the FSA - the recommended supplier is the most cost effective to the FSA.

During contract retender an in-house comparator model was forecast to cost approximately £7.8 million more for the same delivery model which would have carried less flexibility and increased risk for the FSA, meaning it was not a feasible option at the time of contract retender.

■ **Medical Equipment: Rehabilitation**

John Penrose:

[\[140761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of NHS reusable rehabilitation equipment that was supplied to patients for home use and then never returned in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

No estimate has been made of these costs, on the grounds that the costs of buying this equipment are below the costs of collecting equipment and making it safe for re-use. Rehabilitation and support equipment supplied to patients requires decontamination and stress testing before being used again by another patient. This is to maintain an appropriate level of infection control and to ensure that equipment for frail patients is safe to use.

Given the relatively low cost of this equipment, the expense of setting up a system to collect, assess, clean and recycle equipment would be greater than the cost of purchasing new equipment. Trusts are able to set their own policies on the reuse and recycling of equipment and NHS England and NHS Improvement support initiatives to increase reuse and recycling.

■ Medical Treatments: Innovation

Martyn Day:

[\[134502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for the Innovative Medicines Fund to ensure (a) blood cancer patients and (b) other cancer patients can access treatments that would have been available through the Cancer Drugs Fund.

Jo Churchill:

Proposals for the Innovative Medicines Fund (IMF) are in development. We expect NHS England and NHS Improvement and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence to lead an engagement exercise in early 2021. The design and operation of the IMF, including the size of the fund, will reflect the outcome of the engagement exercise and as such, it is too soon to comment on any proposals.

■ Members: Correspondence

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[126088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich of 25 September 2020 on Government guidance on the self-isolation of school children when one of their classmates tests positive for covid-19, ref PO1259890.

Edward Argar:

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

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

Mr John Baron:

[\[132778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 30 October and 25 November on his constituent with the reference JB29196.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We are working to provide all Members and external correspondents with accurate answers to their correspondence, as well as supporting the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

John Penrose:

[134385]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 12 October and 12 November 2020 on behalf of constituent Ms Andrea Miller.

Edward Argar:

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

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

■ **Mongolian Blue Spots**

Fay Jones:

[140277]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to raise awareness of Mongolian Blue Spot among healthcare professionals.

Edward Argar:

Slate-grey naevi are a benign skin condition present from birth, which are most common on babies with darker skin. They can be mistaken for bruising but do not require treatment, will usually disappear by the age of four years old and are not a sign of a health condition.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence clinical knowledge summary on bruising, last revised in 2016, contains guidance for healthcare professionals, in the diagnosis of bruising. It contains recommendations that they also consider other skin conditions that could be mistaken for bruising, including Slate-grey naevi. Healthcare professionals should make diagnostic decisions in line with this guidance. The guidance is available at the following link:

cks.nice.org.uk/topics/bruising/

■ **Mortuaries**

Taiwo Owatemi:

[136635]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to open additional mortuary facilities.

Jo Churchill:

As part of the Government's contingency planning and preparation for the reasonable worst-case scenario this winter, the Department for Health and Social Care has worked closely with the Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure resilience in the capacity of the system. The Cabinet Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have built significant additional capacity through the provision of temporary body storage units. There are units at local resilience forums across England. Throughout the pandemic, this additional capacity has been available for NHS England to use in the unlikely event that they should require it. Communications to local resilience forums have also

emphasised that these are available to the private funeral sector should their own resources be put under pressure.

■ **NHS England and NHS Improvement**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[134375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what date he plans to publish his Department's Mandate to NHS England and NHS Improvement for 2021-22.

Edward Argar:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has a legal duty to publish the mandate to NHS England by 31 March annually under section 13A of the NHS Act 2006.

■ **NHS: Amazon**

Damian Collins:

[\[88292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what liability Amazon has in its data storage contracts with the NHS for loss of data or data breaches; and what the range of legal and financial liabilities is in contracts his Department has with other data storage suppliers.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 September 2020]: As between the parties, the Government retains legal responsibility for any data breaches or loss of data under its contract with Amazon for data storage.

This is the main data storage contract for NHS Test and Trace. Any other data storage is acquired using Government frameworks which set out standard positions in relation to legal and financial remedies.

■ **Paramedical Staff: Protective Clothing**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[135854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure a sufficient supply of personal protective equipment to frontline paramedics.

Jo Churchill:

Since 25 February 2020, the Department has distributed over seven billion items of personal protective equipment (PPE) for use by frontline workers, including paramedics, in England.

By December 2020, the Department had built a four-month stockpile of all COVID-19 critical PPE, with a tremendous contribution from United Kingdom manufacturers. We are confident in the supply of PPE and that we have appropriate processes and logistics in place to distribute PPE to where it is needed.

■ **Pregnancy: Coronavirus**

Emma Hardy:

[\[139118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his Department's policy that pregnant women are vulnerable to covid-19 and should shield.

Jo Churchill:

Only individuals considered clinically extremely vulnerable are advised to shield.

Pregnancy does not on its own make a woman clinically extremely vulnerable. When shielding advice is in place, pregnant women should only follow this advice if they have a condition that meets the definition of clinically extremely vulnerable or following consultation with their general practitioner or hospital specialist.

The majority of pregnant women are considered clinically vulnerable, meaning that they face a moderate risk of serious illness if they contract COVID-19. This is because pregnant women can sometimes be more at risk from viruses like flu. Those in the clinically vulnerable category are not required to shield and should follow the rules that are in place for everyone. It is particularly important for them to follow social distancing advice, to reduce their risk of catching the virus.

■ **Primary Health Care**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[136644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to formally consult organisations representing non-GP members of primary care multi-disciplinary teams, before negotiating the next GP contract, DES and ARRS.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: The Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement engage on an ongoing basis with a wide range of professional groups on issues relating to primary care. These groups' views and feedback help to inform priorities for negotiations with the British Medical Association on the GP Contract.

■ **Protective Clothing: Children**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[137341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what evidence informed his Department's decision that children under the age of 11 do not need to wear a mask in an enclosed public space during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The World Health Organization and UNICEF advise that children aged 12 years old and over should wear a face covering under the same conditions as adults, particularly when they cannot guarantee at least a one metre distance from others and there is widespread transmission in the area. Our guidance reflects this.

Randox Laboratories: Coronavirus**Steve Reed:** [\[91050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the value is of contracts awarded to Randox Laboratories for the delivery of covid-19 testing since 1 March 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: Information on Test and Trace contracts is available publicly on <https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>

School Milk**Paul Holmes:** [\[136653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of expanding the range of milks covered by the Nursery Milk Scheme to include plant-based and other non-dairy milks.

Jo Churchill:

At present the legislation governing the Nursery Milk Scheme allows for the reimbursement of the cost of cow's milk and infant formula based on cow's milk. The Department is currently considering this position.

Smoking: Coronavirus**Lee Anderson:** [\[136054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is undertaking research to determine the extent to which smokers may experience more serious effects of covid-19 compared to non-smokers; and what information his Department holds on that matter.

Jo Churchill:

At the request of Public Health England, an independent and regularly updated rapid review of the international evidence on smoking and COVID-19 has been made and is available at the following link:

<https://www.geios.com/read/UJR2AW.11>

The evidence on smoking and COVID-19 is mixed and developing. We do not yet have a clear picture on the impact of smoking on COVID-19 risks. There is strong evidence that smoking tobacco is generally associated with an increased risk of developing respiratory viral infections.

Stepping Hill Hospital: Finance**Navendu Mishra:** [\[140294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to allocate funding for capital investment at Stepping Hill hospital.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[140295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the suitability of hospital (a) building and (b) estates for Stepping Hill hospital.

Edward Argar:

In 2020-21, Stockport NHS Foundation Trust has received £3.61 million for Stepping Hill Hospital, as part of our £450 million investment to upgrade accident and emergency departments and £4.8 million from our £600 million Critical Infrastructure Risk fund to address backlog maintenance at the hospital. This is in addition to £30.6 million allocated for its sustainability and transformation partnership scheme to provide a new Emergency Care Campus. Now that our capital settlement has been confirmed with HM Treasury, we will consider carefully how projects are prioritised within it, whilst further investment will be dependent on the outcome of future Spending Reviews.

■ **Stockport NHS Foundation Trust**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[140297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing to Stockport NHS Foundation Trust to help improve accident and emergency services at Stepping Hill hospital.

Edward Argar:

Stockport NHS Foundation Trust has been awarded £30.6 million to fund a new emergency care campus on the hospital site, transforming emergency care in the area. Providing effective care for different patient groups, it will ensure that patients can be seen more quickly by the most appropriate clinical specialists. Developments includes an urgent treatment centre, primary care referral unit and a modern space to provide investigations and treatments that will avoid admission for patients wherever possible. An additional £3.6 million has been awarded to the Trust, to support emergency care in managing the challenges this winter by funding the separation of COVID-19 and non COVID-19 patients, same day emergency care expansion and increased emergency department capacity through equipment upgrades and enhanced diagnostics access improving patient flow.

■ **Test and Trace Support Payment**

Maria Eagle:

[\[116403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people notified to self-isolate by the NHS Test and Trace app are now eligible to receive the Test and Trace Support payment.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: As of 10 December, an individual notified to self-isolate by the NHS COVID-19 App because they have recently been in close

contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 is able to claim the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment, provided they meet the eligibility criteria.

Dan Carden:

[119349]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to expand the eligibility of the Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 for people required to self-isolate during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 26 November 2020]: There are no immediate plans to expand eligibility, though we continue to work closely with the 314 unitary authorities and district councils in England to review the scheme.

■ Urinary Tract Infections: Diagnosis

Stephen Metcalfe:

[138954]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether PHE plans to update its guidance on UTIs to recommend the use of a dipstick to diagnose UTI patients with suggestive symptoms and to reflect Scotland's guidance SIGN 88: Management of suspected bacterial urinary tract infection in adults.

Edward Argar:

The Public Health England (PHE) diagnostic urinary tract infection (UTI) guidance was last updated in October 2020 and will be reviewed again in November 2021. The current guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/urinary-tract-infection-diagnosis>

PHE recommends dipstick testing in patients with one or fewer of the key UTI diagnostic symptoms (new nocturia, dysuria, or cloudy urine). The Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network approach recommends using dipsticks in a slightly larger subset of patients. PHE will keep the emerging evidence on dipstick use within UTI diagnosis under review in order to inform future guidance updates.

■ Vaccination

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[107593]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve vaccination rates in England.

Jo Churchill:

The United Kingdom has one of the most comprehensive immunisation programmes in the world and vaccines coverage for most programmes is generally high. Though we do not yet have the verified coverage data to demonstrate the full impact of the pandemic on vaccination rates, vaccine uptake across the UK remains high.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working closely with Public Health England and the Department to drive improvements in immunisation uptake and coverage in all routine childhood immunisations. The Department intends to publish a vaccination

strategy in the near future to maintain and develop the UK's immunisation programme.

■ Vitamin D

Caroline Lucas:

[\[136479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when people who applied for the free four-month supply of vitamin D supplements for adults who are clinically extremely vulnerable will receive them; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

From this month, the Government is providing a free four-month supply of daily vitamin D supplements to adults on the clinically extremely vulnerable list that have opted in to receive the supplements and residents in residential and nursing care homes in England. The registration period for this scheme has been extended to 21 February. For those who have opted in to the scheme and are eligible, supplements will be sent directly to their homes.

