



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 29 January 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:31 P.M., 29 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

■ Bereavement Leave

John McDonnell: [\[140741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to introduce rights to statutory bereavement leave for workers.

Paul Scully:

We recognise that the death of a close family member, friend, or colleague can be deeply upsetting. The Government believes that individuals are best placed to understand their own specific needs and we encourage their employers to respond in an appropriate and sensitive way.

Recognising that the death of a child is particularly tragic, in April 2020 we introduced a new statutory entitlement to Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay for parents who lose a child under the age of 18. Although there is no statutory entitlement to bereavement leave for employees who lose a close relative who is not a child, all employees have a 'day 1' right to take unpaid time off work for an emergency involving a dependant.

■ Conditions of Employment

John McDonnell: [\[140739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which (a) trade unions, (b) employers' organisations and (c) businesses his Department has consulted on the forthcoming consultation on employment rights.

John McDonnell: [\[140740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the forthcoming consultation on employment rights will open.

Paul Scully:

There is no Government plan to reduce workers' rights.

In our manifesto the government promised to maintain existing levels of protections for workers provided by our laws and regulations as we left the EU. In any case, our high standards were never dependent on our membership of the EU. The UK has one of the best employment rights records in the world and it is well known that in many areas the UK goes further than the EU on worker protections.

We have also committed to enhancing workers' rights now that we have left the EU. We have already set out plans to bring forward legislation which will make workplaces fairer, provide better support for working families and new protections for those in low-paid work.

Our manifesto contains commitments to create a new, single enforcement body for labour market abuses, to give greater protections for workers, as well as plans to encourage greater flexible working.

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[140900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish the Government's response to his Department's July 2019 consultation, Good Work Plan: Proposals to Support Families.

Paul Scully:

We are currently assessing the responses from the consultation on high-level options for reforming parental leave and pay. We have also conducted a formal evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme, including large-scale, representative surveys of employers and parents. Together, these will give us a fuller picture of how well the current system of parental leave and pay is working for parents and employers.

We are currently processing and analysing the data that we have collected and will consider this in tandem to the information that we have collected through the consultation. This has taken longer than expected due to the impact of Covid-19 on our research partners and because we have necessarily prioritised work on supporting parents during the pandemic. We will publish our findings in due course.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Climate Change Convention

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[140780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many departmental staff will be attending COP26 in an official capacity with their expenses covered.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The number of departmental staff that will be attending COP26 in an official capacity has yet to be confirmed.

■ Employment Tribunals Service: Coronavirus

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[140903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Justice on the backlog of Employment Tribunal single claims since the covid-19 lockdown announced in March 2020.

Paul Scully:

Ensuring access to justice remains a priority for this Government. In response to the pandemic, we are installing new video technology, recruiting more judges and introducing reforms to improve efficiency.

The Department has worked closely with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), to implement a package of measures to help Employment Tribunals hear more cases, enable deployment of a greater range of judicial expertise including from non-employment judges, and support greater use of virtual hearings.

As a result, since September 2020, Employment Tribunals have been able to return to pre-Covid levels of sitting days and case disposals, and they are the single largest user of video hearings among tribunals.

The Department continues to work closely with Ministry of Justice to ensure the system is equipped for future challenges.

■ Energy: Industrial Health and Safety

Helen Hayes: [\[141549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the need for people that work as gas and electricity meter readers to be working in other people's homes during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Paul Scully:

As visiting peoples' homes is an essential part of a meter readers job, they need to ensure they follow the Safer Working [guidance](#).

When meter readers need to enter other peoples' homes, they should take appropriate Covid-19 secure precautions such as socially distancing wherever possible, wearing a face covering or making sure there is appropriate ventilation.

Helen Hayes: [\[141550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of his Department's guidance on working safely during coronavirus with regard to people that work as meter readers in other people's homes.

Paul Scully:

As visiting peoples' homes is an essential part of a meter readers job, they need to ensure they follow the Safer Working [guidance](#).

When meter readers need to enter other peoples' homes, they should take appropriate Covid-19 secure precautions such as socially distancing wherever possible, wearing a face covering or making sure there is appropriate ventilation.

■ Hydrogen: Finance

Alan Brown: [\[141524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what comparative assessment he has made of the level of funding for hydrogen strategy in the (a) UK and (b) EU; and will he make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution will mobilise £12 billion of government investment to unlock three times as much private sector investment by 2030.

The 10 Point Plan sets out Government's commitment to growing a new low carbon hydrogen economy for the UK. We are closely monitoring international hydrogen developments, including in the EU, where a number of countries announced high level hydrogen strategies and headline investment figures during 2020.

In the UK our focus is on working with industry to develop a supportive policy framework that will ensure we meet our aim of 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030, and secure economic benefit from the global growth in low carbon hydrogen.

We have already announced £240m funding for the Net Zero Hydrogen Fund, made hydrogen a priority in our £1bn Net Zero Innovation Programme and later this year will bring forward further details on hydrogen business models and the revenue mechanism to stimulate private investment in new low carbon hydrogen production facilities. Further detail will be set out in the forthcoming UK Hydrogen Strategy.

■ Hydrogen: Investment**Ian Paisley:**[\[141453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to encourage private investment into the UK hydrogen market.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We recognise the importance that ambition, and a supportive policy framework have had in building investor confidence in the development of low carbon technologies in the UK.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution will mobilise £12 billion of government investment to unlock three times as much private sector investment by 2030.

The Ten Point Plan and Energy White Paper both set out that the Government, working with industry, aims to have 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity in the UK by 2030.

In support of this we have announced a £240m Net Zero Hydrogen Fund for capital co-investment in new low carbon hydrogen production, to bring forward a combination of CCUS-enabled 'blue' hydrogen and electrolytic 'green' hydrogen projects. We have also committed to consulting this year on a preferred hydrogen revenue mechanism, which will support private sector investment.

The Government will publish a dedicated Hydrogen Strategy in the first half of this year. This will offer more detail on how we will work with industry to meet the 2030 ambition.

Alan Brown:

[\[141523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to encourage private investment in the UK's hydrogen market.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We recognise the importance that ambition, and a supportive policy framework have had in building investor confidence in the development of low carbon technologies in the UK.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution will mobilise £12 billion of government investment to unlock three times as much private sector investment by 2030.

The Ten Point Plan and Energy White Paper both set out that the Government, working with industry, aims to have 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity in the UK by 2030.

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The Government will publish a dedicated Hydrogen Strategy in the first half of this year. This will offer more detail on how we will work with industry to meet the 2030 ambition.

■ Local Restrictions Support Grant

Alexander Stafford:

[\[140979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discretion local authorities have to determine whether a business has been mandated to close when deciding eligibility for the Local Restrictions Support Grant Closed (LSRG – Closed).

Paul Scully:

The list of businesses mandated to close is set out in legislation. Local authorities should rely on the relevant legislation and on the guidance provided to determine whether a business is eligible for the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed).

Alexander Stafford:

[\[140981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether businesses that have not been mandated to close but are only able to operate online under the national lockdown guidance are eligible for the Local Restrictions Support Grant - Closed.

Paul Scully:

The Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) is only available to businesses that are required by law to close. Other business that are not mandated to close but which

suffer adverse impacts may be eligible for discretionary funding and should apply to their Local Authority.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[140982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether dog training businesses operating from a business rates registered premises are entitled to receive the Local Restrictions Support Grant - Closed.

Paul Scully:

Local authorities are the decision makers on the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) and must make decisions based on legislation and guidance that has been provided.

There are three key considerations when a Local Authority determines the eligibility of a business for a grant under the LRSG (Closed):

- Is the business the business rate payer of a hereditament that appears on the rating list?
- Is the main service of that business required to close due to the restrictions?
- Is the business able to self-declare that it meets all scheme conditions, including eligibility and State aid requirements?

Where an organisation meets all of these criteria, it is considered eligible to receive a grant through the mandatory LRSG (Closed) scheme.

■ Parental Leave and Parental Pay

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[140901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish the outcome of his Department's evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme.

Paul Scully:

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

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

■ Physiotherapy: Coronavirus**Liz Twist:** [\[141583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what guidance the Government has issued to local authorities on whether physiotherapy clinics that share premises with businesses that are not permitted to operate during the covid-19 lockdown should be required to close.

Paul Scully:

Healthcare professionals, including physiotherapists, can continue operating under the National Lockdown regulations. Where a clinic is based in premises that is required to close, for example a gym, it will be a commercial decision for the gym owner to decide whether the physiotherapists can continue to practice there.

■ Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund: Rother Valley**Alexander Stafford:** [\[140978\]](#)

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

Paul Scully:

Businesses that did not receive grant support earlier in the covid-19 outbreak may still be eligible for grant support available now, and should check with their local authority.

If, for any reason, a business is not eligible for the grant support that has been put in place for businesses mandated to close, local authorities are able to provide discretionary support via the Additional Restrictions Grant.

A range of other measures to support businesses have been made available in response to Covid-19 including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, business rates holiday and a range of business loan schemes. Details about all measures are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>.

■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans**Chris Elmore:** [\[140897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 15 January 2021 to Question 130796 on Wind Power: Seas and Oceans, when the review of UK content measurement and reporting methodology will be completed.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The sector is leading the review of the UK content methodology and is responsible for the timelines associated for the review.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Blood: Contamination****Dr Dan Poulter:**[\[141420\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Government plans to announce what progress has been made with the compensation framework review in relation to the contaminated blood inquiry.

Penny Mordaunt:

Work is currently underway across government to address the concerns of people infected and affected by infected blood, and a compensation framework is being explored. Parliament will be updated in due course.

■ Cabinet Office: Mitie**Ian Byrne:****[R]** [\[143154\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his Department's Facilities Management Framework of the merger of Mitie and Interserve, and if he will publish that assessment; and if he will take steps to introduce a social value framework in relation to the public contracts for facilities management operated by Mitie following their merger with Interserve.

Julia Lopez:

The Crown Commercial Service engaged with both suppliers prior to the merger to ensure that no unfair competitive advantage over other suppliers can be achieved under the Facilities Management (RM3830) framework agreement. . The Cabinet Office has recently issued guidance that sets out how Central government organisations should use a new Social Value model to take account of the additional social benefits that can be achieved in the delivery of its contracts. The guidance applies to in-scope procurements advertised after 1 January 2021.

■ UK Government Union Capability Independent Review**Anthony Mangnall:**[\[140937\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September 2020 to Question 90271, when the Government plans to publish the findings of the Dunlop Review into UK Government Union capability.

Julia Lopez:

In reference to the answer on 22 September 2020, we had intended to publish the Dunlop report by the end of last year, however, in the context of wider events, this was not possible. We will publish Lord Dunlop's review, alongside a full response, in due course.

DEFENCE**■ Ministry of Defence: Equality**

Chris Law: [\[142964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many women in his Department have participated in the Crossing Thresholds programme since 2018.

Chris Law: [\[142965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many civilian staff in his Department have taken part in the Positive Action Pathway scheme since 2018.

Johnny Mercer:

Since its inception in 2018, 158 women in the Ministry of Defence have participated, or are participating, in the Crossing Thresholds programme. The Positive Action Pathway is currently being redesigned by Civil Service Learning and is no longer running; however, 134 civilian staff took part in the scheme from when it began in 2018 until it was suspended for redesign.

■ Ministry of Defence: Staff

Chris Law: [\[142962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the gender balance is of temporary contract staff in his Department.

Johnny Mercer:

As of 31 December 2020, the Ministry of Defence including Defence Equipment & Support but excluding Trading Funds and Agencies, directly employed 245 female, 1,082 male and 86 undisclosed gender civilian staff on a temporary contract .

The gender balance of individual consultants and contractors employed through wider service contracts is not centrally held.

■ Veterans: Identity Cards

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[143713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when Veterans ID cards will be rolled out.

Johnny Mercer:

Officials in the Ministry of Defence continue to work with the Office for Veterans' Affairs to develop a digital solution to allow veterans to securely prove they served. Work is progressing but we are unable to confirm a delivery date at this point.

Information on phase two of the Veterans' ID card will be released closer to the launch date at the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-veterans-id-cards-rolled-out-to-service-leavers>

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Broadband: Leeds North West****Alex Sobel:****[141602]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many broadband cabinets are not enabled for fibre in Leeds North West constituency.