The Government has prioritised groups that were asked to stay indoors more than usual over the spring and summer due to national restrictions. Through this commitment, 2.7 million vulnerable people in England will be offered free vitamin D supplements for the winter by the Government.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum: Military Bases

Owen Thompson:

[\[141528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January 2021 to Question 136007, if she will publish data on the number of medical assessments that have taken place for asylum seekers who are housed in barracks.

Owen Thompson:

[\[141529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January 2021 to question 136008, how much new community-based dispersal accommodation has been procured since the covid-19 lockdown announced in March 2020.

Chris Philp:

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

This includes providing asylum seekers with privacy and confidentiality as would be expected by those seeking sanctuary in the UK where it would be damaging for their identities to be revealed.

The Home Office therefore do not publish data on medical assessments relating to service users.

Procurement of accommodation was on hold due to constraints, availability and Local Authority pressures in relation to Covid 19.

We have established the Local Government Chief Executive Group (HOLGCEX) group to bring together senior representatives from Home Office, Local Government Association and local authorities with the aim of working in partnership to improve the asylum dispersal process for the people who use this service and the communities in which they reside.

We are trying to implement national structures across 150 LAs who will have a localised view and their own processes and practice. To allow us to better engage, we fund SMPs by region to enhance engagement. Furthermore, when procuring dispersed property there is a process to follow which includes consultation with LAs and statutory bodies.

We will continue our work through Home Office and Local Governments Chief Executives (HOLGCEX) group, and the Director and Deputy Director have been having 1 to 1 engagement with Chief Executives to discuss latest plans. We have also stood up a programme team to increase procurement across the UK, but we can only do so where Local Authorities agree we can procure in their area.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[141561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 136619 on Asylum: Military Bases, what the Government's timetable is for the transfer of all individuals of the Penally training camp.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[141562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were housed at the Penally training camp as at 21 January 2021.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[141563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans for the cessation of transfers of asylum seekers into the Penally training camp.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[141564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January to Question 136619 on Asylum: Military Bases, what (a) type of accommodation and (b) location asylum seekers being transferred out of the Penally training camp are being placed in.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[141565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 136619, whether other Ministry of Defence sites will be used to house individuals being transferred out of the Penally training camp.

Chris Philp:

There are currently 118 asylum seekers accommodated at Penally training camp, Pembrokeshire.

The Home Office and Clearsprings Ready Homes have worked intensively with Welsh Government, Public Health Wales, Hywel Dda University Health Board and Dyfed, Powys police and other partners as we have stood up and are now operating on the site.

The Penally training camp is temporary, contingency accommodation whilst we continue to address the issues putting pressure on our asylum accommodation. The MOD has given permission to use the site for 12 months.

At present the Home Office will continue to regularly move small numbers of people out of Penally into Dispersal Accommodation in line with business as usual processes and will continue to route new people into Penally in line with public health guidance.

Those asylum seekers being moved to Dispersal Accommodation will not be moved to the other Ministry of Defence site currently in use; Napier Barracks. This site is also providing temporary contingency accommodation for asylum seekers whilst their claims are examined.

Accommodation for supported asylum seekers is arranged by private sector providers through contractual arrangements with the Home Office. Dispersal Accommodation is a mixture of Homes of Multiple Occupancy (HMO's), flats, houses or hostel-based properties. Location will be based on the availability of properties suitable for each asylum seekers needs.

Our accommodation providers are also working to maximise accommodation procurement opportunities throughout the UK, however they can only do so with local authority agreement. It is our intention to move all individuals in contingency accommodation into suitable dispersed accommodation dependent upon it becoming available.

■ Borders: Coronavirus**Sarah Owen:****[141613]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of introducing a New Zealand-style managed isolation and quarantine system at the border during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

Government discussions on the most appropriate response to COVID-19 are ongoing and evolve in line with developments and assessments. Measures at the Border are a continuous topic of discussion during meetings between Cabinet colleagues; and the Government will continue to announce policy developments at the appropriate stage.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Rachael Maskell:

[141525]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the extent of movement of people between covid-19 local restriction tiers before Christmas 2020; and what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the powers the police have in order to respond to that matter.

Kit Malthouse:

On 2 December, national restrictions were lifted across all of England with the country returning to a regional tiered approach. On 20 December, the Government amended the tiered system to include a fourth tier to be applied in areas where cases were rising the most rapidly.

The Government guidance stipulated that when travelling between tiers, individuals must adhere to either the restrictions in the area where they live or the restrictions in the area they were travelling to, whichever was more stringent. Guidance also stated that people should not enter tier 3 or tier 4 areas unless they had a reasonable excuse to do so (such as to go to work or school or receive medical treatment). Those individuals living in tier 4 areas were advised to stay local and avoid travelling between tiers unless necessary.

The Government moved quickly to ensure the police had the powers and guidance needed to support compliance with the tiered restrictions. The police had the power to direct people who were unlawfully breaching regulations to return home, and to issue fines to those who failed to comply.

■ Domestic Abuse: Death

Jess Phillips:

[140131]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the total number is of women known to the police to have been subjected to domestic abuse or coercive control who have died in sudden or unexplained circumstances; and for how many and what proportion of that number the cause of death was classed as (a) homicide, (b) suicide, (c) accidental, (d) natural causes and (e) open verdicts.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office does not hold the information in the categories requested. However, according to the Office of National Statistics, in the period April 2018-March 2019, in 99 cases of Female Homicide the suspect was either a son, daughter, family member or former or current partner.

Some of this information is included in Domestic Homicide Reviews; government is currently reviewing how to collate such information.

The statistics can be found on this link

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/homicideinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2019/relateddata>

■ Home Office: Databases

Chi Onwurah:

[138973]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many information gateways there are in operation in his Department; and how those gateways are managed and monitored.

Kit Malthouse:

Response 20 January 2021

This information is not held centrally and can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Human Trafficking: Children

Jess Phillips:

[141490]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many children have been referred to the Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship service broken since October 2018; and what information her Department holds on the (a) looked after children status, (b) age, (c) gender and (d) nationality of those children.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office has rolled out Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs), an independent source of advice for trafficked children, in one third of local authorities across England and Wales. ICTGs provide one-to-one support for children who have no one with parental responsibility for them in the UK via an ICTG Direct Worker (DW). They also provide an expert ICTG Regional Practice Co-ordinator (RPC), first introduced in October 2018, for children where there is someone with parental responsibility for them in the UK.

Data tables published in October 2020 as part of the Assessment of Independent Child Trafficking Guardians – Regional Practice Co-ordinators:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-analysis-of-independent-child-trafficking-guardians> show ICTG referral data between October 2018 and December 2019:

(a) The Home Office does hold data about the LAC status of children within the ICTG service. However, this data is not currently published and so, on this basis, we cannot provide any details on how many children receiving ICTG support are LAC.

(b) The split of gender in this timeframe is 378 males (243 DW and 135 RPC) and 134 females (77 DW and 57 RPC), these do not include some values that have been suppressed in order to protect the confidentiality of children in the ICTG service.

(c) The split by age group in this timeframe is:

- 49 aged 0-13 (37 DW and 12 RPC);
- 44 age 14 (28 DW and 16 RPC);
- 90 age 15 (57 DW and 33 RPC);

- 155 age 16 (107 DW and 48 RPC);
- 148 age 17 (83 DW and 65 RPC); and
- 18 age 18 (18 RPC).

These also do not include values that have been suppressed in order to protect the confidentiality of children in the ICTG service.

(d) The total RPC caseload in this timeframe was 193 children. Out of this, 174 children were UK nationals. Due to the small numbers involved, data on other nationalities within the RPC caseload has not been provided in order to protect confidentiality.

For the DW role the following data is recorded for the timeframe: 320 children in total on the DW caseload. 56 Vietnamese nationals, 40 Sudanese nationals, 38 UK nationals, 30 Albanian nationals, 23 Gambian nationals, 22 Afghan nationals, 19 Romanian nationals, 17 Ghanaian nationals, 13 Eritrean nationals, 10 Iraqi nationals and 6 Iranian nationals. As with the RPC role, other nationalities cannot be included due to small numbers and the confidentiality required.

The Home Office publishes statistics on NRM referrals on a quarterly basis, reports from Q2 2019 – Q3 2020 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-referral-mechanism-statistics>.

Reports from 2018 and 2017 can be found here respectively:

<https://nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/who-we-are/publications/282-national-referral-mechanism-statistics-end-of-year-summary-2018/file> and;

<https://nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/who-we-are/publications/159-modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking-national-referral-mechanism-statistics-annual-report-2017/file>.

Jess Phillips:

[141491]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many instances there have been of an Independent Child Trafficking Guardian acting as a litigation friend for a child in each of the last five years.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office does not hold this data.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Stuart C McDonald:

[141496]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, it she will make it her Department's policy that (a) EU care workers and (b) other EU citizens who are unable to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme by the 30 June 2021 because they were unaware of the scheme or the deadline do not lose their status and rights.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has run three bursts of marketing campaigns for the EU Settlement Scheme, spending £4.6 million, with the latest running throughout December 2020, to

encourage EU citizens across the UK to apply. Nearly 4.9 million applications to the scheme had been received by 31 December 2020.

In line with the Withdrawal Agreement, the Government has made clear where a person has reasonable grounds for missing the 30 June 2021 deadline for applications to the EU Settlement Scheme by EU citizens and their family members resident in the UK by the end of the transition period, they will be given a further opportunity to apply.

Non-exhaustive guidance will be published on what constitutes such reasonable grounds, to underpin a flexible and pragmatic approach to considering late applications under the scheme, based on the circumstances of each case.

Stuart C McDonald:

[141497]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what adjustments have been made to the EU Settlement Scheme to mitigate the disruptions caused by the covid-19 outbreak in order to ensure that all EU citizens are able to obtain their status through that scheme by the 30 June 2021 deadline.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has continued to receive and process thousands of applications daily to the EU Settlement Scheme throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in nearly 4.9 million applications had been received by 31 December 2020.

Support for applicants who need it has remained available, including from the EU Settlement Resolution Centre and the network of now 72 organisations across the UK grant-funded by the Home Office to help vulnerable people apply to the scheme.

In line with the Withdrawal Agreement, the Government has made clear where a person has reasonable grounds for missing the 30 June 2021 deadline for applications to the EU Settlement Scheme by EU citizens and their family members resident in the UK by the end of the transition period, they will be given a further opportunity to apply.

Published guidance for EUSS applicants on the impact of COVID-19 is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-eu-settlement-scheme-guidance-for-applicants>.

■ Intelligence Services and Official Secrets

Catherine West:

[141643]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the recommendations of the Intelligence and Security Committee's 2020 report on Russia, if her Department will bring forward legislative proposals on (a) a Foreign Agents Registration Act and (b) updates to the Official Secrets Act.

Kit Malthouse:

As set out in the Queen's Speech, the Government will be introducing new legislation to provide the security services and law enforcement agencies with the tools they

need to tackle the evolving threat of hostile activity by foreign states. As part of this work, we are considering a range of powers, including reviewing the Official Secrets Acts, and intend to introduce our own registration scheme.