Matt Warman:

According to Thinkbroadband the proportion of premises in Leeds North West with access to 'partial Fibre', or 'Full Fibre at any speed' is 98.92%. This is above the national average. This encompasses the technologies: FTTC, VDSL, G.fast, Cable, and FTTP. It should be noted that this refers to BT Openreach cabinets only. 100% of Virgin Media cabinets are fibre enabled as they provide at least Ultrafast speeds and up to Gigabit speeds.

As well as the above percentage coverage for Superfast speeds (at least 30 Megabits per second), Leeds North West is well served by Virgin Media and they have upgraded their network in Leeds to provide up to Gigabit Speeds. Mainly as a consequence of this, 73.50% of residents in the constituency can access Gigabit speeds (1,000 Megabits Per Second) and 77.11% can access Ultrafast speeds (100 Megabits per second).

You can get the latest statistics for your constituency here

<https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/E14000780>

■ Culture Recovery Fund: Sussex**Andrew Griffith:****[141640]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding from the Culture Recovery Fund for Independent Cinemas has been allocated to cinemas in (a) Sussex and (b) Arundel and South Downs constituency.

Caroline Dinenge:

The government recognises the significant cultural and economic value of cinemas, and has supported them through both sector-specific and economy-wide measures. In the first round of the £1.57bn Culture Recovery Fund, more than 200 independent cinemas have so far received funding from a £30m pot. This funding was administered by the BFI on behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, as part of the biggest ever single investment in this country's cultural sectors.

£1,037,554 from the Culture Recovery Fund for Independent Cinemas has so far been allocated to cinemas across Sussex, with £643,083 in West Sussex and £394,471 in East Sussex. There have been no applications received from cinemas in the Arundel and South Downs constituency, West Sussex. Further to this funding, we announced in December that cinemas will be able to apply for another £14 million in grants as part of the second round of the Culture Recovery Fund in 2021. This will support cinemas as they transition back to a viable and sustainable way of operating in the months ahead.

In addition to the Culture Recovery Fund, most cinemas will have benefited from economy-wide measures including the VAT cut on tickets and concessions, a business rates holiday, access to Bounce Back Loans, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Local Restrictions Support Grants.

EDUCATION

■ Department for Education: Climate Change Convention

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[140985\]](#)

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

Nick Gibb:

Numbers on departmental staff attending COP26 are still to be determined.

■ Extended Services: Coronavirus

Ellie Reeves: [\[140909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial support he is providing to the wraparound care sector in response to the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Ellie Reeves: [\[140910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the level of funding support available to the wraparound care sector on the ability of businesses within that sector to remain financially viable during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ellie Reeves: [\[140911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to provide financial support to the wraparound care sector in response to the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Ellie Reeves: [\[140912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of closures in the wraparound care sector during the covid-19 outbreak on the (a) learning and (b) development of children.

Vicky Ford:

We recognise that the wraparound childcare sector, like many sectors, is facing unprecedented financial pressures as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. It is for this reason that the government has made a range of financial packages of support available for businesses to access throughout the current crisis. This includes tax relief, business loans or cash grants through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, as well as a £594 million discretionary fund for councils and the devolved administrations to support local

businesses that may not be eligible for other support during the current national lockdown.

While the department does not hold a central register of all wraparound provision and is therefore not able to give an assessment on the closure of providers, we do however recognise the value this sector offers to our children and young people, in terms of the enriching activities they provide and the valuable support they provide to our critical worker parents, and vulnerable children. That is why we have encouraged all local authorities to consider what local grants could be used to bolster this part of the childcare sector in their areas to safeguard sufficient childcare provision for children of critical workers and vulnerable children. This includes discretionary funding, such as the £594 million fund provided by government to local authorities to help them support local businesses, as well funding streams such as the Holiday Activities and Food Programme. The expanded programme, which comprises a £220 million fund to be delivered through grants to local authorities, will be expanded to reach all local authority areas over the Easter, summer, and Christmas holidays in 2021.

We are also acutely aware of the impact that the COVID-19 outbreak has had on young people and the vital role our childcare and youth services play. That is why more than £60 million of the unprecedented £750 million package for the voluntary and charity sector has been directed towards organisations supporting children and young people. More recently a £16.5 million youth COVID-19 support fund has been announced, which will protect the immediate future of grassroots and national youth organisations across the country. More information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-165-million-youth-covid-19-support-fund>. This is on top of £200 million government investment in early intervention and prevention support initiatives to support children and young people at risk of exploitation and involvement in serious violence, through the Youth Endowment Fund.

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

■ Free School Meals

Rosie Cooper:

[141417]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department plans to review the free school meals eligibility criteria to include all children living below the poverty line.

Vicky Ford:

We think it is important that free school meal support is targeted at those that need it most. Free school meals are an integral part of our provision for families on low incomes and our wider actions to promote social mobility.

We will consider the full recommendations set out in the National Food Strategy. The government has committed to respond formally to the National Food Strategy following publication of Part 2 of the report.

Universal Credit is an in-work benefit which reduces as household earnings increase. It is right that free school meals remain targeted at those who are out of work and on the lowest incomes.

In 2018, Government introduced new eligibility criteria for families on Universal Credit, following a consultation in 2017. It is estimated that this will be more generous in its reach by 2022, in comparison to the legacy benefit system. Further to this we included generous protections, which mean any family transitioning to Universal Credit will continue to have access to a free school meal even if they move above the earnings threshold.

■ GCE A-level: Assessments**Esther McVey:**[\[141448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to provide alternative arrangements to students without teacher-assessed grades to substitute their A-level grade.

Nick Gibb:

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

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

The consultation will be open until 23:45 on 29 January 2021. The Department and Ofqual strongly encourage all our stakeholders, including private candidates and their representatives, to respond. We will continue to engage with a range of relevant stakeholders when developing plans for our policy on GCSE, AS and A level assessments in 2021, as will the exams regulator Ofqual.

■ IGCSE: Assessments

Esther McVey:

[\[141446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the viability due to the covid-19 outbreak of the decision to allow IGCSEs to take place in the 2020-21 academic year.

Nick Gibb:

International GCSEs are not regulated by Ofqual and are not part of the arrangements we have put in place for summer 2021 for GCSEs and A/AS levels. We are in contact with the exam boards that provide international GCSEs and understand that they have not yet taken final decisions on whether or not exams should go ahead in England this summer.

■ Remote Education

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[140916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the covid-19 guidance and regulations for mainstream schools, what sources of funding and support are available for (a) shielding children, (b) vulnerable children and (c) children with hearing impairments and their parents who are homeschooling.

Vicky Ford:

We are continuing to provide local authorities with their high needs funding allocations, which provide for children with complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including those with hearing impairments. These allocations include an additional £730 million in the 2021-22 financial year, on top of the additional £780 million we provided in the 2020-21 financial year. In the 2021-22 financial year, Slough will receive £28.3 million of high needs funding, an 8% increase per head of the 2-18 population compared to the 2020-21 financial year.

Last year, we announced an additional package worth £1 billion to ensure that schools have the resources they need to help all pupils make up for lost teaching time, with extra support for those who need it most. £650 million will be spent on ensuring all pupils have the chance to catch up and supporting schools to rise to the challenge. Each mainstream school will receive £80 per place, and each special, alternative provision and hospital school will receive £240 for each place, across the 2020/21 academic year. We have applied this additional weighting to specialist settings in recognition of the significantly higher per-pupil costs they face.

Where pupils are not in school, we expect schools to provide suitable remote learning materials, consistent with the Children and Families Act 2014. Schools and other institutions must use their best endeavours to secure the provision called for by the pupil's or student's needs.

Our published guidance is clear that schools should work collaboratively with families, putting in place reasonable adjustments as necessary, so that pupils with SEND,

which will include those with hearing impairment, can successfully access remote education alongside their peers.

Esther McVey:

[141450]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to prepare for the future role of remote learning in the education system.

Nick Gibb:

Technology in education has been essential for continuing to teach remotely during the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent school and college closures. In the long term, it also has the potential to support teacher workload reductions, flexible working, cost savings, inclusive teaching practice and improved pupil outcomes.

A number of programmes which have been in place across the COVID-19 outbreak are providing valuable intelligence on the most impactful uses of remote education to deliver the curriculum to all pupils. The EdTech Demonstrator programme, which supports schools and colleges to use technology to strengthen remote education arrangements and develop a sustainable digital strategy, will provide an important evaluation of the impact of effective use of digital technology to improve outcomes for pupils. The Department's digital platforms offer allows schools to provide remote online education and develop blended learning approaches for the longer term.

The Government has invested over £400 million in support for remote education, including securing over 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children. We will build on the foundations of this significant investment in technology and explore options for a strategy to create a more resilient digitally enabled education system which improves outcomes for all children and adults in education.

Charlotte Nichols:

[141621]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to help school pupils catch up with the curriculum who did not have access to a computer device during school closures in spring 2020 due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

To support pupils catch up, last year the Government announced a £650 million catch up premium which aims to support schools to make up for the impact of time outside of the classroom. The Department's expectation is that this funding will be spent on the additional activities required to support children and young people to catch up after a period of disruption to their education.

Schools will receive £80 per head for mainstream schools and £240 per head for special schools and alternative provision. We have applied additional weighting to specialist schools, recognising the significantly higher per pupil costs they face. Schools should use this as a single total and schools should prioritise spending based on need.

To help schools make the best use of this funding, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has published a support guide for schools with evidence based approaches to catch up: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19->

[resources/national-tutoring-programme/covid-19-support-guide-for-schools/#nav-covid-19-support-guide-for-schools1](#).

The EEF has also published a further school planning guide for 2021:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/guide-to-supporting-schools-planning/>.

Alongside this, the £1 billion catch up package includes a new £350 million National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged pupils. This will increase access to high quality tuition for the most disadvantaged young people, helping to accelerate their academic progress and tackle the attainment gap between them and their peers.

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 2021, over 870,000 laptops and tablets had been delivered to schools, academy trusts and local authorities. We are 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 COVID-19 outbreak.

Where pupils continue to experience barriers to digital remote education, we expect schools to work to overcome these barriers. This could include supplementing digital provision with different forms of remote education such as printed resources or textbooks. This should be supplemented with other forms of communication to keep pupils and students on track or answer questions about work.

■ Remote Education: Computers

Sir Alan Campbell:

[140748]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many laptops have been distributed to support remote learning to date, by parliamentary constituency; and how many of those laptops have been distributed to non-state schools.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, by securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. As of Monday 25 January 2021, over 870,000 laptops and tablets had been delivered to local authority maintained schools, academy trusts and local authorities.

All schools, academy trusts and local authorities have now been given the opportunity to order devices.

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 COVID-19 outbreak. On 12 January 2021, the Department announced that it will be providing a further 300,000 devices over the course of this term.

Figures on the number of devices delivered are available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data>.

These figures are broken down by local authority and academy trust. Figures on delivery by constituency are not available.

■ Remote Education: Hearing Impairment

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[140917]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support is available for parents who, as a result of the covid-19 outbreak, are homeschooling a child with a hearing impairment.

Vicky Ford:

Where pupils with hearing impairment are not in school, we expect schools to provide suitable remote learning materials, consistent with the Children and Families Act 2014. Schools and other institutions must use their best endeavours to secure the provision called for by the pupil's or student's needs.

Our published guidance is clear that schools should work collaboratively with families, putting in place reasonable adjustments as necessary, so that pupils with SEND, which will include those with hearing impairment, can successfully access remote education alongside their peers. The guidance can be found here:

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

To help support this, a one-off universal £650 million catch up premium for the 2020/2021 academic year to ensure that schools have the support they need to help all pupils make up for lost teaching time. Schools can use their funding in a way that suits their cohort and circumstances. The department is also, for the 2020/2021 academic year, providing laptops and tablets to schools to help children and families in need to access remote education during the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Remote Education: ICT

Saqib Bhatti:

[140963]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) laptops and (b) home learning devices have been distributed to children in (i) England, (ii) the West Midlands and (iii) the Meriden constituency to support access to education during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, by securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people.

As of Monday 25 January, over 870,000 laptops and tablets had been delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities across England, who are responsible for distributing them onward to disadvantaged children and families.

Figures on the number of devices delivered, broken down by local authority and academy trust are available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data>.

All schools, academy trusts and local authorities have now been given the opportunity to order devices. Laptops and tablets are owned by schools, trusts or local authorities to lend 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 COVID-19 outbreak. On 12 January 2021, we announced that we will be providing a further 300,000 devices over the course of this term.