■ Offences against Children

Jess Phillips:

[\[141493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that girls who are experiencing sexual exploitation continue to receive support when responsibility for their safety and wellbeing transitions from children to adult safeguarding services.

Victoria Atkins:

Sexual exploitation is a devastating crime. The Government understands and recognises that exploitation does not end just because a child reaches 18 years of age. The statutory safeguarding guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children', is clear that agencies should work together to plan and prepare for this transition. The Home Office is working closely with colleagues across government, including with the Department of Health and Social Care, to ensure children transitioning from child to adult services continue to receive support, where this is needed.

Provision of support for victims of all forms of sexual violence and abuse is a priority for the Government. We have significantly increased funding for support services across the country, which victims and survivors can access throughout their lifetime to help them cope with the devastating impact of sexual abuse and exploitation. For example, in 2020 the Ministry of Justice increased the funding available to rape support centres across England and Wales by 50%, from £8 million to £12 million per annum, to provide much needed support to victims of sexual violence and abuse.

■ Sexual Offences

Jess Phillips:

[\[141492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a requirement for statutory agencies to refer women who disclose (a) historical and (b) ongoing sexual exploitation to specialist sexual exploitation services.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government is committed to tackling all forms of sexual violence and exploitation, ensuring that victims are provided with the support they need to begin rebuilding their lives and that those responsible are prosecuted.

We are committed to ensuring that victims of these crimes have access to high-quality support services to help them cope with and, as far as possible, recover from the effects of crime. The right to access these services is set out in the recently revised Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

The recently revised Victims' Code, which comes into force on 1 April 2021, will ensure that victims benefit from a clearer set of rights and that these rights are

recognised at every stage of the justice system. The revised Victims' Code provides a solid foundation on which we can progress the Victims' Law. The Ministry of Justice aims to consult on the full details of the Victims' Law later this year.

Potential victims of sexual exploitation have access to specialist support and advocacy services to assist them in rebuilding their lives and reintegrating into local communities. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the process by which the UK identifies and supports potential victims of modern slavery including sexual exploitation by connecting them with appropriate support, which may be delivered through the specialist Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC), local authorities and asylum services.

The introduction of the new MSVCC, which went live on the 4 January 2021, has brought about a number of new services and greater prescription to existing services to better meet the needs of each victim, including those with specialist or complex needs. The MSVCC will continue to provide accommodation, financial support payments, translation and interpretation, transport and access to an outreach support worker for those who are identified as a potential victim and receive a positive Reasonable Grounds decision from the Single Competent Authority.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ Parliamentary Estate: Coronavirus

Chris Stephens:

[140174]

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, what advice has been received since November 2010 from Public Health England on the risks of people continuing to work on the Parliamentary estate contracting covid-19; and if he will publish that advice.

Pete Wishart:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: Public Health England has supported the House in responding to Covid-19 throughout the past 12 months. Its advice, in conjunction with the working safely guidance which is available to all workplaces, has been incorporated into the Working safely on the Parliamentary estate during the coronavirus outbreak risk assessment. This document has been updated to reflect any changes any in the situation, with the most recent published on 14 January. The assessment is available for anyone to view on the Parliamentary website:

<https://www.parliament.uk/contentassets/d23db9b1eb174243ae97bda14ca82613/hop-v4-hop-covid-risk-assessment--issued.pdf>

Chris Stephens:

[140175]

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, what recommendations have been received from Public Health England since November 2020 on the circumstances in which the suspension of work on

the Parliamentary estate would be advisable owing to the increased risk of infection from covid-19.

Pete Wishart:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: Public Health England has confirmed that the measures put in place to ensure the House remains Covid secure are appropriate to manage the risk of infection. As the risks are being managed, Public Health England has issued no advice around where suspension of work on the estate may be necessary.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Homelessness: Coronavirus

Neil Coyle:

[\[141478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2021 to Question 136542, how many and what proportion of the 33,000 people supported through the Everyone In scheme were subject to No Recourse to Public Funds restrictions.

Eddie Hughes:

The data and breakdown requested is currently not available. 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 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: Domestic Violence

Jess Phillips:

[\[141489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Supported housing: national statement of expectations, published on 20 October 2020, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that exempt

accommodation providers housing victims of domestic abuse and their children meet the required standards.

Eddie Hughes:

The National Statement of Expectations (NSE) is an important step in improving oversight of supported housing. The publication of the NSE sent a strong signal that the Government expects high standards to be met in housing across the supported exempt sector.

We are continuing to work with local government and the sector to improve standards for all residents in supported exempt accommodation. My officials will continue to work with Women's Aid, and domestic abuse providers on this important issue.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Department for International Trade: Databases

Chi Onwurah:

[\[138970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many information gateways there are in operation in her Department; and how those gateways are managed and monitored.

Greg Hands:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has a 2 key information gateways in place. One with the HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and one with the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

DIT has a legal gateway to receive and access HMRC data via a Memorandum of Understanding. This has been granted under sections 18 of the Commissioner for Revenue and Customs Act 2005 and section 25 of the Taxation (Crossborder Trade) Act 2018. This gives DIT access to HMRC data including (but not limited to) Customs Declarations data with Director level sign-off for the monitoring and investigation of unfair trade. Access is limited to colleagues in the Trade Remedies Investigations Directorate that provide digital and operational support to the directorate. The movement, use and destruction of the data must be in line with HM Government's Security Policy Framework.

The Trade (Disclosure of Information) Act 2022 underwent Royal Assent in December 2020. The Act includes a data sharing clause that allows DIT (and other departments) the opportunity to request data held by HMRC for the purposes of trade. We are currently working closely with HMRC to agree what data can be shared, how it will be shared and held safely on DIT systems and agree protocols on data usage.

DIT also has 4 Data Access Agreements in place with the ONS. This gives access to: the Inter-Departmental Business Register, the Labour Force Survey, the Annual Population Survey and Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings to approved individuals in this agreement for the purposes specified within the agreements. Access is

restricted to approved individuals via an agreed secure analytical environment and managed by the DIT Microdata team. Records are kept of users and their access arrangements as well as the work that they are undertaking and outputs produced. The processing of these data must be for statistical purposes and in accordance with Data Protection Legislation including the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007). All outputs must meet the criteria and Principles established in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics set out by the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA).

Finally, over the summer DIT supported HMRC and other departments with engagement with businesses for the end of transition, with a Memorandum of Understanding to cover data sharing. This included using data provided by HMRC, the legal basis for which was Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act Section 18(2) with trader consent. This work is now complete.

■ Fossil Fuels: Carbon Emissions

Preet Kaur Gill:

[141578]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the projected emissions are for each fossil fuel project currently under consideration to be funded by UK Export Finance by scope (a) one, (b) two and (c) three.

Graham Stuart:

Until 31st March 2020 it was UK Export Finance (UKEF) policy and practice to collect the estimated annual operational CO₂-equivalent (CO₂e) Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions of projects only where they fall under the scope of the OECD Council Recommendation on Common Approaches for Officially Supported Export Credits and Environmental and Social Due Diligence (OECD Common Approaches) or the Equator Principles, and where they are expected to be in excess of 25 000 tonnes CO₂e annually.

Eight of the fossil fuel related cases currently under consideration by UKEF are requests for support through the Export Development Guarantee (EDG). The EDG provides general working capital to support the operations of eligible UK exporters, and is not tied to specific contracts or projects. UKEF does not, therefore, hold information about project-level *greenhouse gases* (GHG) emissions for these cases.

The estimated emissions for those projects for which UKEF does hold figures are as follows:

COUNTRY	TYPE OF PROJECT	SCOPE 1/2 EMISSIONS (TONNES OF CO2E/YEAR)	SCOPE 3 EMISSIONS (TONNES OF CO2E/YEAR)
Brazil	Upstream oil and gas	480,000	Not available (data not yet collected or estimated by the project)
Turkmenistan	Compressors for a gas pipeline to a power station	108,625	Not available (data not yet collected or estimated by the project)
Brazil	Upstream oil and gas	2,088,000	Not available (data not yet collected or estimated by the project)

We do not hold project related GHG emissions data relating to trade finance applications.

■ Overseas Trade: Ghana

Gareth Thomas:

[138852]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate her Department has made of the number of British companies that have paid tariffs on imports of goods from Ghana since 1 January 2021; what the value of those tariffs were; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Since 1st January, Ghana has been eligible for preferential tariff rates under the United Kingdom's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) scheme. The collection of any tariffs is a matter for HM Revenue and Customs, but details of the GSP scheme and associated preferences are available at:

gov.uk/government/publications/trading-with-developing-nations

Over a year ago, we proposed a deal to Ghana on the same terms as they have in force with the EU, which would have maintained their duty-free, quota-free access, but they chose not to take this take up. To put this in context, we reached agreements with 63 countries around the world on this basis, covering trade flows worth £217 billion in 2019. This included a deal with Côte d'Ivoire, a member of ECOWAS alongside Ghana.

On 31st December 2020, the United Kingdom and Ghana issued a joint Ministerial statement announcing that a consensus had been reached on the main elements of a trade agreement. Negotiations are progressing and, with willingness in Ghana, the agreement can be finalised and brought into force quickly, restoring tariff-free trade for Ghanaian exporters.

■ **Overseas Trade: Israel**

Janet Daby:

[\[140253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what her Department's policy is on the supply to the Israeli Government of (a) mechanical diggers and (b) other large-scale industrial or agricultural equipment that may potentially be used for the destruction of buildings in that country; and whether her Department has supplied such equipment to the Israeli Government.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom applies export controls to military items and certain dual-use items. Standard mechanical diggers and agricultural machinery are not subject to such controls, but the Department for International Trade is not a supplier of such equipment.

■ **UK-Africa Investment Summit**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[140904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether any Official Development Assistance was used to fund the hosting of the Africa Investment Conference.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The Africa Investment Conference was funded from the Department for International Trade (DIT) Africa core budget, which excludes Official Development Assistance.

■ **UN Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods**

Mhairi Black:

[\[141505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what her Department's policy is on ratifying the Convention on the International Sale of Goods 1980.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

I refer the Hon. Lady for Paisley and Renfrewshire South to the answer I gave her on 20th November 2020 (UIN: [114241](#)).

JUSTICE

■ Exploitation: Children

Jess Phillips:

[140125]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions for offences for exploitation of children under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 there have been in each year since that Act came into force.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions, up to December 2019, for offences under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. These are available in the 'Outcomes by Offence' data tool, here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888664/outcomes-by-offence-tool-2019.xlsx

Data held centrally by MoJ does not identify the age of the victim unless *this is specified by the relevant legislation*. Therefore, centrally held information cannot separately identify the number of modern slavery prosecutions that involved child victims. The information may be held on court record; however, identification of the victim's age would require access to court records and transcripts, which would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Legal Representation

Grahame Morris:

[141426]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what statistical information his Department holds on trends in the number of litigants in person appearing in courts and tribunals since 2010.

Alex Chalk:

The Department publishes County Court, Family Court and Crown Court figures on defendants or parties with no (or unknown) representation. Information on unrepresented defendants in Magistrates' Courts and Tribunals, with the exception of Employment Tribunals, is not held centrally. Where this data is not available from 2010, the start of the publication series is provided. This data does not represent the number of litigants in person, however, because a party may be without representation for only part of a case.

Family Courts:

Data on the number of parties with and without representation in cases with at least one hearing are published in the Family Court Statistics Quarterly, and trend analysis since 2011 is also given. The latest edition is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-court-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2020>.

Civil:

Data from 2013 on the number of civil defended claims with and without representation are published in the quarterly publication at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-justice-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2020>

Crown Court:

Data from 2010 to 2018 on the number of parties with no (or unknown) representation in the Crown Court, including trends since 2010, are published in the quarterly publication at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2019> (Tables AC10-13).

Employment Tribunals:

Data of those represented in Employment Tribunals are published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2020>.

■ **Magistrates' Courts: Coronavirus**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[139995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure that Magistrates courts (a) limit observers and (b) enforce covid-19 lockdown regulations in the context of observing a court hearing not being a legitimate reasons to leave home.

Chris Philp:

Courthouses have been individually assessed, in accordance with guidance approved by Public Health England and Public Health Wales. These assessments include limiting the capacity of waiting areas and courtrooms to enable everyone to observe social distancing requirements.

Magistrates' courts are under a statutory duty to sit in open court and the public must be admitted, subject to it being safe to do so. It is the responsibility of the police and local authorities to enforce the covid-19 lockdown regulations.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Databases**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[138976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many information gateways there are in operation in his Department; and how those gateways are managed and monitored.

Alex Chalk:

Effective management of information is critical to the smooth running of the justice system, and the department takes its management and monitoring very seriously. Revealing details of the department's monitoring capabilities in public would likely prejudice their capability and effectiveness, and the department's ability to preserve those systems. In order to safeguard processing systems, we are unable to provide the information requested.

Memoranda of Understanding and Information Sharing Agreements are in place as required and assessed for the required data protection clauses and adequate safeguarding of information. The checks and approval process are carried out in a centralised privacy tool which also stores the final version. The department has initiated a renewed programme of training aimed at those with roles with significant elements of dealing with personal information. All staff are required to take part in information handling training.

■ Probate: Administrative Delays

Alex Sobel:

[141601]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment his Department has made of the level of administrative delays in probate cases.

Alex Chalk:

The most recently published information regarding waiting times for a grant of probate covers July 2020 to September 2020 and is published on gov.uk via Family Court Statistics Quarterly (Table 26):

AVERAGE TIME TO GRANT ISSUE FOR PROBATE GRANTS, ENGLAND AND WALES ^{1,2,3}

	Application submission to grant issue		Document receipt to grant issue ³	
	Mean weeks	Median weeks	Mean weeks	Median weeks
July 2020 to September 2020	6.7	4.9	6	4.4

Source HMCTS Core Case Data

1) HMCTS Core Case Data (CCD) came into effect at the end of March 2019, following a transition between data systems recording information regarding The Probate Service.

2) The average timeliness figures are produced by calculating the time from application/document receipt (which may be from an earlier period) to the grant issued made in that period.

3) Document receipt occurs after payment has been made and all accompanying paperwork has been received by HMCTS.

In 2020 the level of applications being made increased and the service faced unprecedented challenges due to the impact of Covid-19.

Despite this, and as a result of HMCTS increasing resources to meet demand, the average length of time taken for a Grant of Probate to be issued improved quarter on quarter throughout the year.

■ Sexual Offences: Internet

Fay Jones:

[140279]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to criminalise the offence of threatening to share explicit images without consent.

Alex Chalk:

Activities involving sharing or threatening to share intimate images are captured by existing offences tackling “revenge pornography”, harassment, malicious communications, blackmail, and “coercive or controlling behaviour”.

However, the Government recognises that there is concern over the growth of new technology and the impact on the law in this area.

We have asked the Law Commission to review the law in this area to ensure victims are properly protected. The Law Commission intends to publish a public consultation paper shortly with a view to announcing findings later this year, which the Government will consider carefully.

■ Sexual Offences: Prosecutions

Jess Phillips:

[140126]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions for the offence of sexual assault by penetration under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 have been made in cases where the victim had experienced county lines exploitation in each year since 2015.

Alex Chalk:

The Government recognises the devastating impact of county lines activity on children and vulnerable people which can include both sexual and criminal exploitation. Prosecutions data involving offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 held centrally by the MoJ does not include such detailed information about the victim to indicate whether they had been a victim of county lines exploitation previously. This information may be held on court record, however to identify it would require access to detailed court records and transcripts, which would incur disproportionate cost.

However, the Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions, up to December 2019, for the following offences: ‘Sexual assault on a female – penetration’, ‘Sexual assault on a male – penetration’, ‘Sexual assault of a male child under 13 - penetration’, ‘Sexual assault of a female child under 13 – penetration’ and ‘Causing sexual activity without consent – penetration’. These are available in the Outcomes by Offence data tool:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888664/outcomes-by-offence-tool-2019.xlsx

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Iron and Steel: Northern Ireland****Colum Eastwood:**[\[140971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on the Northern Ireland economy of the recent application of the 25 per cent steel tariff on steel movements from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

Colum Eastwood:[\[140973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will publish the engagements he has had with stakeholders on the 25 per cent tariff on steel moving between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Colum Eastwood:[\[140974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what plans his Department has to (a) seek removal of the 25 per cent tariff on steel moving between Great Britain and Northern Ireland and (b) mitigate the effects of that tariff through provision of financial support.

Mr Robin Walker:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The Government wrote to affected businesses to set out routes for bringing UK-origin and EU-origin steel into Northern Ireland tariff-free.

The Government also set out how relevant quotas can be accessed when businesses in Northern Ireland import steel from the rest of the world.

We will continue to engage on this issue with industry, the European Commission, and the Northern Ireland Executive.

Colum Eastwood:[\[140972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what engagement (a) he and (b) Cabinet colleagues have had with representatives of the EU on seeking a resolution to the matter of the recent application of the 25 per cent steel tariff on steel movements between Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The Government wrote to affected businesses to set out routes for bringing UK-origin and EU-origin steel into Northern Ireland tariff-free.

The Government also set out how relevant quotas can be accessed when businesses in Northern Ireland import steel from the rest of the world.

We will continue to engage on this issue with industry, the European Commission and the Northern Ireland Executive.

SCOTLAND**■ Scotland Office: Databases**

Chi Onwurah: [\[138977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many information gateways there are in operation in his Department; and how those gateways are managed and monitored.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland has a small number of information gateways in operation with other Government Departments. They are managed and monitored through data sharing agreements.

■ Scotland Office: Marketing

Owen Thompson: [\[141530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much his Department has spent monthly on (a) communications, (b) advertising and (c) marketing since 1 August 2020.

Mr Alister Jack:

Following best practice set out in the Government Communications Service (GCS) Modern Communications Operating Model (MCOM,) the Office is resourced to deliver all of the communications functions and activities expected and required of a government department in its own right and on behalf of the UK Government in Scotland.

(a) Total Office expenditure from 1 August 2020 to 31 December 2020, including staffing, on delivering all of these functions was £687,925

(b) & (c) The Office delivers public information campaigns in Scotland to communicate important messages to the public, such as national awareness campaigns and policy initiatives. Total Office expenditure from 1 August 2020 to 31 December 2020 on promoting public information was: £34,591.

TRANSPORT**■ Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme**

Seema Malhotra: [\[141467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the proportion of an airport's fixed costs that will be covered by the Airports and Ground Operators Support Scheme.

Robert Courts:

The Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme will support airports and ground handlers that have been severely impacted by the pandemic while retaining relatively high fixed costs, including business rates liabilities. We do not comment on the commercial or financial matters of private firms, because this information is commercially sensitive.

Seema Malhotra:

[\[141468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of lifting the £8 million cap in the Airports and Ground Operators Support Scheme.

Robert Courts:

The Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme intends to allow commercial airports and ground handlers operating at airports in England to be able to apply for support to the equivalent of their site's business rates liabilities, up to a cap of £8m, if they meet the qualifying criteria and conditions. Final details of the scheme are still to be made and we aim to launch the scheme shortly.

■ **Department for Transport: Databases**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[138971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many information gateways there are in operation in his Department; and how those gateways are managed and monitored.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Based on the information that is currently held by the Department and its agencies (namely the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, Vehicle Certification Agency, and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency), there are approximately 200 information gateways in operation.

We manage and monitor our information gateways by assigning them to trained Information Asset Owner (IAOs). These IAOs are responsible for ensuring that information is shared in a way that is both lawful and consistent with the Department's aims and objectives. The IAOs are supported by data protection and information assurance experts, as well as the Department's lawyers where appropriate, to ensure that they understand their responsibilities to protect sensitive information.

■ **Driving Licences: EU Countries**

Ian Murray:

[\[141425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will update the Government's online guidance for people driving in the UK on an EU licence to reflect the changes as a result of the end of the transition period.

Rachel Maclean:

Some discussions are still ongoing with Member States around the exchange of driving licences. Gov.uk pages, including the pages "Driving in Great Britain on a non-GB licence" and "Exchange a foreign driving licence" will be updated as information becomes available.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Kerry McCarthy:

[141410]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 21 January 2021 to Question 138893, when the remaining £14 million of the £20 million allocated for ORCS for the financial year 2020-21 is planned to be distributed to local authorities; and whether it has already been determined which local authorities will receive this funding.

Rachel Maclean:

The On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) is a demand-led fund open to all UK local authorities to apply to. Funding is awarded following successful applications from local authorities, and as such the distribution of funds is not pre-determined. There has been a record number of projects funded this year, and applications to the Scheme are still being received. The Government regularly considers other opportunities to support local authorities in maximising the provision of EV infrastructure and will take action if it deems it appropriate.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line

Rachael Maskell:

[140860]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent changes have been made in the planning for HS2 East to ensure minimum or no disruption to biodiversity and ancient woodlands

Andrew Stephenson:

Development of the Eastern Leg is currently paused while we undertake the Integrated Rail Plan for the Midlands and the North. The IRP will look at how best to deliver HS2 Phase 2b, Northern Powerhouse Rail and other major rail programmes. We aim to publish the IRP early this year, which will set out plans covering the Eastern Leg of HS2.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Railway Stations

Rachael Maskell:

[140861]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what cross-departmental work is taking place to build the maximum economic opportunity in (a) York and (b) other locations adjacent to High Speed Two stations.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department is working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to help ensure local places capitalise on the economic benefits of HS2. This includes identifying barriers which are impeding the implementation of the HS2 Growth Strategies, and developing plans to help ensure HS2 catalyses local growth and regeneration and helps to level-up the economies of the Midlands and the North.

■ Marine Environment: Emergencies

Caroline Lucas:

[\[138914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the marine contingency planning the UK has in place for responding to a maritime accident involving the escape of radioactive materials to marine (a) aquatic and (b) atmospheric environments relating to (i) environmental protection and (ii) public health; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[138915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the marine contingency planning range of actions for which the UK has preparations in place for responding to a maritime accident involving the escape of radioactive materials to the marine aquatic environment to (a) mitigate and (b) reduce (i) the environmental impact and (ii) down-stream exposure and public health impact of those radioactive materials; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[138916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the marine contingency planning range of actions for which the UK has preparations in place for responding to a maritime accident involving radioactivity entrained into an atmospheric plume generated by a shipboard fire to (a) mitigate and (b) reduce (i) the environmental impact and (ii) down-stream exposure and public health impact of those radioactive materials to (A) ship crew, (B) oil rig staff, (C) other maritime staff and (D) coastal communities; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) response planning designed to manage incidents involving dangerous cargo, including nuclear materials, is contained in the 'The National Contingency Plan - A Strategic Overview for Responses to Marine Pollution from Shipping and Offshore Installations (the NCP)' and other operational response procedures. The NCP is published on GOV.UK.