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

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Esther McVey:

[\[141449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure (a) consistency of the curriculum and (b) the quality of pupils' education during January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Nick Gibb:

It is critically important to ensure that all children and young people continue to learn during the national lockdown. That is why we have updated the expectations for schools to clarify and strengthen what is expected during the period of restricted attendance and drawing on our evolving understanding of best practice in remote education. Further details on best practice can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak#section-5-contingency-planning-for-outbreaks>.

With most children now being taught remotely and schools and colleges having made huge progress in developing their remote education provision, it is right that we have high expectations on what remote education they receive. The number of hours expected for different age groups has changed. Hours include either recorded or live direct teaching alongside time for pupils to work independently to complete assignments that have been set. Schools are now expected to provide, as a minimum:

- 3 hours a day for KS1, on average across the cohort with less for younger children
- 4 hours a day for KS2
- 5 hours a day for KS3 and KS4

Schools are also expected to have a system in place for checking on a daily basis whether pupils are engaging actively with their work. Schools will need to work with

families to identify swiftly where pupil engagement is a concern and find effective solutions.

Schools and colleges are expected to teach a planned and well sequenced remote curriculum, and to consider how to transfer into remote education what we already know about effective teaching in the classroom. This includes, for example: providing clear explanations of new content; providing opportunities for interactivity and reflective discussion; and using assessment to ensure teaching is responsive to pupils' and students' needs. Schools need to be confident that pupils are taught the necessary knowledge and skills required for them to progress through the curriculum as expected. We also expect schools and colleges to identify a senior leader with overall responsibility for remote education provision. This role would include responsibility for reviewing the school or college's remote education offer and ensuring that school and college policies are in place to effectively meet the remote education expectations.

A comprehensive package of support continues to be available to schools and colleges to help them meet these expectations which can be accessed via our get help with remote education page: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-remote-education>. This includes helping schools and colleges to access technology that supports remote education, as well as peer-to-peer training and guidance on how to use technology effectively. It also includes practical tools, a good practice guide and school-led webinars to support effective delivery of the curriculum. Information is also available on issues such as safeguarding, statutory duties and expectations, supporting pupils and students with special educational needs and disabilities, and recovery and catch up to stop pupils and students falling behind.

■ Secondary Education: Remote Education

Esther McVey:

[141447]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to work with (a) Cloud Learn and (b) other online education providers to create a secure online learning platform for secondary school pupils.

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.

Since April 2020, we have been working with Google and Microsoft to support all state-funded primary and secondary schools in England who did not have student user accounts already set up on an appropriate online platform.

Schools can choose to use their Government funded support to get set up on a free-to-use digital education platform: either a G Suite for Education (Google Classroom) or Office 365 Education (Microsoft Teams).

Once a school applies, Google or Microsoft confirm their eligibility for the programme and assign the school to an IT supplier. The IT supplier then sets up the platform for all staff and pupil/student accounts.

■ Social Mobility Commission

Justin Madders:

[\[140834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what consultations were undertaken prior to the decision to move the Social Mobility Commission to the Cabinet Office.

Vicky Ford:

This move aligns with a recent recommendation by the Chair of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, the Social Mobility Commission's (SMC) own recommendation about where it would best fit within government, and with a recommendation by the Education Select Committee in 2018.

Moving the sponsorship of the SMC to become a key part of the new Equality Hub makes good sense and puts equality and fairness of all kinds at the heart of government. The move shows how serious this government is about acting on these issues, as part of our levelling up agenda.

Justin Madders:

[\[140835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the business case supporting the decision to move the Social Mobility Commission to the Cabinet Office.

Vicky Ford:

Decisions on Machinery of Government changes are made by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister. Ministers in relevant departments were consulted before the decision was made. This move aligns with a recent recommendation by the Chair of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities and a recommendation by the Education Select Committee in 2018.

Moving the sponsorship of the Social Mobility Commission to become a key part of the new Equality Hub makes good sense and puts equality and fairness of all kinds at the heart of government. The move shows how serious this government is about actually acting on these issues, as part of our levelling up agenda.

■ Supply Teachers: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[140866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial support is available to supply teachers who are not teaching as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

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

If supply staff employed via employment agencies are unable to work due to COVID-19, their employment agency can place them on furlough and use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to claim for 80% of their wages, including during school holiday periods, provided that the eligibility criteria are met:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-which-employees-you-can-put-on-furlough-to-use-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>.

Employers can now flexibly furlough their employees for the hours the employee would usually have worked in that period, whilst also being able to work outside of the hours they are furloughed. Employees can work for any amount of time, and any in work pattern, but they cannot do any work for their employer during hours that employers record them as being on furlough.

The decision to furlough an employee, fully or flexibly, is entirely at the employer's discretion as it is dependent on a range of factors that the employer is best placed to determine, for example, the amount of work available for employees.

The Department has produced further guidance that may be helpful to schools with their workforce planning and schools should continue to check updates here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf.

The Government has provided additional financial support for those who are unable to work because they have COVID-19 or are self-isolating, which is outlined in the following guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-what-to-do-if-youre-employed-and-cannot-work?priority-taxon=5ebf285a-9165-476c-be90-66b9729f50da#if-someone-you-live-with-has-symptoms-of-coronaviru>.

■ Universities: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[133128]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to ensure universities provide adequate support for lost learning during the covid-19 outbreak to new students in the 2021 intake.

Michelle Donelan:

We recognise students have experienced unprecedented disruption to their education this year and this disruption has not fallen equally across the country.

In December 2020, the department confirmed the launch of an expert advisory group to consider the differential impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on pupils and recommend mitigations for these impacts. In light of the decision to cancel exams, the department is working to finalise the terms of reference and membership of the group. We will ensure that membership is representative of the sector and is geographically diverse. Further details on membership and priorities of the group will be provided in due course.

We will consider the advice of the group and work closely with sector leaders in the higher education taskforce on any recommendations arising.

Universities are extremely aware of the difficulties that students have faced this year and we encourage them to take this into account and be flexible when making offers to students and when supporting them in their transition into higher education.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Trade Agreements

Paula Barker:

[\[141629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what safeguards the Government has put in place to protect high British food and farming standards after new trade deals are agreed with countries outside the EU.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has a clear manifesto commitment that in all of our trade negotiations we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards.

Legal protections for our standards are in place. The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 retains standards on environmental protection, animal welfare, animal and plant health and food safety. This includes the prohibition on the use of artificial growth hormones in both domestic production and imported meat products and that no products, other than potable water are approved to decontaminate poultry carcasses.

The Government has recently taken additional steps to give Parliament a greater role in scrutinising trade agreements. In the Agriculture Act 2020, we have established a duty for the Secretary of State to report to Parliament on the impact of our Free Trade Agreements on the maintenance of UK food safety, animal welfare and environmental standards.

In July we established the Trade and Agriculture Commission, an independent board set up to advise and inform the Government's trade policies on environmental and animal welfare standards in food production. We have since moved to put it on a statutory footing in the Trade Bill and the Commission will directly feed into the Agriculture Act reporting process.

■ Agriculture: Young People

Esther McVey:

[\[141437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with (a) local authorities, (b) landowners and (c) stakeholders on improving land accessibility to new entrants to the farming industry.

Esther McVey:

[\[141438\]](#)

To ask to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if will he provide further information on the new entrant support schemes outlined in the Agricultural Transition Plan 2021-2024.

Esther McVey: [\[141439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to improve affordability and accessibility of land to prospective new entrants to the agriculture and horticulture industry.

Esther McVey: [\[141441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will allocate funding saved from reducing direct payments to farmers into schemes to attract young people to the agricultural and horticultural sector.

Esther McVey: [\[141443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking under the Agricultural Transition Plan 2021-2024 to help young farmers to gain a foothold in the industry.

Esther McVey: [\[141444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which aspects of The Agricultural Transition Plan 2021-2024 are planned to help young farmers to gain a foothold in the industry.

Victoria Prentis:

As set out in the Agricultural Transition Plan this Government will provide funding to create lasting opportunities for new entrants to access land, infrastructure and support to establish successful and innovative businesses.

Funding for this new entrant scheme will be allocated from savings resulting from reducing direct payments helping new farmers to access opportunities in the sector in future.

The details and eligibility criteria of the new entrant scheme are being developed through a consultative co-design process with stakeholders. The co-design steering group includes representatives of local authorities with council farm estates, new entrant farmers, providers of innovation support for new farmers, cooperative and community land organisations and private landowners. We will also be engaging a wide range of stakeholders through workshops on key issues between February and May 2021. We will report more details of the scheme in the summer of 2021 and aim to launch the scheme in 2022.

During the agricultural transition the Government also intends to offer eligible farmers the option of a lump sum payment in place of future Direct Payments if they wish to leave the industry. By making it easier for those farmers who wish to retire to do so, the lump sum payment should free up more land for new entrants to start up. We plan to consult farmers on the details of our lump sum scheme shortly.

In addition, the Government is working with the Skills Leadership Group to introduce a professional body for agriculture and horticulture creating clear career pathways and promoting the sector as a progressive career choice to those wishing to enter the industry.

Esther McVey:

[\[141440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution of Lord Gardiner of Kimble of 23 November 2020, Official Report, column 808, what progress his Department has made on creating an advisory body for young people seeking careers in agriculture and horticulture.

Victoria Prentis:

Attracting bright new talent into agricultural and horticultural careers is vital for the future of food and farming.

In the recently published Agricultural Transition Plan document, the Government committed to contributing towards the establishment of a new industry-led professional body, the Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture. The Institute will be the home of professional development and training for the agriculture and horticulture industry in England.

Through raising awareness of agriculture as an exciting and attractive career path, the Institute will promote the opportunities available within the farming and land management industry.

Esther McVey:

[\[141442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of creating strategic partnerships between schools and local farms to introduce pupils to career opportunities in agriculture and horticulture.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government supports the excellent work already underway to connect classrooms and farmyards. Industry-led initiatives such as the 'countryside classroom', Farming and Countryside Education (FACE) and [Linking Environment and Farming](#) (LEAF) Education are doing a fantastic job delivering educational experiences to young people and promoting the career opportunities available in agriculture and horticulture.

Employers and professional bodies in the agriculture and horticulture sector can sign up to 'Inspiring the Future', run by the Education and Employers charity. This free programme allows volunteers to visit state schools to talk to pupils about their job. This will raise the profile of various careers within this sector.

■ **Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control**

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[140822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many badgers were culled in 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

Data from the 2020 badger control operations have been published by Natural England on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bovine-tb-summary-of-badger-control-monitoring-during-2020>

Those figures exclude Supplementary Badger Culling which will be available later in the year.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Climate Change Convention**

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[140781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many departmental staff will be attending COP26 in an official capacity with their expenses covered.

Victoria Prentis:

Numbers on departmental staff attending COP26 are still to be determined.

■ **Farmers: Young People**

Esther McVey: [\[141435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a land-matching scheme, similar to schemes in place in Scotland and Northern Ireland, to match existing farmers with younger farmers to manage joint financial and operational ventures.

Victoria Prentis:

As part of our engagement work with stakeholders to co-design a new entrant scheme we will explore and discuss the merits and impacts of establishing a land matching service drawing on the examples from Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and other countries. We will report more details of the outcomes of our co-design process for a new entrant scheme in the summer of 2021 and aim to launch the scheme in 2022.

■ **Farms: Local Government**

Esther McVey: [\[141436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to incentivise local authorities to retain and invest in their farm estates.

Victoria Prentis:

This Government values the role that county farm estates play in providing a route into farming for new entrants. We want to encourage local authorities to retain and invest in their farm estates. That is why we are developing a new entrant funding scheme to create lasting opportunities for new entrants to access the land, infrastructure and support they need to establish successful and innovative businesses.

We want to encourage applications from local authorities, cooperative and community land organisations, local partnerships, and private and institutional landowners who

have innovative ideas and the capability to provide long-term opportunities for talented new entrants.

The details of the scheme including the funding criteria are being developed through a consultative co-design process with stakeholders which includes representatives of local authorities with county farm estates. We aim to report more details about the scheme in summer of 2021 and launch the scheme in 2022.

■ Flood Control: West Sussex

Andrew Griffith:

[\[141641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress the Environment Agency has made on maintenance at high flood risk areas along the River Arun and River Adur in West Sussex.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency carries out an annual programme of routine maintenance works on the River Adur and Arun which have been completed for this financial year. The programme will resume from April 2021.