Response to vessel incident and pollution incidents within the maritime environment is for the most part initiated by Her Majesty's Coastguard (HMCG), with involvement from MCA Counter Pollution and Salvage (MCA CPS) and the Secretary of State's Representative (SOSREP). The timing, nature and extent of any subsequent response will depend on the nature, scope and scale of the incident and the risks to the public and the environment. This is equally applicable to incidents involving nuclear materials, where broad alerting and response protocols exist across the appropriate UK agencies and organisations.

In the case of incidents involving vessels, technical support will be sought from ship's owners, classification society, naval architects, insurers and salvors. For incidents involving nuclear materials further specialist support would be required. This will comprise of a range of response services using the resources of: International Nuclear Services, the Office of Nuclear Regulation, the Environmental Hazards and Emergencies Department (EHED), the Centre for Radiation, Chemical and

Environmental Hazards (CRCE) (including the Radiation Team element of CRCE), the Met Office and the Civil Nuclear Constabulary. Other industry specialists are likely to be engaged by the salvors for vessel firefighting, cargo/source containment, mitigation, stabilisation, and recovery.

Public Health England (PHE) have delegated responsibility to lead on UK-wide public health impacts and response resulting from the release of nuclear materials. PHE will be informed by potential and/or actual release information as well as forecast drift and exposure modelling developed by the Met Office, this last supported by EHED and CRCE. Again, location of the incident, its nature, actual and potential extent, risk to the public and environment will be considered and will inform the actual response activated. In response, PHE will engage with Local Government Resilience Fora and their counterparts within the Devolved Administrations to co-ordinate a coherent national response.

Her Majesty's Coastguard will maintain communication with all shipping approaching or in the vicinity of any incident, informing them of any danger and advise on exclusion areas and potential re-routing. They will similarly inform any offshore installation (oil & gas or offshore renewable operation), should they be in the modelled drift or potential fall-out impact area. They will also inform the UK Hydrographic Office, who will issue a temporary and/or longer term Notice to Mariners.

■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

Kerry McCarthy:

[141409]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, (a) what representations he has received, and (b) what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the removal of Value Added Tax on the sale of zero emission vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

A number of stakeholders have proposed the removal of Value Added Tax to incentivise the transition to zero emission vehicles. I have regular discussions with colleagues across Government on a range of issues relating to the Government's support for zero emission vehicle uptake. We have put in place a generous incentives regime which assists with the cost of buying zero emission vehicles and their associated charging infrastructure and which rewards those motorists who choose the cleanest vehicles. The March Budget last year included the extension of favourable benefit in kind tax rates for zero emission vehicles out to 2025: company car tax is 0% in 2020/21, 1% in 2021/22 and 2% in 2022/23 through to 2024/25; and all zero emission cars are exempt from vehicle excise duty (VED). The Government's Plug-in Car Grant (PiCG) provides grant funding of up to £3000 to assist motorists with the up-front cost of purchasing an electric vehicle. At Spending Review 2020, £582m was announced to extend plug in grants until 2022/2023. Zero emission vehicles also have significantly cheaper running costs than conventional vehicles. It costs motorists from 1p per mile to run a zero emission vehicle. Additionally, motorists are often able to take advantage of local measures like free parking and

exemption from congestion charging. The Government will continue to support industry and consumers to make the switch to cleaner vehicles.

■ Railways

Rachael Maskell:

[140859]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will focus the integrated rail plan on (a) public transport modes and active travel and (b) other aspects of intermodal transport.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) will consider how best to deliver and sequence HS2 Phase 2b and Northern Powerhouse Rail, alongside wider transport investment in the North and Midlands. The Government is considering the National Infrastructure Commission's Rail Needs Assessment report in full, ahead of making decisions on the IRP.

■ Road Traffic Offences: Enforcement

Peter Kyle:

[141541]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Government plans to give local authorities outside London the civil enforcement powers set out in part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 to enable them to enforce effectively a School Streets Scheme.

Rachel Maclean:

The moving traffic enforcement powers under Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 require a set of statutory instruments to be made covering enforcement, level of penalties, financial provisions, approved devices, adjudication and representations and appeals. This will take several months to bring into force, after which those local authorities with civil parking enforcement powers can apply for a designation order for moving traffic enforcement. Statutory guidance is being developed for local authorities on how to use the powers, including publicising their introduction in advance, to ensure that enforcement is carried out fairly.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Seema Malhotra:

[141469]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress he has made on securing a common international standard for passenger covid-19 testing; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

This is a very important issue. The UK has been leading work with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to help civil aviation restart and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. A key part of ICAO's work has been agreeing guidance last November for States to use testing more as a means to reduce the reliance on quarantine or self-isolation measures, such as the UK's Test to Release scheme. Building on this, ICAO is now looking at how to reflect progress on vaccination within that guidance and how to support the mutual recognition of tests and vaccination

records for international travel. When I spoke to the ICAO President in December, I welcomed ICAO's work so far and committed UK support.

TREASURY

■ Air Passenger Duty

Henry Smith:

[\[138921\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will hold discussions with the Secretary of State for Transport on the potential effect of the re-introduction of a return leg exemption from air passenger duty for domestic flights in the UK on (a) regional connectivity and (b) the viability of regional air routes.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has committed to consult on aviation tax reform, as part of which we will consider the case for changing the APD treatment of domestic flights, and the potential impact any measure may have on regional connectivity and domestic routes. We will provide an update on timing in due course.

HM Treasury is engaging with relevant departments ahead of this consultation.

■ Amusement Arcades: VAT

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[141477\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason the VAT reduction to five per cent was not granted to amusement arcades.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors, and will run until 31 March 2021.

Hospitality for the purposes of this relief includes the supply of food and non-alcoholic beverages from restaurants, cafes, pubs and similar establishments for consumption on the premises. It also includes the supply of hot food and non-alcoholic hot beverages to take away. Where an amusement arcade provides such hospitality, that hospitality will benefit from the reduced rate.

While the Government keeps all taxes under review, this relief comes at a significant cost to the Exchequer, and there are currently no plans to extend the scope of the reduced rate. This policy will cost over £2 billion, and while some businesses in some sectors are disappointed, a boundary for eligibility had to be drawn.

■ Business: Finance

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[139030\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing grants for businesses that have accrued excess stock as a result of Government policy changes on covid-19 restrictions.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises that this continues to be a challenging time for businesses in a wide variety of sectors, and that the restrictions which are necessary to save lives and protect the NHS cause disruption for businesses.

The Government has made available an unprecedented package of economic support, including several grant schemes. Businesses that are legally required to close due to Covid restrictions are eligible for cash grants from the Local Restrictions Support Grant of up to £3,000 per month. In addition, these businesses will benefit from one-off grants of up to £9,000 as announced on 5 January.

Businesses which are not eligible for grants for closed businesses may be able to benefit from the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). We 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, we encourage local authorities to support businesses which have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, but which are ineligible for the other grant schemes.

In addition to the grant schemes, businesses can benefit from an extension of the furlough scheme until April; an extension of the COVID-19 loan schemes until March; support for the self-employed via the SEISS; a business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality and leisure business properties; mortgage holidays; enhanced Time to Pay for taxes; and VAT cuts and deferrals.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**Rachael Maskell:**[\[141526\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) reviewing the cut-off date of 30 October 2020 for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and (b) extending that scheme in light of the third national covid-19 lockdown announced on 5 January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

For all eligibility decisions under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), the Government must balance the need to support as many jobs as possible with the need to protect the scheme from fraud.

Under the CJRS extension, an employer can claim for employees who were employed and on their PAYE payroll on 30 October 2020. The employer must have made a PAYE Real Time Information (RTI) submission to HMRC between 20 March 2020 and 30 October 2020, notifying a payment of earnings for that employee. The 30 October 2020 cut-off date allowed as many people as possible to be included by going right up to the day before the announcement, while balancing the risk of fraud that existed as soon as the scheme became public. Extending the cut-off date further would have significantly increased the risk of abuse because claims could not be confidently verified against the risk of fraud by using the data after this point.

The Government will provide a further update on the CJRS at Budget 2021.

The Government understands that the new restrictions are challenging for some businesses. On 5 January, the Chancellor announced an extra £4.6 billion to protect jobs and support affected businesses as restrictions get tougher, including a new one-off grant of up to £9,000 to support businesses in England which are legally required to close. This comes in addition to the existing monthly grants for closed businesses of up to £3,000 per month. Local authorities will also receive an additional £500 million, to a total of £1.6 billion, of discretionary funding to allow them to support their local businesses.

The CJRS is not the only support available for employees. The Government has boosted the generosity of the welfare system by £7.4 billion in 2020-21 including through a temporary £20 a week increase in the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element.

■ **Coronavirus Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund: Wholesale Trade**

Mr Clive Betts:

[141394]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions has he had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the rejection of wholesalers from Local Authority Discretionary Funds.

Kemi Badenoch:

Local authorities in England have received an additional £500 million of discretionary funding under the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme to support their local businesses. This builds on the £1.1 billion of discretionary funding which they have already received to support their local economies and help businesses impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

It is up to each local authority to determine eligibility for this scheme based on their assessment of local economic need. However, we encourage local authorities to support businesses which have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, but which are ineligible for the other grant schemes, this can include suppliers to the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors.

Businesses which do not receive grant funding should be able to benefit from other aspects of the Government's unprecedented package of economic support including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and Government-backed loans.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Mr Steve Baker:

[R] [140796]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the financial effect of the extended duration of the covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions put in place in response to the covid-19 outbreak on (a) limited company directors, (b) the self-employed, (c) hospitality staff substantially remunerated through tronc payments and (d) others who have received no or limited Government support during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided substantial levels of support throughout this crisis to protect people's jobs and livelihoods, and support businesses and public services across the UK. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has helped to pay the wages of people in 9.9 million jobs across the country and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) has received claims from 2.7 million self-employed workers.

The Government has acknowledged that it has not been possible to support everyone as they might want and that the past months have been very difficult for many people.

The Government has put in place a wide-ranging £280 billion package of support including over £65 billion in affordable finance to firms through business loan schemes, a temporary £8 billion increase to welfare, mortgage holidays, help with council tax payments, business loans, grants, a business rates holiday, and tax cuts and VAT deferrals.

The resurgence of the virus has required further action to protect people's health, while preserving the capacity of people to work and businesses to trade. The Government keeps the economic response to the pandemic under review.

■ Cultural Heritage: Coronavirus**James Sunderland:**[\[911369\]](#)

What financial support he is providing to the cultural and arts sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Steve Barclay:

The Government has announced a £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund to protect the cultural sectors through the pandemic.

To date, more than £790m of grants and loans have been allocated to over 3,000 cultural organisations in England. In addition, £100 million has been allocated in direct support to our national cultural institutions and the English Heritage Trust.

This unprecedented investment will help to protect jobs and organisations across the country.