In 2020 the Environment Agency received additional Government funding to repair assets that were damaged during the 2019/20 winter storms and floods. This funding has been used to repair flood embankments on the River Arun in the following locations: Hardham (south of Pulborough), Greatham and many locations along the River Stor.

The Environment Agency is also working with partners and local communities in both river catchments to implement the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy.

■ Food: Labelling

Jo Gideon:

[\[140961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department's consultation on food labelling is planned to include questions on the need (a) for labelling to better promote healthier foods (b) to simplify the food labelling requirements and (c) to promote more sustainable foods.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government's obesity strategy, published in July 2020, includes a number of important measures to improve nutrition labelling to aid consumers in making more informed, healthier choices. These include commitments to consult on front of pack nutrition labelling and alcohol calorie labelling, and a commitment to introduce legislation to implement out-of-home calorie labelling for large businesses. The consultation on front of pack nutrition labelling closed on 21 October 2020, the consultation on alcohol calorie labelling will take place shortly and we are looking to introduce legislation on out-of-home calorie labelling later this year.

The Government has further committed to consult on what can be done through labelling to promote high standards and high welfare across the UK market following the end of the transition period. The consultation is currently being prepared. The consultation will seek stakeholder and public views on how consumer information should be presented and on a range of policy options including mandatory/voluntary labelling reforms.

We also have the opportunity to carry out a review of food labelling now we are no longer bound by EU rules to ensure information supports UK consumers' safe, healthy and sustainable food choices and also Great British food products. This would include careful consideration of how food labelling might contribute to the outcomes of the National Food Strategy, which is looking in detail at creating a better food system for people and for the environment.

■ Neonicotinoids

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[140935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what safeguards he is putting in place to prevent the overuse of neonicotinoids.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government remains committed to the neonicotinoid restrictions put in place in 2018 to protect bees and other pollinators. We will only consider exceptions in special circumstances where emergency authorisation for limited and controlled use appears necessary because of a danger that cannot be contained by any other reasonable means and where the risk to people, animals and the environment is considered acceptably low.

The emergency authorisation that was recently granted for Cruiser SB (containing the neonicotinoid thiamethoxam) meets all these requirements. It only allows use on the 2021 sugar beet crop to address a serious threat from viruses transmitted by aphids. The use of this product will be tightly limited and controlled. A threshold of predicted disease level must be met before the use of treated seeds is allowed and the application rate of the product will be below the previously authorised commercial rate. There is also a prohibition on any flowering crop being planted within 22 months of the drilling of the sugar beet crop. This period is extended to 32 months for oilseed rape, which is attractive to bees and other pollinators.

■ Pesticides: Pollinators

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[140749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage the development and wider use of non-chemical pesticides in order to protect pollinators.

Victoria Prentis:

Our strict regulation applies to both chemical and non-chemical pesticides, as it cannot be assumed that non-chemical pesticide are inherently safer.

Defra and the Devolved Administrations are currently consulting on the revised National Action Plan for Sustainable Use of Pesticides (the NAP). The NAP lays out how we intend to support the uptake of integrated pest management (IPM) to reduce the risks associated with pesticides use, including those to pollinators.

The NAP supports the development of alternatives to chemical pesticides, with the aim of reducing impact on non-target species. Our proposed plan will increase uptake of non-chemical approaches by improving advice and skills sharing, and providing financial support through the new Environmental Land Management Scheme.

In England, we are working to ensure that these actions support and align with our wider priorities for protecting pollinators through the National Pollinator Strategy.

■ Rivers: Sewage

Andrew Griffith:

[\[140999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 December 2020 to Question 123502, when the new joint taskforce on storm overflows will publish its proposals on protecting chalk streams.

Rebecca Pow:

The new Storm Overflows Taskforce established between the Government, the water industry, regulators and environmental NGOs will set out clear proposals to address the harm and frequency of sewage discharged into our rivers and other waterways from storm overflows. The Taskforce has commissioned a research project to gather a comprehensive evidence base about the costs, benefits and feasibility of different options. This research project is due to be completed in the spring.

Additionally, we are working with stakeholders through a new national working group to develop a chalk stream action plan to restore and protect England's chalk streams.

The working group will be considering all available options on providing further protection of chalk streams and will be reporting its recommendations later in the year.

■ Rivers: South Downs

Andrew Griffith:

[\[141000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the level of protection of chalk streams in the South Downs.

Rebecca Pow:

Restoring England's internationally important chalk streams is a Government priority. In October last year I co-hosted a conference bringing together key partners whose actions are needed to achieve that priority. A chalk streams working group has been formed and is developing an action plan, a first draft of which will be presented to Government later this year.

A number of river systems drain the South Downs but in many cases only the headwaters would be considered to be chalk streams. The main exceptions are the

Itchen and Meon which are sizeable rivers with strong chalk stream character. The Itchen is notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation from source to sea for its national and international importance as chalk stream habitat.

More broadly, River Basin Management Plans set out the actions that are required by a range of organisations and sectors to improve the water environment at a local scale. In addition, the Nitrates (Pollution Prevention) Regulations 2015 and the Farming Rules for Water (2018) aim to reduce agricultural loadings to the natural environment. The Environment Agency is addressing the issue of unsustainable water abstraction, which may also impact on the health of a chalk stream.

Chalk streams are habitats of principal importance under Section 41 of The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, alongside other important river types. The Act requires that the Secretary of State takes steps, as appear to be reasonably practicable, to further the conservation of these habitat types, and promote the taking of similar steps by others. Natural England and the Environment Agency work closely with public bodies and other landowners and stakeholders to advise on and support better protection and restoration of chalk streams, in the South Downs and more widely.

■ **Seafood: Consumption**

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[140936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to increase domestic consumption of UK-caught seafood

Victoria Prentis:

We are committed to encouraging consumers to buy and eat more locally caught fish and shellfish from UK waters, thereby increasing domestic consumption.

Through the Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme, we provided funding for projects that helped to increase the supply of local seafood to domestic markets and help to increase consumption of locally caught seafood in the UK.

Additionally, we have worked in partnership with Seafish on the 'Sea for Yourself' consumer facing campaign to inspire the UK to eat more locally caught seafood. The launch of their 'Love Seafood' brand in October 2020 will help consumers across the UK reconnect with the enjoyment of seafood by promoting the choice, convenience and balanced living that it provides. 'Love Seafood' represents an ambitious long-term initiative to reframe the nation's view of seafood and encourage consumers in the UK to eat more seafood over the next 20 years.

■ **Tree Planting**

Helen Hayes:

[\[141551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many trees were planted under The Big Tree Plant scheme.

Helen Hayes:

[\[141552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of trees planted under The Big Tree Plant scheme are still viable.

Rebecca Pow:

The £4 million Big Tree Plant planted one million trees across England from 2010-2015. Defra and the Forestry Commission funded the costs of establishing trees (weeding, mulching, watering, replacing lost trees etc), and local authorities and communities have been responsible since for ensuring these trees are kept in good condition.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Bahrain: Human Rights

Ben Lake:

[\[140914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of imposing sanctions against Bahrain in response to alleged human rights abuses by Bahraini security officials.

Ben Lake:

[\[140915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Bahraini counterpart on potential human rights violations by Bahraini authorities.

James Cleverly:

We regularly raise human rights issues and individual cases with the Government of Bahrain, at senior levels, both in private and public, most recently during my visit to Bahrain in November 2020. We urge that all allegations of this nature are reported to the appropriate Bahraini national oversight body and encourage them to carry out swift and thorough investigations into any such claims.

On 6 July, the UK Government established the Global Human Rights ('Magnitsky') sanctions regime by laying regulations in Parliament under the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018. This sanctions regime gives the UK a powerful new tool to hold to account those involved in serious human rights violations or abuses. It is not appropriate to speculate who may be designated under the sanctions regime in the future, as to do so could reduce the impact of the designations.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Climate Change Convention

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[140784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many departmental staff will be attending COP26 in an official capacity with their expenses covered.

James Duddridge:

Numbers of departmental staff attending COP26 are still to be determined.

■ **Iran: Nuclear Fuels****Robert Halfon:**[\[140775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the permanent members of the UN Security Council on reports that Iran is advancing research on uranium metal production.

James Cleverly:

Iran has no credible civilian use for uranium metal, which could provide knowledge gains applicable to a weapons programme. We strongly urge Iran to halt this activity, and return to compliance with its JCPoA commitments without delay. We continue to engage closely with the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council to address Iran's non-compliance.

■ **Military Alliances****Anthony Mangnall:**[\[140934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the UK Government seeking participation within the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.

James Cleverly:

As part of preparation to deliver a meaningful tilt towards the Indo-Pacific through the Integrated Review, the Government has been looking at options for closer dialogue and practical cooperation with the countries part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Australia, India, Japan and the US). The UK deep partnerships already established with these countries covering security issues and many other sectors that we will build on. The Foreign Secretary's visit to India in December, for example, enabled agreement on the key elements of a 10 year UK-India roadmap so that we can deliver a step change in ambition for the relationship between our two countries, including our commitment to building a stronger defence and security partnership with India. No decisions have yet been made on the form UK engagement with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue could take.

■ **Myanmar: Rohingya****Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[140765\]](#)

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 report by Human Rights Watch entitled An Open Prison Without End, on the treatment of Rohingya people in Myanmar.

Nigel Adams:

As I [Minister Adams] tweeted on 9 October 2020, this is an important report which shines a spotlight on the ongoing discrimination faced by the Rohingya, and other

minorities, confined to camps in Rakhine State. Myanmar must adhere to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) provisional measures order and end discrimination against the Rohingya and other minorities. The UK has consistently expressed concern at restrictions on Rohingya, including freedom of movement and access to healthcare.

The UK is one of the largest donors in Rakhine, supporting the Rohingya who remain through assistance with water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, health services, protection, livelihoods, education and food aid.

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[140766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Myanmar Government on the (a) safe repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Rakhine state and (b) reinstatement of citizenship rights for Rohingya people.

Nigel Adams:

We are clear that returns must be voluntary, safe and dignified and the Rohingya should be granted rights and status within Myanmar. I [Minister Adams] raised the importance of human rights and full citizenship rights for the Rohingya in my call with the Myanmar Minister for International Cooperation in June 2020 and the Foreign Secretary emphasised these messages in his call with the Minister in July. Our Ambassador and Development Director regularly discuss the issue of returns with Government of Myanmar, including most recently with the Minister for Social Welfare on 18 January.

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[140767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his counterpart in Myanmar on allowing Rohingya people to stand in elections.

Nigel Adams:

Both I and the Foreign Secretary raised our concern about the exclusion of the Rohingya from the democratic process in the run up the elections last year with Myanmar's Minister for International Co-operation. The UK strongly believes all individuals should have the right to freely participate in the democratic process and we remain very concerned that the Rohingya and other minority ethnic groups were excluded from these elections. Universal suffrage for all people in Myanmar, including the Rohingya, and the right to stand as a candidate are key to achieving effective democracy. We are clear that the 1982 Citizenship Law is deeply flawed and enables the exclusion of Rohingya and other minorities on spurious grounds. The Rohingya, who have lived in Myanmar for generations, should be granted full citizenship and the associated rights.

■ Myanmar: Sanctions

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[140768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to impose further sanctions on Myanmar.

Nigel Adams:

The UK has targeted sanctions in place on 16 individuals from the Myanmar armed forces for their role in atrocities against Rohingya and other minorities. We have sanctioned all six individuals identified by the United Nations Fact Finding Mission. This includes the Commander-in-Chief and his Deputy. We will continue to consider designating persons under the Global Human Rights sanctions regulations in order to deter and provide accountability for serious human rights violations or abuses around the world. It is not appropriate to speculate who may be designated under the sanctions regime in the future. To do this could reduce the impact of the designations.

■ Sustainable Development

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[141407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what role the Minister for the Overseas Territories and Sustainable Development has in respect of the implementation into UK domestic policy of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Nigel Adams:

The UK played an instrumental role in establishing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is committed to implementing them at home and around the world. The FCDO has oversight of the SDGs with the Cabinet Office providing cross-government support on their domestic implementation. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, is the FCDO Minister responsible for the SDGs. All government departments have responsibility for aspects of the SDGs that relate to their policy remits. Everyone in the UK has a role to play in achieving the SDGs including communities, local government, the private sector, and civil society.