■ Directors: Coronavirus**Esther McVey:**[\[140807\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the proposed directors income support scheme in the context of Northern Ireland's limited company directors support scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government recognises that taxpayers have faced immense challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has prioritised targeting support to those who most need it as quickly as possible, while guarding against the risk of fraud or abuse.

The Government welcomes constructive proposals from stakeholders to improve the design of its COVID-19 business support measures, including the suggestion of a Directors Income Support Scheme (DISS). The Government has been reviewing this proposal.

Company directors who pay themselves a salary through PAYE are eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Directors also have access to Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, increased levels of Universal Credit, mortgage holidays and other business support grants. More information about the full range of business support measures is available at: www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/.

■ Government Securities: Coronavirus

Sir Charles Walker:

[141413]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the (a) potential merits of the issuance of a 50 year coronavirus recovery bond to cover the debt generated by Government borrowing in the last 12 months and (b) size of the attached interest coupon that would be required to make that product attractive to institutional and retail investors; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

Throughout the past year, the Government had announced an extensive package of measures in order to provide the critical support needed by individuals, families, and businesses facing disruption caused by COVID-19. This has significantly increased the Government's financing requirement in the near term and, as previously announced by the Chancellor, this additional financing will be fully funded via additional borrowing through the Government's normal debt management operations.

Our core gilt financing programme is the most stable and cost-effective way of raising finance to fund the day-to-day activities of the Government. This includes the significant funding increase required specifically to address the period of economic disruption arising from COVID-19 and the Government's policy response. The gilt market is deep and liquid, with a good track record in responding smoothly to increases in gilt supply.

At present, the UK Government does not have any plans to introduce coronavirus recovery bonds to help fund the response to COVID-19. The Government remains open to the introduction of new debt instruments but would need to be satisfied that any new instrument would meet value-for-money criteria, enjoy strong and sustained demand in the long term, and be consistent with wider fiscal objectives. The Government recently announced its intention to issue a first sovereign Green Bond in 2021, for example. We keep the introduction of new debt financing instruments under regular review.

The UK already has comfortably the longest average duration to maturity in its debt stock across the G7, at around 15 years. This compares to around 8 years for our closest G7 peer and helps to reduce refinancing risk in the UK. The conventional and

index-linked yield curves stretch out to 2071 and 2068, respectively. When setting gilt issuance plans – including on the average duration of issuance – for the year ahead in the spring, HM Treasury and the Debt Management Office (DMO) seek to minimise, over the long term, the costs of meeting the Government's financing needs, taking into account risk.

Regarding interest rates, the Government is ultimately a price-taker, with the price of government debt determined by the market. The Treasury and DMO do not have target levels for the yields at which debt is issued. When new instruments are issued, the coupon rate is set with reference to prevailing market rates for bonds of the equivalent maturity.

■ Health Professions: Tax Avoidance

Paula Barker:

[\[140966\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) doctors and (b) nurses who (i) are subject to the Loan Charge and (ii) have settled to avoid that Charge.

Paula Barker:

[\[140967\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many armed forces veterans (a) are subject to and (b) have settled to avoid paying the Loan Charge.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not hold the requested estimates and do not routinely collect data on professions.

■ Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade: Non-Domestic Rates

Alexander Stafford:

[\[140977\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of how business rates relief supports supply chain businesses in the hospitality, leisure and retail sectors during the covid-19 outbreak.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[140980\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing business rates relief for supply chain businesses affected by the national lockdown.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided enhanced support to the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors through business rates relief given the direct and acute impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on those sectors.

The Government understands the impact that COVID-19 has had on businesses, and has provided various schemes to support firms, including those within the supply chain, including Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans, Bounce Back Loans, grants and VAT deferrals.

■ Hospitality Industry: Government Assistance

Daisy Cooper:

[141611]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the viability of calls from UK Hospitality to (a) extend the repayment period for all Government-backed loans to ten years, (b) extend the interest free period of such loans by 12 months and (c) increase the maximum Bounce Back Loans available to small businesses from £50,000 to £100,000.

Kemi Badenoch:

Any business concerned about their ability to repay their loan should discuss this with their lender in the first instance.

In order to give businesses further support and flexibility in making their Bounce Back loan repayments, the Chancellor has announced “Pay as You Grow” (PAYG) options. PAYG will give businesses the option to repay their BBLS facility over ten years. This will reduce businesses’ average monthly repayments on the loan by almost half. Businesses will also have the option to move temporarily to interest-only payments for periods of up to six months (an option which they can use up to three times), or to pause their repayments entirely for up to six months (an option they can use once and only after having made six payments). We have also amended the CBILS rules to allow lenders to extend loan terms from six to a maximum of ten years where they judge that this will help borrowers repay their loan.

For any businesses seeking finance above the £50,000 threshold for BBLS, eligible businesses can take out a CBILS loan and use part of this facility to refinance their existing BBLS loan. Businesses in this situation should speak to lenders about their financing options and eligibility for CBILS. Businesses can use any of the 100+ accredited CBILS lenders to refinance, and not just the lender they have the existing BBLS loan with.

Together, these measures provide a generous support package giving businesses the time to get back on their feet.

■ Housing: Construction

Mr Richard Bacon:

[911382]

What fiscal steps he is taking to encourage self-build and custom housebuilding.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is committed to ensuring that self- and custom-build provision expands across the country – giving more people a greater say over their homes and communities.

At the Spending Review, we announced £2.2 billion of new loan finance to support SME housebuilders. This includes delivering ‘Help to Build’ for custom and self-builders.

Custom-builders can also access development finance through the Home Building Fund.

■ Infrastructure: Coronavirus

Ian Mearns:

[\[911370\]](#)

What estimate he has made of the level of infrastructure investment required to support the potential contribution of the (a) North and (b) Midlands to post covid-19 economic recovery.

Kemi Badenoch:

In November, the government published the first ever National Infrastructure Strategy, setting out our comprehensive plan to transform infrastructure across the UK. The NIS announced a number of measures which will support the North and Midlands in their economic recovery from COVID 19, including: a new £4bn Levelling Up Fund to invest in local infrastructure priorities; £5bn to support UK-wide gigabit broadband roll-out; and a share of £4.2bn for intra-city transport settlements.

The NIS also announced that the government will set up a new UK infrastructure bank, which will be headquartered in the North and will support the UK's economic recovery from the COVID 19 pandemic.

■ Languages: Education

Kim Johnson:

[\[139166\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will include language schools in the eligible retail and leisure categories for business rates relief to allow those schools to access support from future Government grant schemes.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has provided enhanced support to the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors through business rates relief given the direct and acute impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on those sectors.

Eligibility for the current business grant schemes is not tied to eligibility for business rates relief provided to the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. Businesses that are legally required to close due to Covid restrictions are eligible for cash grants from the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) of up to £3,000 per month. In addition, these businesses will benefit from one-off grants of up to £9,000 as announced on 5 January.

Businesses which are not eligible for these grants for closed businesses may be able to benefit from the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). We 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, we encourage local authorities to support businesses which have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, but which are ineligible for the other grant schemes.

■ Pensions: Age**Jonathan Edwards:****[911389]**

What plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to introduce changes to the minimum age for withdrawing a private pension.

John Glen:

In 2014 the government announced it would increase the minimum pension age from age 55 to age 57 from 2028.

This increase reflects trends in longevity and encourages individuals to remain in work, while also helping to ensure pension savings provide for later life.

The 2014 announcement set out the timetable for this change well in advance to enable people to make financial plans and will be legislated for in due course.

■ Renewable Energy: VAT**Derek Thomas:****[141570]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of removing VAT on domestic renewables and installations for a period of 10 years to (a) help grow the Green Economy and (b) stimulate the uptake of microgeneration in domestic properties.

Jesse Norman:

The installation of many energy saving materials that generate domestic renewable energy are already subject to the reduced rate of VAT of 5 per cent when certain conditions are met.

Decisions on tax policy are made at fiscal events and the Government keeps all taxes under review.

■ Research: Tax Allowances**Jonathan Gullis:****[140959]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) small and (b) large firms have claimed R&D Tax Relief since 2010.

Jonathan Gullis:**[140960]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many firms have claimed Video Games Tax Relief in each year since its introduction in 2014.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC publish annual statistics on the number and cost of claims for Research and Development (R&D) tax reliefs. The latest release can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/corporate-tax-research-and-development-tax-credit>.

Table RD1 gives the number of claims for the R&D tax relief split by all schemes since the relief was introduced for SMEs in 2000. The number of claims for R&D tax relief can be used to approximate the number of companies.

HMRC also publish annual statistics on the number and cost of claims for Creative Industry tax reliefs. The latest release can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/creative-industries-statistics-august-2020>.

Table 4.2 gives the number of companies which have claimed Video Games Tax Relief in each year since the relief was introduced in 2014.

■ Revenue and Customs: Contracts

Paula Barker:

[140969]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many contractors have worked for HMRC while using disguised remuneration schemes in relation to the Loan Charge.

Jesse Norman:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given on 1 December 2020 to UIN 119261.

■ Revenue and Customs: Correspondence

Margaret Ferrier:

[140825]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many letters were sent by HMRC to people affected by the Loan Charge, in December 2020.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC sent approximately 17,000 letters in December 2020 to people affected by the Loan Charge. The number of taxpayers receiving these letters will be lower, as some will have received more than one piece of correspondence.

In addition to these letters and since 30 September 2020, HMRC have continued settlement discussions with taxpayers eligible for the 2017 disguised remuneration settlement terms who were prevented from settling by 30 September 2020 for reasons beyond their control, such as recent hospitalisation.

HMRC continue to offer support to taxpayers where needed when dealing with their tax affairs.

■ Revenue and Customs: Staff

Gavin Newlands:

[140838]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many employees of HMRC were exclusively employed on facilitating the collection of customs duties on (a) 30 September 2020, (b) 31 October 2020, (c) 30 November 2020 and (d) 31 December 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[141588\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent steps he has taken to ensure that working parents are aware that they can be furloughed to look after their children when schools are closed in (a) Slough and (b) England.

Jesse Norman:

Employees who are unable to work, including from home, or who are working reduced hours because they have caring responsibilities resulting from coronavirus, can be furloughed. This includes employees caring for children who are at home as a result of school and childcare facilities closing.

It is for the employer to decide whether to offer to furlough an employee.

Information on the conditions under which an employee can be put on furlough has been communicated extensively through GOV.UK guidance updates, stakeholder emails, digital media advertising, and other communications products.

■ Small Businesses: Insolvency

Layla Moran:

[\[911392\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Federation of Small Businesses January 2021 finding that 250,000 small businesses may go out of business in the next 12 months.

John Glen:

The Government is aware of the FSB's findings. We are committed to supporting small businesses and have put in place an unprecedented package of support, worth over £280 billion, which includes loans, tax deferrals, Business Rate reliefs, and general and sector-specific grants.

We will continue to take a flexible approach to ensure businesses are supported in coming months, even as measures to control the virus change.

■ Stamp Duties

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[140788\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to consider extending the Stamp Duty holiday until the end of 2021 in order to help shore up economic growth?

Jesse Norman:

The temporary increase in the Stamp Duty Land Tax nil rate band was designed to create immediate momentum within the property market, where property transactions fell by as much as 50 per cent during the COVID-19 lockdown in March. As the relief was designed to provide an immediate stimulus to the property market, the Government does not plan to extend this relief.

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[141558\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the stamp duty holiday for people who have requested solicitors to buy or sell a house before the stamp duty holiday deadline.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary SDLT relief was designed to stimulate immediate momentum in a property market where property transactions fell by as much as 50 per cent during the COVID-19 lockdown in March. This has also supported 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, but as the relief was designed to provide an immediate stimulus to the property market, it does not plan to extend this relief.

■ Tax Avoidance

Paula Barker:

[\[140965\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what action is being taken against people who promoted and operated schemes now subject to the Loan Charge.

Paula Barker:

[\[140968\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps HMRC is taking to tackle umbrella companies that advise their clients to use disguised remuneration schemes.

Jesse Norman:

The Government and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) are committed to continuing to tackle promoters and operators of tax avoidance schemes. This includes challenging the entities and individuals who promote disguised remuneration loan schemes.

On 19 March 2020, HMRC published their strategy for tackling promoters of tax avoidance 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. The Promoter Strategy is available on GOV.UK. HMRC consulted on a package of measures to tackle promoters of tax avoidance schemes over Summer 2020.

On 12 November 2020, the Government announced further proposals to tackle promoters, which it will consult on this spring. Umbrella companies advising individuals to use disguised remuneration tax avoidance schemes are within the scope of the legislation that applies to promoters and others who facilitate tax avoidance. Where appropriate, they are subject to the range of measures laid out in HMRC's strategy for tackling promoters of tax avoidance schemes.

■ Tax Avoidance: Bankruptcy

Paula Barker:

[\[140970\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people facing bankruptcy as a result of the Loan Charge.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC cannot provide an estimate for the number of people subject to the Loan Charge who have been declared bankrupt. There are many reasons why someone may be declared bankrupt. Moreover, HMRC are not always the only creditor; some individuals may be declared bankrupt as a result of a non-HMRC debt and some individuals may choose to enter insolvency themselves based on their overall financial position.

HMRC only ever consider insolvency as a last resort and encourage taxpayers to get in contact to agree the best way to settle their tax debts. Anyone who is worried about being able to pay what they owe is encouraged to get in touch with HMRC as soon as possible on 03000 599110.

■ Transport: Infrastructure

Gary Sambrook:

[\[911380\]](#)

What fiscal steps his Department is taking to improve transport connectivity throughout the UK.

Jesse Norman:

Improving transport connectivity throughout the UK is vital to the Government's levelling up agenda. That is why at the Spending Review, the Government announced a new £4 billion Levelling Up Fund to invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities. This is in addition to already announced transport investment through intra-city transport settlements, the Transforming Cities Fund and RIS2.

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has also made over £12 billion available to transport services across the UK.

■ UK Trade with EU

Hilary Benn:

[\[141395\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the availability of transit guarantees; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

Businesses using transit regularly (more than three times a year) need to apply to HMRC for authorisation to use a Customs Comprehensive Guarantee (CCG). Most businesses authorised by HMRC to use a CCG for transit will need to provide a guarantee undertaking from an approved financial institution.

Most businesses applying for CCG authorisation are currently being approved by HMRC within 30 days. However, businesses need to allow additional time to obtain a guarantee from a financial institution and return this to HMRC. HMRC and HMT have been engaging regularly with banks about the provision of guarantees for transit users. Banks have not reported any problems or delays with the issuance of transit guarantees.

HMRC are monitoring the use of guarantees by all transit users in the UK and will be contacting any traders who are identified as having insufficient guarantees directly to support them in either managing or increasing their transit guarantee. CCG holders who wish to increase the value of their guarantee should request this by contacting the CCG Team at HMRC: customs-comprehensive-guarantee-team.ccto@hmrc.gov.uk.

■ UK Trade with EU: Exports

Dr Rupa Huq:

[139077]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what comparative assessment he has made of the cost to UK-based and EU-based businesses importing goods from outside the EU to sell to EU customers.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has always acknowledged there would be new rules and processes that businesses would need to follow after the end of the Transition Period. The Government worked closely with industry throughout negotiations to ensure the vast majority of UK exports will benefit from zero tariffs, while protecting industry from unfair competition from products from other countries being imported through the EU.

Overall, businesses are adjusting well to the new rules and continue to trade effectively. In order to further support businesses and trade, the Government will continue engaging with businesses in sectors that are most affected by the UK's changing relationship with the EU to help them adjust and compete on a global stage. The deal enables the UK to take full advantage of the opportunities available as an independent trading nation, striking trade deals with other partners around the world.

■ UK Trade with EU: Travel Restrictions

Alan Brown:

[140180]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what impact assessment he has made of the EU-UK trade agreement's restrictions on laden journeys and cross trade transport operations on the logistics and haulage industry with respect to the movement of (a) goods and (b) equipment for the music and entertainment business.

Jesse Norman:

The UK's Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU ensures there will be zero tariffs or quotas on trade between the UK and the EU, where goods meet the relevant rules of origin, and includes provisions to facilitate trade and address non-tariff barriers for UK exports to the EU and vice versa.

The Government's priority is to keep goods moving and avoid delays at the border. Border Force and HMRC will act to ensure that border processes are as smooth as possible, without compromising security.

Inland border sites have been set up to ease congestion at ports. HMRC have been working with stakeholders and the Department for Transport to produce the Haulier Handbook. This outlines the processes of which hauliers need to be aware when moving goods between GB and the EU from 1 January 2021 and is available on GOV.UK.

ATA carnets are available for commercial goods, professional equipment or goods going to trade fairs or exhibitions in participating countries, which are moved on a temporary basis to a new customs territory (i.e. they will not be sold, and will return to the country of origin). This includes equipment for the music and entertainment business. Carnets allow a single document to be used for clearing goods through customs in the countries that are part of the ATA carnet system.

In addition to using carnets, alternative options for transporting equipment on a temporary basis between the EU and the UK (without having to pay customs duties and VAT) are Temporary Admission and Returned Goods Relief. More information is available on GOV.UK.

■ Wholesale Trade: Coronavirus

Alexander Stafford:

[139177]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support wholesale distributors in response to the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, the Government has protected people's jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK. Food and drink wholesalers have been eligible for a number of economic support schemes, including:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended until the end of April 2021 for all parts of the UK;
- The opportunity to defer VAT payments due between 20 March and 30 June 2020; and
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme for small businesses to borrow between £2,000 and £50,000, with no interest payments or fees for the first 12 months.

WALES

■ Wales Office: Databases

Chi Onwurah:

[\[138978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many information gateways there are in operation in his Department; and how those gateways are managed and monitored.

David T C Davies:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Wales takes the security of its data very seriously. The Office has a small number of information gateways in operation with other Government Departments. These are managed and monitored between the Office and the relevant department on an ongoing basis.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Ruth Jones:

[\[134134\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the effect of the Government's covid-19 (a) health restrictions and (b) economic measures on people aged over 75.

Kemi Badenoch:

Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on communities across the UK, and indeed across the world. The Government's health measures have been guided by science, and aim to save lives and protect the NHS. To support these, the Government has put in place an unprecedented economic support package of over £200 billion.

The Government has due regard to the equality impacts of its policy decisions relating to the Covid-19 outbreak, including explicit consideration of impacts related to age. This reflects the Government's commitment to promoting equality and ensures that Ministers comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

■ Disadvantaged: Children

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[132871\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps the Government has taken to reduce social exclusion among the children of England.

Kemi Badenoch:

A world-class education system that works for everyone is the surest way to spread opportunity across the country. That is why we are investing over £7 billion more in our schools by 2022-23 than in 2019-20, plus additional funding to cover pension costs. This means schools around the country can continue to raise standards to give all children the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. Schools continue to receive additional funding through the pupil premium – worth around £2.4 billion annually – to help them support their disadvantaged pupils.

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

This Government has also delivered an unprecedented package of support to protect jobs and businesses and, for those in most need, injecting billions into the welfare system. The new Covid Winter Grant Scheme builds on that support with an additional £170 million for local authorities in England, to support families with children and other vulnerable people with the cost of food and essential utilities this winter. Our long-term ambition is to level up across the country and continue to tackle child poverty through our reformed welfare system encouraging parents to move into and progress in work wherever possible.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Child Maintenance Service: Fees and Charges

Marion Fellows:

[\[140841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much revenue her Department has collected through the Child Maintenance Service's (a) 20 per cent fee and (b) four per cent fee through collect and pay in each of the last three years.

Marion Fellows:

[\[140842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much revenue her Department has collected through the Child Maintenance Service's £20 application fee in each of the last three years.

Guy Opperman:

Income received from the Child Maintenance Service £20 Application fee for the last 3 years is as follows:

APPLICATIONS FEE	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
	£m	£m	£m
	1.510	0.972	0.749

(Application fees reduced due to the waiver introduced in cases of Domestic Abuse)

Income received through collection charges for the last 3 years are below:

		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
		£m	£m	£m
PP Collection	20%	16.878	27.905	34.771

		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Charge				
RP Collection Charge	4%	3.241	5.430	6.767

■ **Employment: Coronavirus**

Matt Vickers:

[\[911287\]](#)

What support her Department is providing to help people find new jobs during the covid-19 lockdown.

Mims Davies:

My Department has taken significant steps to ensure jobseekers continue to get the help they need throughout the pandemic. As well as recruiting thousands of new Work Coaches, our employment support programmes, including Job Finding Support and SWAPs offer both online and - when necessary and appropriate - face-to-face support in line with the latest guidance.

In addition, as part of the DWP Estates Expansion and Renewal Programme my Hon.Friend will already be aware that we have secured new premises for a JobCentre Plus in Stockton.

■ **National Insurance: Coronavirus**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[141580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 139101, what estimate her Department has made of the (a) number of applications in the backlog awaiting issuance of National Insurance numbers to people that cannot use the visa route and (b) time it will take her Department to clear that backlog.

Guy Opperman:

Due to Covid 19 restrictions, the Department are not conducting face-to-face National Insurance Number (NINo) interviews at present. Applicants who have verified their ID via a Visa application are able to apply for a NINo using a postal route. As of 17 January 2021, there are 16,245 NINo applications awaiting a decision. Of the total outstanding applications, 1,588 have applied via the Visa Postal route, and 14,657 have applied via an alternative Postal route.

In a business as usual position our benchmark is 15 days. However, people who do not have a visa, are part of the digital trial so this may take longer.

■ National Insurance: EU Nationals**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:****[141581]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many national insurance numbers have been issued to EU citizens in each of the last five years.

Guy Opperman:

The Department publishes quarterly statistics on National Insurance Number (NINo) allocations to adult overseas nationals entering the UK. All of this information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-insurance-number-allocations-to-adult-overseas-nationals-entering-the-uk>

The available information on the number of NINos issued in the last 5 years to EU Nationals can be found at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Pensions: Environment Protection**Andrew Griffith:****[139184]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to promote environmentally sustainable investments by pension funds.

Guy Opperman:

For several years the DWP has taken action to ensure that sustainable investment by pension funds is both possible and encouraged. This has been in several different ways.

In 2018 we brought forward the ESG Regulations. These require trustees of schemes with 100 or more members to publish a policy on environmental considerations including climate change, and defined contribution schemes are required to publically report annually on how they have implemented their policy. This policy was expanded upon in 2019.