■ Sustainable Development: Local Government

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[141408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions the Minister for the Overseas Territories and Sustainable Development has had with local government leaders on the implementation into UK policy of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Nigel Adams:

The UK played an instrumental role in establishing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is committed to advancing them both internationally and at home. The FCDO has oversight of the SDGs with the Cabinet Office providing cross-

government support on their domestic implementation. All government departments have responsibility for aspects of the SDGs that relate to their policy remit.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, is the FCDO Minister responsible for the SDGs. He has not had the opportunity to meet with local government leaders since taking on this responsibility in November 2020 but hopes to do so in the near future. Everyone has a role to play in achieving the SDGs including communities, local government, the private sector, and civil society. We therefore welcome local government engagement with the SDGs.

■ **Tigray: Humanitarian Aid**

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[141559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) ensure that all civilians in Tigray have access to humanitarian assistance and (b) help restore peace to the Tigray region.

James Duddridge:

We remain concerned about the impact of the continued fighting in Tigray on both the humanitarian situation and on wider stability in Ethiopia and beyond. We continue to urge both parties to bring an end to fighting, prioritise the protection of civilians and allow unfettered humanitarian access. The Foreign Secretary raised these points when he met with Prime Minister Abiy on 22 January and also pressed for a political dialogue to bring a lasting peace to Tigray.

The UK is working closely with humanitarian organisations to make sure aid reaches civilians affected by the fighting. The Foreign Secretary visited Gondar on 22 January and saw first-hand how £11m of UK Aid is supporting the World Food Programme and NGOs to ensure the delivery of aid to those affected by the conflict. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are working hard to deliver support in challenging circumstances, including shelter, water and healthcare. We continue to work with the UN to promote and monitor access and the delivery of humanitarian support to all those who need it, including to civilians in contested areas.

■ **Western Sahara: Freedom of Expression**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[141625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to make representations to the Moroccan Government on freedom of expression for people calling for independence in occupied Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

Support for human rights including freedom of expression is a priority around the world. We raise such issues with the Moroccan Government accordingly and monitor cases related to freedom of expression in Western Sahara. The UK fully supports the UN's efforts to achieve a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

■ Western Sahara: Human Rights**Navendu Mishra:** [\[141624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many Special Rapporteurs have visited the non-self-governing territory of Western Sahara since the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1979 in April 2011; when those visits took place; and what the duration was of each such visit.

James Cleverly:

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has conducted several visits to Western Sahara since 2011, the latest of which was in January 2016. Further details of these visits can be found on the OHCHR website.

■ Western Sahara: Sovereignty**Navendu Mishra:** [\[141623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 137300, whether Morocco has sovereignty over the territory of Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

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

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Coronavirus: Disease Control****Layla Moran:** [\[91713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to Prime Minister's oral contribution of 22 July 2020, Official Report, column 2152, whether he has read the recommendations submitted to him by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Coronavirus; and whether he plans to respond in detail to them.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: I replied to the All-Party Parliamentary Group's letter on 28 January 2021.

■ Epilepsy**Valerie Vaz:** [\[137918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the NHS of unplanned hospitalisations for those with epilepsy in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 19 January 2021]: This information is not collected centrally therefore no such estimate has been made.

Valerie Vaz:[\[137920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with epilepsy by (a) gender and (b) age in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 19 January 2021]: This information is not available centrally.

■ Whittington Health NHS Trust: Coronavirus**Catherine West:**[\[134028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support is being provided to Whittington Health NHS Trust to support staff and patients during the period of increased covid-19 related admissions.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Whittington Health NHS Trust is committed to supporting both staff and patients throughout the period of increased COVID-19 related admissions and beyond.

The Trust has invested in staff wellbeing to ensure everyone has the practical and emotional support they need to do their jobs. This includes support for staff to get to work with free car parking and access to free food and drink during the pandemic, creating safe spaces for staff to rest, recuperate and switch off from work and support to work flexibly

In addition, the Trust's staff have a range of services that are available, including a mental health hotline, practical support, financial advice and specialist bereavement and psychological support. The Trust has put a series of measures in place such as changes to the Trust's visitors policy and to non-urgent patient transport services, to ensure that patients who require treatment will be kept safe during the period of increased COVID-19 related admissions.

The Government is committed to supporting National Health Service capacity to protect it during surges in COVID-19 cases alongside the increased pressures on the system during winter. At the end of August, this included a retrospective top up payment to the Trust of £5.3 million to offset the additional costs incurred due to the pandemic. The Trust has also received £375,000 to expand and upgrade its accident and emergency departments to reduce overcrowding and improve infection control during winter

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Napier Barracks**

Damian Collins: [\[142898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department has received from Public Health England on policies for mitigating the spread of covid-19 amongst people living and working at the asylum seeker accommodation centre at Napier Barracks in Folkestone.

Damian Collins: [\[142899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people who have applied for asylum in the UK (a) have been accommodated at Napier Barracks in Folkestone, (b) are currently being accommodated there; what the average length of stay has been; and whether asylum seekers who have not previously stayed at the Barracks will be accommodated there in the future.

Kevin Foster:

We are working closely with our providers, and with Public Health England, to ensure that all individuals who have to self-isolate can do so and are following all medical advice closely.

We take the welfare of those in our care extremely seriously and asylum seekers can contact the 24/7 helpline run by Migrant Help if they have any issues.

We do not publish the information requested, although the number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#asylum-support>

At present the Home Office will continue to regularly move small numbers of people out of Napier barracks into Dispersal Accommodation in line with business as usual processes and will continue to route new people into Napier 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 (Penally Training Camp). This site is also providing temporary contingency accommodation for asylum seekers.

■ British Nationality: Applications

Seema Malhotra: [\[141470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of available appointments slots with the UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services in each of the next three months for people applying for UK citizenship.

Kevin Foster:

UK Visa and Citizenship Application Service (UKVCAS) centres are run by Sopra Steria Ltd (SSL) on behalf of UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI).

UKVCAS appointments are released to all customers simultaneously, irrespective of the route they have applied under.

SSL release new UKVCAS appointments on a daily basis, 28 days in advance. The number of appointments added into the system is not constant as it depends on a number of factors.

In w/c 18 January 2021, 15,030 appointments were offered across the network of UKVCAS service points.

UKVI works closely with SSL to monitor appointment levels to ensure sufficient appointments are made available overall and including in geographical regions where there appears to be most demand.

Seema Malhotra:

[\[141471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has provided an extension to people applying for British citizenship by naturalisation to provide their fingerprints, photo and additional information and book a citizenship ceremony during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

Extra time is being provided to customers applying for British citizenship to enable them to enrol their biometric information, which includes providing their photograph and fingerprints. We are also providing additional time to customers to provide further information in support of their application.

Normally, a customer is required to attend their citizenship ceremony within three months of receiving their invitation from the Home Office. Due to the current pandemic this period has been extended to six months.

■ Counter-terrorism: Coronavirus

Jess Phillips:

[\[141479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications of the covid-19 outbreak for the implementation of the Prevent strategy.

Kit Malthouse:

The Prevent programme has continued to be delivered effectively throughout Covid-19. Prevent referrals are continuing to be assessed and managed by Local Authorities and Police, and individuals are continuing to be supported through the Channel early intervention programme. Engagement and training are being delivered to Prevent practitioners and Prevent Duty statutory partners to ensure they remain well-equipped to identify and support those vulnerable to radicalisation.

The increased use of the internet as a result of Covid-19 has brought into sharp focus the need to remain vigilant of terrorists and their supporters seeking to exploit the situation. We are working closely with tech companies, international partners and civil society organisations to ensure preventing terrorist use of their platforms continues to

be a priority and that tech companies are effectively responding quickly to any emerging threats.

■ Counter-terrorism: Finance

Jess Phillips: [\[141480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has undertaken due diligence checks on projects that receive Prevent strategy funding.

Kit Malthouse:

For projects that receive Prevent strategy funding, due diligence checks are undertaken by the relevant Local Authority before entering into any agreement with a Project Provider. The due diligence requirement is set out in the terms and conditions agreement between the Home Office and the relevant Local Authority which has been awarded funds for Prevent delivery.

The terms and conditions require the relevant Local Authority to “ensure that it carries out a thorough and proportionate documented due diligence process to understand an organisations’ financial status, viability and capability; technical skills and capacity; operational and commercial processes and procedures; background and history”.

Jess Phillips: [\[141481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she takes to assess the (a) potential effectiveness and (b) effectiveness of projects that receive Prevent strategy funding.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office funds dedicated Prevent posts and locally commissioned projects in local authorities where the risk of radicalisation is most acute, to reduce the threat from terrorism.

Evaluating the effectiveness of projects that receive Prevent funding and learning what is working is an integral part of the Prevent programme. Regular assessments are conducted by the Home Office, and we commission independent evaluation of a selection of projects that receive funding each year. In addition, local authorities commission and undertake their own evaluation of the projects that they fund.

■ Housing: Sexual Offences

Jess Phillips: [\[141495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure there is adequate access to safe accommodation for adults fleeing sexual exploitation.

Victoria Atkins:

Sexual exploitation can be a form of modern slavery. The Government remains committed to ensuring the safety and security of victims of modern slavery and supports adult victims through the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC).

The MSVCC is available for adult victims in England and Wales. Support for victims of modern slavery is devolved in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The MSVCC provides support to adults who have been referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), have received a positive Reasonable Grounds decision, and have consented to support.

The MSVCC ensures the safeguarding and protection of victims as well as providing tailored support according to each victim's recovery needs, including accommodation, financial support and specialist support workers.

Emergency accommodation is available before a Reasonable Grounds decision for any potential victim who has consented to enter the NRM and is destitute with no access to safe accommodation. In this situation, an immediate referral can be made by a First Responder Organisation to The Salvation Army.

Individuals supported through the MSVCC receive a needs-based assessment which considers whether they have a need for MSVCC accommodation. Accommodation is available where a need is identified, and due regard is given to the circumstances of each potential or confirmed victim.

■ Human Trafficking

Jess Phillips:

[\[141483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to transpose into domestic law EU Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims; and if she will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government is committed to tackling the heinous crime of modern slavery and to ensuring that victims are provided with the support they need to begin rebuilding their lives.

While the EU Exit transition period ended on 31 December 2020, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and relevant policy guidance is unaffected. The UK is still bound by international obligations in relation to preventing and combatting human trafficking and modern slavery – most notably the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (ECAT) and Article 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), neither of which have been impacted by our exit from the EU.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Jess Phillips:

[\[141482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that victims of modern slavery with EU/EEA nationality living in the UK before December 31 2020 are able to apply for settled status in the event that they do not meet the deadline to apply as a result of their experience of exploitation; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

In line with the Citizens' Rights Agreements, 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 EEA 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.

Examples of such reasonable grounds will include victims of modern slavery and other people in abusive or controlling situations or relationships who were prevented from applying. 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, in light of the circumstances of each case.

■ Musicians: Visas**Mhairi Black:**[\[141503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing (a) a two year multi-entry touring visa, (b) a temporary cultural exemption for the transportation of instruments and equipment and (c) an expansion of the list of CITES-designated points of entry and exit to support the music industry's recovery after the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

Currently, artists, entertainers and musicians visiting the UK can perform at events, take part in competitions and auditions, make personal appearances and take part in promotional activities for up to 6 months without the need for formal sponsorship or a work visa. They can also receive payment for appearances at permit free festivals for up to 6 months, or for up to one month for specific engagements, under the Visitor route.

HMRC advise 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.

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.

The UK Government will keep the list of CITES Ports of Entry and Exit (PoEs), managed by DEFRA, under review and look to make additional designations where it is feasible and advantageous to do so.

■ NHS: Migrant Workers**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[141403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been granted visa extensions under the scheme of free one-year visa extensions for health workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

Since the free extension was introduced in March 2020 we have extended the visas of more than 7000 eligible healthcare professionals, and their dependants.

More details of the scheme can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-more-health-workers-to-benefit-from-visa-extensions>

Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[141404]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people there are whose employers have told UK Visas and Immigration that they are eligible for the free one-year visa extensions for health workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

Since the free one-year extension scheme was introduced in March 2020, we have extended the visas of more than 7000 eligible healthcare professionals, and their dependants. This work remains ongoing.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-more-health-workers-to-benefit-from-visa-extensions>

The available published data shows the numbers of visas granted in each work route but does not provide any data on the specific numbers that have been granted on this scheme nor the number of notifications received by UKVI from employers.

Data on visas granted by category can be found in Vis_D02 at:

[entry-clearance-visa-outcomes-datasets-sep-2020.xlsx](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/attachment_data/file/534242/entry-clearance-visa-outcomes-datasets-sep-2020.xlsx)

Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[141405]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people's biometric residence permits UK Visas and Immigration has received with respect to the free one-year visa extensions for health workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

Since the free extension was introduced in March 2020 we have extended the visas of more than 7000 eligible healthcare professionals, and their dependants.

The available published data shows the numbers of visas granted in each work route but does not provide any data on the specific numbers that have been granted on this scheme nor the number of Biometric Residence Permits received by UKVI.

Data on visas granted by category can be found in Vis_D02 at:

[entry-clearance-visa-outcomes-datasets-sep-2020.xlsx](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/attachment_data/file/534242/entry-clearance-visa-outcomes-datasets-sep-2020.xlsx)

■ Nitrous Oxide: Misuse**Andrew Rosindell:****[140753]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to stop the illegal (a) supply and (b) distribution of nitrous oxide for recreational consumption.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government takes the supply of substances for their psychoactive effect very seriously. There are legitimate uses for nitrous oxide, such as in medicine, dentistry and as a propellant for whipped cream canisters, but those who supply nitrous oxide who know, or who are reckless as to whether, it will be used for its psychoactive effect may be subject to a maximum sentence of seven years' imprisonment, an unlimited fine, or both under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. The term "supply" includes distribution for the purposes of the legislation.

The Government has published guidance for retailers to satisfy themselves that they comply with the law, available on the gov.uk website. The guidance recommends that retailers, including those operating online, should pay particular attention to the potential for abuse of nitrous oxide, especially where customers seek to buy in bulk or large volumes, and suggests that retailers may wish to carry out age checks to prevent those at highest risk from gaining access to psychoactive substances.

With regard to the online sale of nitrous oxide, in the Queen's Speech on 19 December 2019, the Government committed to develop legislation to improve internet safety for all. We have published the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation, which sets out the new expectations on companies to keep their users safe online. The new regulatory framework will establish a duty of care on companies to improve the safety of their users online, overseen and enforced by an independent regulator. The Full Government Response will be followed by legislation, which we are working on at pace, and will be ready this year.

Police**Charlotte Nichols:****[140956]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of police officers in (a) January 2021 and (b) January 2019.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office publishes official statistics on the number of police officers in England and Wales as at March and September each year, which are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales>

As part of the drive to recruit an additional 20,000 officers by March 2023, the Home Office now also publishes " [Police officer uplift](#) " statistics on a quarterly basis, broken down by the number of officers at the end of each month. The number of officers in January 2021 is due to be published in April 2021.

Police National Computer: Hampshire**Stephen Morgan:****[141596]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the loss of 400,000 police records, what discussions her Department has had with Portsmouth City Council.

Stephen Morgan: [\[141597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the loss of 400,000 police records, what discussions her Department has had with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police Area Chief Constable.

Stephen Morgan: [\[141598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the loss of 400,000 police records, how many ongoing police investigations in the Portsmouth South constituency have been affected by the loss of that data.

Stephen Morgan: [\[141599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the loss of 400,000 police records, how many pieces of data relate to incidents in the (a) Portsmouth South constituency and (b) Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police Area.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office is working closely with Policing/National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) to assess the scale and impact of the incident. This includes undertaking a robust and detailed assessment and verification of all affected records. Once complete we will develop and implement a plan to recover as many lost records as is possible over the next few weeks.

■ **Racial Discrimination and Sexual Offences: Females**

Jess Phillips: [\[141494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what financial support her Department provides to specialist services for women who experience racism and who have survived sexual exploitation.

Victoria Atkins:

All forms of sexual violence are terrible crimes and the Government continues to fund support to victims.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we allocated £76m to support victims of modern slavery, domestic abuse and sexual violence. This included a £25m package to support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence, £10m of which was ringfenced for organisations supporting victims of sexual violence. The Ministry of Justice have also recently announced that £10.1m will be provided to rape and domestic abuse support centres and Police and Crime Commissioners to fund services in local areas. The Home Office is also providing £200,000 in 2020/21 to specialist sexual violence support services through its National Sexual Violence Support Fund.

In addition, the Ministry of Justice has awarded £12 million to 91 rape support centres across England and Wales to provide independent, specialist support to female and male victims of sexual violence, including victims of child sexual abuse. This is an increase of £4 million from 2019/20, and a total investment of £32m over three years from April 2019 to March 2022.

An additional £4m per annum until 2022 is also being invested in recruiting more Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) to help victims feel informed and supported at every stage of their recovery journey.

We understand that individuals can be the victims of multiple and different abusive behaviours because of the way different characteristics, including immigration status, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic position and sexuality intersect and overlap, particularly in relation to accessing services and support. We will be publishing a new Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy in the spring which will ensure we can better support victims. To inform the new strategy, we launched a Call for Evidence on 10 December, inviting responses from the public, organisations that provide support to victims and survivors, frontline professionals, and academics. We are actively seeking input from minority groups and intend to hold focus groups to ensure we hear the perspectives of people with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, refugee violence against women and girls experts, deaf and disabled violence against women and girls experts, and others.

■ Sexual Offences

Peter Kyle:

[\[140881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of statutory responsibilities to support adults who are selling sex and/or experiencing sexual exploitation.

Victoria Atkins:

We are committed to tackling the harm and exploitation that can be associated with selling sex and continue to work closely with the police and other partners to ensure the legislation achieves these aims.

We continue to provide support to those who are most vulnerable in society, including those involved in selling sex or victims of sexual exploitation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we allocated £76m to support victims of modern slavery, domestic abuse and sexual violence. This included a £25m package to support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence, £10m of which was ringfenced for organisations supporting victims of rape and sexual violence. MoJ have also recently announced that £10.1m will be provided to rape and domestic abuse support centres and Police and Crime Commissioners to fund services in local areas.

Potential victims of sexual exploitation have access to specialist support and advocacy services regardless of their immigration status 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.

■ Travellers: Caravan Sites

Clive Lewis: [\[140874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to publish the results of her Department's consultation, Strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments before the Police Powers and Protections Bill is brought before Parliament.

Clive Lewis: [\[140875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish the results her Department's consultation, Strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments.

Kit Malthouse:

As we set out in the briefing accompanying the Queen's Speech in December 2019, it is our firm aim to bring forward legislation this session.

The Home Office launched a public consultation in November 2019 to seek views on how we could strengthen police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments. We will publish our response to that consultation in the usual way.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Disabled Facilities Grants

Karin Smyth: [\[141511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the capacity of local councils to provide payments to successful claimants of the disabled facilities grant within legal time limit.

Eddie Hughes:

The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 requires local authorities to make decisions on Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) applications within six months of receipt.

When someone applies for a grant, the local council carries out an assessment of need and affordability. If these assessments are passed the council instructs a trusted contractor to install the home adaptations that the applicant requires.

Local authorities provide MHCLG with annual data returns on DFG delivery, including information on the average number of days between a DFG application being received by the council and completion of the works.

For 2018-19 and 2019-20 the average number of days between DFG applications and completion of the works was 115 days, or between 3 and 4 months.

■ Homelessness: LGBT People

Apsana Begum:

[\[141620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made for his policies of people in the LGBTQ+ community who are made homeless due to fleeing abuse at home.

Eddie Hughes:

It is absolutely critical that victims of domestic abuse get support and especially when they are in housing need.

In May 2020 the Government announced its intent to give those who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse priority need for accommodation secured by the local authority. This is being taken forward through the Domestic Abuse Bill and will help to ensure victims do not remain with their abuser for fear of not having a roof over their head.

Until this legislative change comes into force, victims of domestic abuse continue to be supported by local authorities through the Homelessness Reduction Act, where authorities have a duty to try and prevent or relieve a household's homelessness irrespective of whether they are a family or single person, what has put them at risk, or if they have a local connection to the area. This means that all victims of domestic abuse who are at risk of homelessness, including those from the LGBTQ+ community, should be provided with an offer of support from their local authority to find appropriate accommodation.

During the pandemic MHCLG has allocated the £10 million Emergency Support Fund to 147 successful charity bids. In total these are supporting 166 organisations to provide 1,890 bed spaces for victims of domestic abuse. Of those funded, 51 bids were from organisations offering specialised support to diverse groups including BAME and LGBTQ+ victims.

■ Housing: Planning Permission

Ian Mearns:

[\[140778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department have any plans to increase the powers available to Local Authorities to prevent house builders bring forward further developments where their previous developments have been found to be sub-standard.

Christopher Pincher:

It is a priority for this Government to build more high-quality, environmentally friendly homes and residents must feel confident that their property is safe. The Government is committed to improving recourse for building defects for new build homebuyers. We will ensure a New Homes Ombudsman is established and we will require

developers to belong to it. We will include provision for the New Homes Ombudsman in the Building Safety Bill.

In addition, we are taking action to improve the quality of new homes and to tackle sub-standard new housing. This includes better design through the planning system, safer homes through the biggest reform to the building safety regulatory regime and being sustainable through the Future Homes Standard. Any new home needs to meet building regulations, and local authorities can take planning enforcement action if the development differs from the plans they approved when they granted planning permission.

■ **Housing: Poplar and Limehouse**

Apsana Begum:

[141618]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of (a) White British households and (b) Bangladeshi households are living in overcrowded accommodation in Poplar and Limehouse constituency.

Christopher Pincher:

The latest data on national and regional levels of overcrowding by ethnicity is published on the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website and can be found at:

<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/housing/housing-conditions/overcrowded-households/latest#by-ethnicity-and-area> .

■ **Housing: Renewable Energy**

Derek Thomas:

[141569]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to make (a) heat pumps, (b) solar and (c) other domestic renewables compulsory for all new housing.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Regulations are couched in performance terms and do not prescribe the technologies, materials or fuels to be used. This allows builders and homeowners the flexibility to innovate and select the most practical and cost-effective solutions appropriate in any development. For example, many roofs are not suitable for solar photovoltaic (PV) panels because of the visual amenity, strength, or direction of the building. We will need to move away from fossil fuel heating in order to meet our commitment to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The future is likely to see a mix of low carbon technologies used for heating and it is unlikely that there will be a one-size-fits all solution, so multiple technologies will play a role. To make sure that homes built under the Future Buildings Standard are zero carbon ready, from 2025 we intend to set the performance standard at a level which means that new homes will not be built with fossil fuel heating. We expect heat pumps will become the primary heating technology for new homes under the Future Homes Standard and that heat networks will also have an important role to play.

■ Landlords: Licensing**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[141622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to introduce a licencing scheme for landlords in the private housing sector.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to delivering a private rented sector that works for everyone and balances the needs of landlords and tenants. The Government has no current plans to introduce a centrally based licencing scheme for private landlords.

We are working with local authorities to raise standards in the private rented sector. Local authorities must license Houses in Multiple Occupation where five or more people from two or more households share facilities. Local authorities also have the power to license different types of privately rented properties through additional licensing or selective licensing schemes.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Climate Change Convention**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[140787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many Departmental staff will be attending COP26 in an official capacity with their expenses covered.

Eddie Hughes:

Numbers on Departmental staff attending COP26 are still to be determined.

■ Service Charges: Regulation**Ian Mearns:** [\[140779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to regulate the growing property maintenance sector to protect leaseholders from increasingly expensive and sub-standard service.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to ensuring that those living in the leasehold sector are protected from abuse and poor service.

Property agents can play an important role in the management and upkeep of buildings and protect the value of people's homes. Currently, anyone can become a property agent regardless of their background, skills or experience. Many take a professional approach, but others do not. The Government has announced that it will regulate managing agents and introduce a single mandatory and legally enforceable Code of Practice to set standards across the sector. We will also require agents to be qualified to practise.

The Government established an independent working group of housing experts, chaired by Lord Best, to advise Government on the regulation of property agents. The

working group has presented its final report to Government and we are considering its recommendations.

■ **Sleeping Rough: Birmingham**

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[140750]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to tackle rough sleeping in the Birmingham City Council area.

Eddie Hughes:

In 2020/21, we are providing over £700 million to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping across England.