In 2020 the Government brought in the Pension Schemes Bill; Section 124 provides powers to impose a wide range of climate-related requirements, including to report in line with the recommendations of the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), and to take account of the Paris Agreement goal. This is a world first. This, the first pensions-related bill to specifically cover climate change, completed its passage of Parliament on 19th January 2021. We will bring forward detailed draft regulations and statutory guidance to in the coming days. Subject to approval by Parliament, these duties will come into force in October 2021.

Whilst many schemes can and do invest in environmentally sustainable opportunities within the charge cap, the Government is seeking to make it easier for pension scheme trustees to invest in 'productive finance' that funds infrastructure, small businesses and the transition to 'net zero'. To that end we have consulted upon changes to the rules and requirements relating to the investment by pension funds in illiquid investments.

The fragmentation of the UK pensions market is holding us back. The Government will introduce changes in October of this year to drive consolidation of the UK Defined Contribution pensions market. Without a faster rate of consolidation and greater scale, members of smaller schemes simply cannot benefit from the potential returns and greater diversification that investments such as green infrastructure or the sustainable businesses of the future can offer.

Finally, the government is also creating a Green Gilt to provide another investment vehicle for pension funds in sustainable investments.

■ Universal Credit

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[140052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to maintain the £20 universal credit uplift in universal credit beyond March 2021.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[140053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has held with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on retaining the additional uplift of £20 to universal credit recipients beyond March 2021.

Will Quince:

The £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit was announced by the Chancellor as a temporary measure in March 2020 to support those facing the most financial disruption as a result of the public health emergency. This measure remains in place until March 2021. As the Government has done throughout this crisis, it will continue to assess how best to support low-income families, which is why we will look at the economic and health context before making any decisions

■ Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit: Coronavirus

Dan Jarvis: [\[141454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department plans to announce its decision on whether the £20 uplift to universal credit and working tax credits will be extended beyond April 2021.

Dan Jarvis: [\[141455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of ending the £20 uplift to universal credit and working tax credits on (a) universal credit claimants and (b) the economy.

Will Quince:

The £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit was announced by the Chancellor as a temporary measure in March 2020 to support those facing the most financial disruption as a result of the public health emergency. This measure remains in place until March 2021. As the Government has done throughout this crisis, it will continue to assess how best to support low-income families, which is why we will look at the economic and health context before making any decisions.

■ Winter Fuel Payments: British Nationals Abroad**Jonathan Reynolds:****[140070]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to tackle the disparity in eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments for UK nationals living in different European Economic Area countries.

Guy Opperman:

In 2015 legislation was introduced that stopped winter fuel payments being made to those EEA countries with warmer winter temperatures than the warmest winter area of Great Britain - South West England. This resulted in payments no longer being made to those living in Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Greece, France, Malta and Gibraltar. There are no plans to amend this legislation.

■ Work Capability Assessment**Steve McCabe:****[141393]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have been waiting for a face-to-face Work Capability Assessment for (a) less than and (b) more than six months in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not held.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

EDUCATION

■ Educational Institutions: Coronavirus

Bill Esterson:

[133815]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the latest rate of infection with covid-19 of (a) teachers, (b) teaching assistants, (c) non teaching school staff, (d) staff in registered childcare settings, (e) college staff and (f) university staff.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 11 January 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not hold data on infection rates amongst (a) teachers, (b) teaching assistants, (c) non teaching school staff, (d) staff in registered childcare settings, **and** (e) college staff, ~~and (f) university staff.~~

For (f) university staff, the department has asked higher education (HE) providers to share information on their staff numbers and the number of staff COVID-19 cases that have been reported to them. For the 183 HE providers which provided this information to us for the 7 days between 10 and 16 December, our estimate is that there were 56.7 confirmed cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 non-academic and academic staff in HE providers for that period.

Estimates for more recent weeks are not available due to: i) a pause in data collection over the winter break and ii) inconsistencies arising from the effect of the national lockdown that began this month.

Advice from the Children's Task and Finish group is that children are at very low risk of serious illness from the virus, and there is also no current evidence that staff **in schools and colleges** are at higher risk of infection than those working in other sectors. This advice can be accessed here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/948617/s0998-tfc-update-to-4-november-2020-paper-on-children-schools-transmission.pdf.

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

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

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950367/Students_returning_to_and_starting_higher_education_in_Spring_Term_2021.pdf.

The Department also published 'guidance: Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak', which sets out what all schools will need to do during the COVID-19 outbreak from January 2021. The guidance is available here:

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

On 7 January, the Department published guidance for all early years settings and local authorities in England, which provides information on how the national lockdown restrictions to control the spread of COVID-19 will impact early years and childcare settings. This guidance is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950653/Education_and_childcare_settings_-_national_lockdown_from_5_January_2021_.pdf.

On 8 January, the Department published guidance on actions for further education colleges and providers during the COVID-19 outbreak:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision>.

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

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Trade: Advisory Bodies

Emily Thornberry:

[137160]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 14 December 2020 to Question 127536, if she will publish a full list of the Thematic Working Groups established by the Government to include the (a) membership and (b) terms of reference of each group and (c) dates on which those groups have so far met.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 18 January 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Department has established a cohort of cross-government Thematic Working Groups (TWGs), of which eight are currently in operation: Continuity; Customs; Financial Services; Intellectual Property; Procurement; Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs); Sustainability; and Trade for Development. We are in the process of establishing two further TWGs covering: Cross-Cutting Services; and Technical Barriers to Trade.

The TWGs have met 15 times to date since they were established in October 2020. A review of these groups' membership is ongoing and expected to conclude shortly,

together with a decision on whether membership and terms of reference will be published. The table below shows how many meetings the eight established groups have had and the dates on which they were held.

TWG NAME	TOTAL NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD TO DATE	DATE OF EACH MEETING HELD				
Continuity	5	23/10/2020	20/11/2020	15/12/2020	29/12/2020	05/01/2021
Customs	2	09/10/2020	11/12/2020			
Financial Services	2	06/11/2020	15/12/2020			
Intellectual Property	1	19/11/2020				
Procurement	2	07/12/2020	14/01/2021			
SMEs	1	19/11/2020				
Sustainability	1	05/11/2020				
Trade for Development	1	14/10/2020				

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Development Update

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Dominic Raab): [\[HCWS735\]](#)

As agreed with the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the last Spending Review, I have completed the cross-government review of how Official Development Assistance (ODA) will be allocated against the government's priorities for 2021. This statement sets out the process and conclusion of the review, which has ensured that UK ODA is focused on our strategic priorities, spent where it will have the maximum impact, has greater coherence and delivers most value for money.

The UK is facing the worst economic contraction in over 300 years, and a budget deficit of close to £400 billion. At 19% of GDP this is around double that of the last financial crisis. As announced last year, given the impact of this global pandemic on the economy and, as a result, the public finances, we will move to a target of spending 0.5% of GNI as ODA in 2021.

This is a temporary measure and we will return to 0.7% when the fiscal situation allows.

We remain a world leading donor, and based on current GNI forecasts will spend over £10bn of ODA in 2021.

At the same time, we will ensure the maximum impact from our aid budget by changing the way we allocate ODA to support a more integrated approach. This will allow us to drive greater impact from our ODA spending.

This review has agreed ODA allocations for all government departments, sharpening our focus on the core priorities I set out to Parliament in November in the overarching pursuit of poverty reduction: climate and biodiversity; Covid and global health security; girls' education; science and research; defending open societies and resolving conflict; humanitarian assistance; and promoting trade.

This settlement gives us the best possible launch pad to champion our international priorities for the coming year, as we commence our G7 Presidency and look ahead to hosting COP26. It maintains the Prime Minister's promise to double UK international climate finance to £11.6bn over the next five years. It sustains our commitment to the world's poorest people, advances our strategic interests overseas, and delivers on the Prime Minister's ambition to bring greater coherence and strategic oversight to the UK aid budget. The government will drive forward that agenda in 2021 through clear ministerial accountability and oversight for all our development spend. Looking further ahead, I will lead a cross-departmental review on a new development strategy to ensure close alignment of UK aid with the objectives to be set out in the Integrated Review.

Departmental ODA allocations, 2021/22

<i>DEPARTMENT</i>	<i>21/22 ALLOCATION (£M)</i>
<i>FCDO</i>	<i>8115</i>
<i>BEIS</i>	<i>706</i>
<i>CSSF</i>	<i>337</i>
<i>DCMS</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Defra</i>	<i>92</i>
<i>DHSC</i>	<i>207</i>
<i>HMRC</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>HMT</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Home Office</i>	<i>470</i>
<i>ONS</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Other [1]</i>	<i>42</i>

[1] Includes DfE, DWP, MOD and Barnett given to the devolved administrations as a result of UK Government spend on ODA. These budgets include fixed ODA eligible costs.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Update on supply of Medicinal Cannabis from The Netherlands

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care) (Jo Churchill): [\[HCWS734\]](#)

I would like to update the House on progress made by the Department of Health and Social Care towards ensuring patients can continue to access Bedrocan cannabis oils from the Netherlands.

The UK has left the EU, and the transition period after Brexit came to an end on 31 December 2020. From 1 January 2021, prescriptions issued in the UK can no longer be lawfully dispensed in an EU Member State.

Dutch law does not permit the export of finished Bedrocan oils from the Netherlands. Prior to 31 December, Bedrocan oils were supplied in the Netherlands against UK prescriptions through the proxy of a specialist importer. This was allowed whilst UK prescriptions were recognised in the Netherlands.

Bedrocan cannabis flowers produced in the Netherlands, and other unlicensed cannabis-based medicines imported from other countries, can continue to be supplied to the UK.

The Government has worked quickly with the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport to resolve the issue. I am delighted to announce that the Dutch Government has agreed to the continued access to the medicine for existing UK patients until 1 July 2021.

This news will bring enormous relief to the families who depend on these medicines and I am hugely grateful to the Dutch Government for working with us closely and quickly on this.

The Department have communicated this to patient groups, clinicians and the supply chain to ensure immediate action is taken to resume supply of these products and that no patient faces a break in their treatment.

The Department are also working in earnest to rapidly explore options for a more permanent solution for supply of these products, and will engage patient representatives and the supply chain.

HOME OFFICE

■ Independent Review of Prevent

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): [\[HCWS736\]](#)

The Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019 committed the Government to making arrangements for an independent review and report on Prevent, the Government Strategy for supporting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Prevent is one of the four strands of the Government's Counter-Terrorism Strategy, CONTEST, and is therefore a critical part of our approach to reducing the risk we face from terrorism.

Following an open competition to appoint a new Independent Reviewer of Prevent, I am appointing William Shawcross to be the new Independent Reviewer of Prevent. Mr Shawcross brings with him the necessary skills, experience and independence to carry out this Review and provide recommendations to further develop our approach to supporting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism in the future.

The appointment of Mr Shawcross demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that the Government's strategy for supporting vulnerable people to prevent them from being drawn into terrorism is as effective as possible in the future.

The Terms of Reference for the Review will be published shortly once Mr Shawcross has had an opportunity to review them in full and any amendments he might want to make, taking into account any views which have been shared with the Review team on the previous Terms of Reference. These will outline the timescales for completing the Review and ensure this important work fulfils the Government's objective of diverting vulnerable people away from terrorism.