Birmingham City Council have been allocated more than £2.5 million through rough sleeping programmes in 2020/21. This includes:

- Rough Sleeping Initiative funding to support the establishment or enhancement of coordinated local services for rough sleepers or those at risk of sleeping rough;
- Next Steps Accommodation funding to prevent those brought in during the COVID-19 pandemic returning to the streets and long term funding through the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme, from 2020/21 – 2023/24;
- Cold Weather Funding to bring forward COVID-secure accommodation this winter and to keep vulnerable people safe;
- Protect Programme funding, which provides targeted support to local authorities with higher numbers of rough sleepers to meet the specific challenges they faced;
- Drug and alcohol misuse funding for those with drug and alcohol support needs to get the help they need to rebuild their lives, and;
- Funding for Housing First is also providing accommodation for up to 130 individuals in the city by the end of June 2021.

Birmingham City Council have been closely supported by our MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative and homelessness advisers. These expert advisers are proactively working with local areas as they adapt to the new restrictions and will continue to support these authorities beyond COVID-19.

This Government is committed to ending rough sleeping and we have taken unprecedented steps to protect rough sleepers during the pandemic. This work has not stopped, and through Everyone In, by November we had supported around 33,000 people with nearly 10,000 in emergency accommodation and over 23,000 already moved on into longer-term accommodation.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Department for International Trade: Expenditure****Emily Thornberry:****[142838]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to her Department's monthly transparency publications on expenditure over £25,000, where the following payments made to Linklaters LLP are recorded, as set out in Linklaters' filings under the United States Foreign Agents Registration Act: (a) \$294,935.44 on 6 July 2020, (b) \$65,965.67 on 12 August 2020 and (c) \$51,439.05 on 21 August 2020.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: Due to an administrative error, these transactions were not included in the Department's regular monthly transparency publications on expenditure over £25,000. The Department is currently investigating this error and will correct any omissions in the published data as soon as possible.

In accordance with the Department for International Trade's obligations under section 5 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, an Award Notice for US Trade Legal Support contract was published to the Contracts Finder website on 2nd of March 2020. This can be found at

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/926103bc-59ab-426c-bc15-44756efad7b2>

Obtaining expert legal advice to negotiate trade deals of this size and importance is standard practice. UK-US negotiations have proceeded at an impressive pace, in part due to the internal and external expertise we have in place.

■ Department for International Trade: Staff**Ruth Jones:****[143099]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the advice provided by trade experts in her Department to UK businesses.

Graham Stuart:

International Trade Advisors (ITAs) help businesses to identify target export markets, conduct research, test market readiness and find solutions to barriers to entry. ITAs undergo a broad range of appropriate training and have access to clear lines on government policy to ensure they provide businesses with timely and accurate advice on exporting. The Department conducts an independent annual survey with approximately 6000 businesses. Of the businesses that used the ITA service between April 2018 and March 2019, **76%** were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied', **84%** rated staff knowledge positively and **67%** said the service was good at meeting their needs.

■ Pipelines: East Africa

Kate Osamor:

[\[143024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 8 December 2020 to Question 122815 on Pipelines: East Africa, for what reason the Answer of 23 December 2020 to Question 130164 on Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees did not include reference to the East African Crude Oil Pipeline; and what other projects have UKEF been approached on that were not included in Answers to Questions 91998 and 118072.

Graham Stuart:

While UK Export Finance (UKEF) has been approached by and held initial meetings with the sponsors of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline project (EACOP), it has not engaged in any substantive due diligence on the project and so considers this to be an early-stage enquiry. As such, at this early stage UKEF was not able to make any reliable assessment of whether the transaction might progress or, if so, over what timeframe.

JUSTICE

■ Administrative Law Independent Review

Clive Lewis:

[\[140876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish his Department's submission to the Independent Review of Administrative Law's call for evidence.

Alex Chalk:

As the Lord Chancellor said when he gave evidence to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee on 8 December (<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/1369/default/>), the Government will publish the report of the Independent Review of Administrative Law. We will consider publication of submissions made to the Review consistent with the usual disclosure provisions.

■ Youth Custody: Restraint Techniques

Christian Wakeford:

[\[140985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many children in custody have been reported by his Department as being placed in (a) handcuffs or (b) restraints in each of the last twelve months; under what circumstances those children were handcuffed or restrained; and in which local authority these incidents took place.

Christian Wakeford:

[\[140986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what data his Department collects on the (a) handcuffing or (b) restraining of children in custody.

Alex Chalk:

Data on the use of force and restraint on children in the youth custodial estate is recorded and collated locally in incident reports at each custodial establishment. This data is aggregated annually in the “Youth Justice Statistics” report which are included in the Youth justice statistics series. The latest report for 2019/20 was published on 28 January: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2019-to-2020>.

Information on use of force, broken down by establishment and reason, can be found in the supplementary tables. The total number of Restrictive Physical Interventions (RPIs), are broken down by month in table 8.1. This provides figures on all restraints of young people that satisfy the definition of being RPI, and the relevant line of table 8.24 provides the subset of those that involve handcuffs.

For ease of reference, the number of times that handcuffs have been used to restrain children is also provided in the attached table. It should be noted that this does not take place in secure children’s homes.

The use of restraint and force is only ever used as a last resort to protect children from further harm.

Attachments:

1. Table [PQ 140985 Handcuffs used during 2019-20 by month.xlsx]

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Abortion: Northern Ireland****Jess Phillips:****[141486]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many women have travelled to England to receive abortion care since the establishment of a legal framework for abortion in Northern Ireland on 31 March 2020.

Mr Robin Walker:

The health and safety of women and girls remains paramount in accessing abortion services across the UK. I note there is some local provision of services, with over 719 abortions having been provided in Northern Ireland.

Where access is sought in other circumstances and cannot yet be provided locally in Northern Ireland, we are continuing to engage closely with the British Pregnancy Advisory Service who are contracted to provide access to the Government-funded services in England. During Covid-19, even where travel options have been limited, some abortion services have remained available in England for women resident in Northern Ireland to access.

The statistics for 2020 will be published later this year by the Department of Health and Social Care as per usual practice.

We firmly believe that full commissioning of services by the Department of Health would remain the most appropriate way to progress the matter and we are working to further engage and offer support to achieve this at the earliest opportunity.

We are continuing to monitor the situation closely, including considering further legislative action at Westminster.

Jess Phillips:

[\[141487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on equality for women across the UK of the lack of (a) funding or (b) commissioning for abortion services in Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

I am pleased that since the Regulations we made came into effect from 31 March 2020, some abortion service provision has commenced on the ground in Northern Ireland through existing sexual and reproductive health clinics across most Health and Social Care Trusts. According to figures released by the Department of Health in October, over 719 abortions have been provided in Northern Ireland. The collection of notification forms, and relevant data, in Northern Ireland is a matter for the Northern Ireland Department of Health.

Informing Choices Northern Ireland has been acting as the Central Access Point in order to provide a local pathway to this abortion care. Women and girls resident in Northern Ireland also continue to have access to safe, fully-funded abortion services in England through the Government-funded scheme and remain able to contact the Central Booking Scheme for support and advice on options available in this regard.

The health and safety of women and girls remains paramount in accessing abortion services right across the UK. We firmly believe that full commissioning of services by the Department of Health would remain the most appropriate way to progress the matter and we are working to further engage and offer support to achieve this at the earliest opportunity.

We are continuing to monitor the situation closely, including considering further legislative action at Westminster.

Jess Phillips:

[\[141488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps he is taking with the Northern Ireland Executive to ensure abortion services in Northern Ireland are compliant with the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc.) Act 2019; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Robin Walker:

Regulations have been in place to make provision for accessing abortions in Northern Ireland since 31 March 2020, consistent with section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc.) Act 2019.

I note that some service provision commenced on the ground in Northern Ireland through existing sexual and reproductive health services from last April. Over 719 women and girls have been able to access services locally since this time.

We remain disappointed that the Northern Ireland Executive and Department of Health have not acted to ensure they deliver on these rights following the earlier change to the law. However, we firmly believe that full commissioning of services by the Department of Health would remain the most appropriate way to progress the matter and we are working to further engage and offer support to achieve this.

In the meantime, we are continuing to fund access to services in England for women and girls where access is not available locally in Northern Ireland.

We are continuing to closely monitor the situation, including considering further legislative action at Westminster.

TRANSPORT

■ Car Sharing

Robert Largan:

[\[141631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to promote car sharing.

Rachel Maclean:

Under the national lockdown restrictions currently in place, car sharing is not permitted with someone from outside your household or your support bubble unless your journey is undertaken for an exempt reason, such as if car sharing is reasonably necessary as part of your work. The driver and passengers should wear a face covering to minimise the risk of transmission.

The Department is continuing to undertake work on trends in car and ride-sharing (including public attitudes), so we can identify any policy or regulatory gaps which might need addressing. This work is being undertaken in the context of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan and our Future of Transport Regulatory Review.

■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[142953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to address the backlog of driving tests when covid-19 lockdown restrictions are lifted; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of using experienced driving instructors as temporary examiners in that context.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency is committed to reducing the backlog of driving tests as quickly as possible. It has measures in place to increase the number of driving tests available, once it is safe for tests to resume. These include offering overtime and annual leave buy back to examiners, asking all those qualified to carry

out tests (warrant card holders) to do so, and conducting out of hours testing (such as on public holidays). A recruitment campaign is also underway to increase the overall number of driving examiners available for testing.

The Road Traffic Act 1988 only allows a full driving licence to be issued if the person has passed the test of competence to drive. The Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) 1999 regulations requires driving test examiners to meet certain criteria and pass an initial qualification and examination before being authorised by the Secretary of State to conduct practical driving tests. The regulations also specifically prohibit an examiner from simultaneously being an active approved driving instructor (ADI).

Although ADIs are well qualified and proficient in driving and instruction, they are not experienced assessors and this is evidenced by the current practical test pass rate of 47%. Driving examiners undertake rigorous and continuing training throughout their career. They also test many types of learners and are regularly evaluated to ensure they conduct tests in a fair and consistent manner.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[143056]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to support learner drivers whose theory test certificate has expired over the course of the last year before they have been able to pass their practical test.

Rachel Maclean:

A candidate whose theory test certificate expires will have received the service for which they paid the fee. If a practical test is already booked at the time when the theory test expires, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency will refund the fee for the practical driving test.

The maximum duration of two years between passing the theory test and a subsequent practical test is in place for road safety reasons; to ensure that a candidate's knowledge is current. It is important that road safety knowledge and hazard perception skills are up to date at the critical point that they drive unsupervised for the first time. Those with theory test certificates expiring may have taken their test in early 2019. Since then, their lessons and practice sessions will have been significantly curtailed during recent lockdowns and it is likely that their knowledge base will have diminished. Research suggests that this would be particularly harmful for hazard perception skills, a key factor in road safety.

Taking all this into consideration, the decision has been made not to extend theory test certificates and learners will need to pass another theory test if their certificate expires.

■ **Driving under Influence**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[142902]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of differing blood alcohol limits in the UK on levels of road safety.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to tackling drivers under the influence of alcohol and ensuring that all such drivers are caught and punished. We have a combined approach of tough penalties and rigorous enforcement along with our highly respected and effective THINK! Campaigns. This reinforces the social unacceptability of drink driving and reminds people of the serious consequences that drinking and driving can have on themselves and others.

The Government has no plans to lower the drink drive limit in England and Wales. We believe that our current measures as outlined above are a more effective deterrent than changing the drink driving limit.

Motor Vehicles: Testing**Darren Jones:**[\[142043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason MOTs have not been extended in the context of the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

Garages testing and repairing vehicles are allowed to remain open for business during the English lockdown announced in January, on the basis of Covid-secure working practices. The vast majority (over 95%, in the last week) of the testing network is open for business. There is widespread availability of contact free, pick-up and drop-off MOT services. The MOT test is important to vehicles being roadworthy and dangerous defects being identified and rectified. As with other aspects of the lockdown, the position is subject to review.

Motor Vehicles: Urban Areas**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[143040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is planning to take to reduce ownership of sports utility vehicles in urban areas.

Rachel Maclean:

Decarbonising transport, including sports utility vehicles, is a key priority for the Government's forthcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan. It will set out how we are taking decisive action to end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030 and also investing £5 billion to increase the share of journeys taken by public transport, cycling and walking. A green paper on the UK's post-EU CO2 emissions regulations on new vehicles and the first-ever National Bus Strategy will be published shortly.

Supermarkets: Delivery Services**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[142777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that supermarket retailers minimise the roadside air pollution caused by their vehicles.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[142778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with his Cabinet colleagues on the progress made by supermarket retailers in minimising their fleet's contribution to roadside air pollution across the UK.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[142782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of supermarket vehicle fleets on rates of roadside air pollution in the UK.

Rachel Maclean:

Ministers and officials have periodic meetings with fleet operators about a range of issues. The Government recognises the scope for fleets to be at the vanguard of the transition to zero emission driving, including the newly announced 2030 phase out of new petrol and diesel cars and vans, and we will continue to work with fleet operators towards this. The Government's £20m Low Emission Freight Trials funded a series of R&D projects aimed at encouraging the widespread introduction of low and zero emission vehicles to UK fleets. Retailers including Sainsbury's, ASDA, Tesco and John Lewis were all part of this innovation programme.

Data from the government's national air quality model is used to assess the contribution of emissions from commercial vehicles to total emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx) and particulate matter at the roadside. We have not conducted a specific assessment of emissions from supermarket deliveries.

Building on the commitments set out in the WHO-commended Clean Air Strategy (CAS), the Government has introduced air quality measures in the landmark Environment Bill. The CAS sits alongside extensive action that has been taken to reduce harmful emissions from road transport.

TREASURY

■ Building Safety Fund: VAT

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[142881\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of VAT charges on the efficacy Building Safety Fund to repair buildings with (a) unsafe cladding and (b) fire safety defects.

Jesse Norman:

In most cases, the standard rate of VAT will be applied to the removal and replacement of cladding. However, the cost of replacing cladding can be zero rated if it is tied to the initial construction of the building and is shown to be defective.

On 9 May 2019, the Government announced that it would fully fund the removal and replacement of certain types of unsafe cladding on private sector residential buildings 18 metres or over, including any VAT charge.

The supply of fire safety equipment, under qualifying circumstances, is already eligible for VAT relief when provided alongside the construction and renovation of residential or charitable buildings.

■ **Buildings: Insulation**

Shabana Mahmood: [\[142880\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the effect of (a) cladding and (b) fire safety defects on the Exchequer's taxation revenue.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided £1.6bn for the remediation of unsafe cladding from the highest risk buildings. Building owners are responsible for keeping their buildings and residents safe and should meet remediation costs without passing them on to leaseholders, where possible.

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of ministerial discussions are not normally disclosed. The Government monitors closely the revenue from property taxation, and HMRC publish quarterly updates on SDLT receipts.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Rachael Maskell: [\[143005\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until at least 12 months after the final covid-19 lockdown is eased.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor has always been clear that the Government would keep the situation under review, adapting its approach as the context evolved. The Government will set out its future economic plans, including next steps on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, at the Budget.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Pensions and Taxation**

Emma Hardy: [\[143069\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to review the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to allow employers to include in their claim to HMRC (a) employer contributions to the employee's pension and (b) employer National Insurance or tax contributions.

Jesse Norman:

Since November, employers are only asked to cover National Insurance and employer pension contributions for hours not worked under the CJRS, which is lower than the previous level in September and October. For an average claim, this accounts for just 5 per cent of total employment costs or £70 per employee per

month. Furthermore, many small employers can benefit from the Employment Allowance for support with their NICs bill.

Since March, businesses have received billions in loans, tax deferrals, Business Rate reliefs, and general and sector-specific grants. This support can be used by businesses to cover the costs of NICs and pension contributions, ensuring that they can continue to furlough their employees.

The Government will provide a further update on the CJRS at the Budget.

■ Leisure: Non-domestic Rates

Stephen Morgan:

[\[143075\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to extend business rates relief to the leisure industry supply chain.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided enhanced support to eligible businesses in 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.

■ Parental Leave: Coronavirus

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[142794\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of taking steps to encourage companies to place parents on furlough while schools are closed as a result of the covid-19 national lockdown that has been in place since January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is available to the employers of anyone who is unable to work, including from home, due to caring responsibilities arising from COVID-19, such as caring for children who are at home as a result of school and childcare facilities closing. However, the furloughing of staff through the CJRS is a voluntary arrangement, entered at the employers' discretion and agreed by employees. It is not for the Government to decide whether an individual firm should put its staff on furlough.

In the most recent national lockdown, the Government has chosen to keep early years settings open for all children. Vulnerable children and children of key workers can also continue to attend out-of-school settings, for example breakfast clubs and after-school clubs. Households with anyone aged under 14 can form a 'childcare bubble'. This allows friends or family from one other household to provide informal childcare.

■ Patients: Transport**Taiwo Owatemi:** [\[142061\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if HMRC will take steps to ensure all patient transport services as zero-rated for VAT purposes.

Jesse Norman:

Under the current rules, transport services for sick or injured persons in vehicles specially designed for that purpose, such as ambulances, are exempt from VAT. The Government also allows the supply of transport services in any vehicle with seating to carry 10 or more passengers (including the driver) to be a zero-rated supply.

Introducing a zero rate on all patient transport services would come at a cost to the Exchequer. While the Government keeps all taxes under review, there are no current plans to change the VAT treatment of patient transport services.

■ Protective Clothing: VAT**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[142820\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the UK leaving the EU on the UK's ability to cease charging VAT on personal protective equipment.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[142821\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the reintroduction of VAT on personal protective equipment, in November 2020, on public demand for face masks.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[142823\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he consulted suppliers and manufacturers of personal protective equipment (PPE) before the reintroduction of VAT on PPE from 1 November 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary zero-rate of VAT on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was an extraordinary measure to help affected sectors (such as hospitals and care homes) during the initial shock of the COVID-19 crisis and when the global supply of PPE did not meet demand.

This measure came to an end on 31 October (as legislated), as from 1 November new measures were introduced by the Government to ensure supply of COVID-19 related PPE to affected sectors. Face coverings that do not meet the standard set by PHE should not be affected by the temporary zero rate coming to an end, such as fabric face coverings.

In coming to a decision, the Government worked to understand the PPE supply position across the UK. The Department for Health and Social Care has stabilised the UK PPE supply chain and now has a four-month stockpile of all COVID-critical PPE in place, with a tremendous contribution from UK manufacturers.

Given these steps taken by the Government to ensure the supply of PPE to these sectors, the zero rate of VAT on PPE was no longer needed. As such, there are no plans to review the current VAT treatment of PPE.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[142822\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the revenue raised from the charging of VAT on personal protective equipment since November 2020.

Jesse Norman:

An estimate of the revenue raised from VAT on personal protective equipment since November 2020 is not available. HM Revenue and Customs do not hold information on VAT revenue from specific products or services because businesses are not required to provide figures at a product level on their VAT returns, as this would impose an excessive administrative burden.

On 1 May 2020 the Government introduced a temporary VAT zero rate on personal protective equipment (PPE) that met the standard set out in guidance published on 24 April 2020 from Public Health England so as to ensure that affected sectors (such as hospitals and care homes) were able to access PPE as required. The Government has since put in place new measures that now ensure the supply of PPE to these sectors from November 2020. The zero rate therefore ended on 31 October (as legislated).

In July 2020, the Government announced in the Plan for Jobs additional expenditure of over £15 billion for PPE procurement.

■ Social Enterprises: Coronavirus

Ruth Jones:

[\[143104\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to expand the scope of the Social Investment Tax Relief scheme.

Ruth Jones:

[\[143105\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to continue the Social Investment Tax Relief scheme beyond March 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The Social Investment Tax Relief (SITR) was introduced in 2014 to incentivise risk finance investments in qualifying social enterprises and charities. HMRC statistics show that up to 2018-19, about 110 enterprises have used the scheme to raise £11.2 million.

The Government keeps all taxes and reliefs under review in order to ensure they continue to meet policy objectives and represent value for money for taxpayers. The Government previously published a Call for Evidence on SITR's use to date. A response to the consultation will be published in due course and a decision on SITR's future will be announced at the Budget ahead of its sunset clause in April 2021.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**Stephen Farry:** [\[143174\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the current staffing level is of the Trader Support Service.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC are working closely with the Fujitsu-led consortium appointed to deliver services offered by the Trader Support Service (TSS). The consortium has expertise across the range of services needed to make the TSS effective, including an existing provider of customs education and an established customs intermediary. It has over 700 contact centre staff on hand to manage trader queries, answering 98% of calls in under 30 seconds.

Stephen Farry: [\[143175\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps are being taken to ensure effective communication and co-ordination between the Trader Support Service and the Irish Revenue Commissioners.

Jesse Norman:

The Trader Support Service (TSS) has been established to help traders affected by changes due to the Northern Ireland Protocol. For example, the service can submit import and safety and security declarations on behalf of traders moving goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland without them needing to engage directly with new digital customs systems.

The Government recognises the need to work closely with the Irish authorities regarding customs requirements and the TSS is engaging with these authorities accordingly. As part of the TSS's educational offering, the service can indicate to traders and hauliers when they will need to interact with Irish systems.

WALES**■ Local Growth Deals: Wales****Andrew Griffith:** [\[141634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will publish information on his Department's progress in signing new Growth Deals in Wales.

Simon Hart:

We signed a Final Deal Agreement for the North Wales Growth Deal on 17 December 2020. We also successfully agreed Heads of Terms for a Mid Wales Growth Deal on 22 December with a view to negotiating a Final Deal Agreement. When this is signed, it will mean that the whole of Wales will be covered by £790m of UK Government City and Growth Deal funding. The Government is committed to ensuring that these deals deliver economic growth and jobs across the whole of

Wales and I will continue to work closely with my colleagues to enable that to happen.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Equality

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[143905\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to her oral contribution of 13 January 2021, Official Report, column 281, on the launch of an Equality Data Project which will consider data on a wide range of personal characteristics, including socioeconomic status and geography, whether her Department will continue to record data by (a) ethnicity, (b) age, (c) sex and (d) disability.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Equality Data Programme will continue to consider data on a wide range of personal characteristics including ethnicity, age, sex and disability. In addition, we will also consider factors such as socioeconomic status and geography to give a holistic picture of equality.

■ Ethnic Groups: Coronavirus

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[143086\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Minister for Equalities of 13 January 2021, Official Report, column 276, what assessment she has made of the susceptibility of Black, Asian and ethnic minority people to the range of socioeconomic and geographical factors such as occupational exposure, population density and household composition which increase the risk of exposure to covid-19.

Kemi Badenoch:

My first quarterly report to the Prime Minister and Health Secretary of 22 October summarised the evidence available at the time on the role of various factors in increasing the risk of Covid-19 infection and mortality for different ethnic minority groups. This included risk factors such as occupation, population density and household size.

I will shortly be publishing my second quarterly report providing updates where there is further evidence. This will include updates on the role of household composition, geography and occupation in Covid-19 infection rates.

■ Gay Conversion Therapy

Crispin Blunt:

[\[143679\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to her answer on conversion therapy to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton on 23 September 2020, Official Report, Column 931, whether the research has been completed; if she will publish that research; and when she plans to introduce steps to end conversion therapy.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government continues to conduct research into conversion therapy and will publish this in due course. The Government will introduce steps to end conversion therapy after the research has concluded and we have considered its findings.

WORK AND PENSIONS■ **Universal Credit: Mortgages****Navendu Mishra:**[\[142084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, since the start of the covid-19 outbreak, what Government support has been provided to people claiming universal credit who have a mortgage and are not eligible for receipt of housing allowance to help with repayments.

Guy Opperman:

Homeowners experiencing financial difficulties meeting mortgage repayments because of Covid-19, can apply for a mortgage holiday for up to six months and have until 31st March 2021 to do so. The moratorium on lender repossession has been extended until 1 April.

■ **Universal Credit: Publicity****Navendu Mishra:**[\[142086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will publicise the option for fortnightly payment of universal credit.

Guy Opperman:

There are no plans to review the four categories of specified accommodation at a national or local level. However, we are reviewing the guidance for specified accommodation claims to improve consistency in decision-making.

The specified accommodation definition was introduced into Housing Benefit in 2014 to extend the protections for exempt accommodation to other categories of supported housing that, although not materially different, were subject to welfare reforms. As a result, housing support for people living in specified accommodation is paid through Housing Benefit rather than Universal Credit and this support is exempt from the Benefit Cap.

The specified accommodation definition applies to all of Housing Benefit across Great Britain.