



Daily Report

Monday, 1 February 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 1 February 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:39 P.M., 01 February 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	8	■ Training	16
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	8	■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans	18
■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme	8	CABINET OFFICE	19
■ Business: Coronavirus	8	■ Blood: Contamination	19
■ Consumer Goods: Prices	9	■ Cabinet Office: Marketing	19
■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme	9	■ Civil Servants: Bradford	19
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	10	■ Elections: Coronavirus	20
■ Green Homes Grant Scheme	10	■ EU Nationals: Oxford West and Abingdon	20
■ Hinkley Point C Power Station	11	■ G7: Cornwall	20
■ Home Energy and Lifestyle Management: Misrepresentation	12	■ Government Departments: Procurement	20
■ Hydroelectric Power: Storage	12	■ Public Sector: Procurement	21
■ Hydrogen	13	DEFENCE	21
■ Industrial Energy Transformation Fund	13	■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme: Coronavirus	21
■ Metals: Kingston upon Hull	13	■ Armed Forces: Addictions	21
■ Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries	14	■ Armed Forces: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder	22
■ Post Office: Fujitsu	15	■ Defence: Climate Change	22
■ Renewable Energy	15	■ Defence: Employment	23
■ Retail Trade	16	■ Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review	23
■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus	16	■ Military Aid: Coronavirus	23
		■ Military Aid: Mozambique	24

■ Military Alliances: France	24	■ Free School Meals	40
■ Ministry of Defence: Cost Effectiveness	25	■ Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes	40
■ MOD Boscombe Down	26	■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments	41
■ Unemployment: Young People	26	■ IGCSE: Assessments	42
■ Veterans: Civil Proceedings	26	■ Institute of Teaching	43
■ Warrior Armoured Vehicle: Procurement	26	■ Institute of Teaching: Finance	43
DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	27	■ Institute of Teaching: Qualifications	43
■ Arts: Visas	27	■ National Tutoring Programme	44
■ Culture Recovery Fund: Greater London	28	■ Office for Students: Coronavirus	44
■ Data Protection: EU Law	28	■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus	44
■ Gambling: Advertising	29	■ Pre-school Education: Finance	48
■ Gambling: Black Economy	30	■ Pupil Premium	49
■ Golf: Coronavirus	30	■ Pupils: Attendance	49
■ Leisure: Coronavirus	31	■ Pupils: Mental Health	50
■ Lotteries	32	■ Pupils: Sanitary Protection	51
■ Ofcom: Annual Reports	32	■ Remote Education	52
■ Public Libraries: Wales	32	■ Remote Education: Bristol West	52
■ Sports: Coronavirus	33	■ Remote Education: ICT	53
■ Video Games: Data Protection	33	■ Remote Education: York	55
■ Video Games: UK Relations with EU	34	■ Schools: Coronavirus	56
■ Winter Sports	35	■ Skilled Workers: South Yorkshire	60
EDUCATION	35	■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus	60
■ Assessments: Coronavirus	35	■ Students: Fees and Charges	62
■ Children in Care	36	■ Students: Housing	62
■ Coronavirus: Key Workers	37	■ Supply Teachers: Coronavirus	63
■ Covid-19 Education Catch-up Fund: Greater London	37	■ Teachers: Training	65
■ Education: Coronavirus	38	■ Universities: Coronavirus	66
■ Extended Services: Coronavirus	39		

■ Video Games: Graduates	69	■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus	83
■ Video Games: Overseas Students	70	■ Developing Countries: Females	84
■ Vocational Education: Finance	70	■ Ethiopia: Armed Conflict	84
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	71	■ EU Countries: British Nationals Abroad	84
■ Animal Experiments: Chemicals	71	■ European Union: Visas	85
■ Animal Grooming: Coronavirus	72	■ Iain Lindsay	85
■ Animal Housing: Cats and Dogs	72	■ India: Farmers	85
■ Animal Products: Exports	73	■ India: Religious Freedom	86
■ Animal Welfare	74	■ Johal, Jagtar Singh	86
■ Flood Control	74	■ Malawi: Coronavirus	87
■ Flood Control: Grants	75	■ Overseas Aid	87
■ Flood Control: Local Government	76	■ Overseas Aid: Climate Change	88
■ Flood Control: North Yorkshire	76	■ Overseas Aid: World Bank	88
■ Gun Sports: Coronavirus	77	■ Russia: Human Rights	88
■ Horses: Animal Welfare	77	■ Tigray: Human Rights	89
■ Hunting: Coronavirus	78	■ Tigray: Humanitarian Situation	89
■ Incinerators: Wales	79	■ USA: Genito-urinary Medicine	90
■ Lighting: Pollution Control	79	■ Visas: EU Countries	90
■ Organic Food: Northern Ireland	79	■ Western Sahara: Armed Conflict	90
■ Pets: Sales	80	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	91
■ Pigs	81	■ Breast Cancer	91
■ Seafood: Exports	81	■ Breast Cancer: Health Services	91
■ UK Trade with EU: Meat	81	■ Cancer: Health Services	92
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	82	■ Cancer: Screening	93
■ Africa: Coronavirus	82	■ Cervical Cancer: Screening	93
■ Africa: Overseas Aid	82	■ Children: Disability	94
■ Belarus: Human Rights	83	■ Coronavirus: Children	94
		■ Coronavirus: Cornwall	94
		■ Coronavirus: Death	95
		■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	95

■ Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups	96	■ Mental Health Services: West Midlands	116
■ Coronavirus: Hospitals	96	■ Mental Health: Children	117
■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing	97	■ NHS: Protective Clothing	117
■ Coronavirus: Quarantine	98	■ Nivolumab	117
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	98	■ Obsessive Compulsive Disorder: Children and Young People	118
■ Department of Health and Social Care: Ministerial Powers	107	■ Oxygen: Blood Tests	119
■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions	107	■ Podiatry	120
■ Disease Control and Public Health: Finance	107	■ Prescription Drugs	120
■ Earwax: Medical Treatments	108	■ Secure Psychiatric Units	121
■ Epilepsy: Diagnosis	108	■ Telemedicine	121
■ Epilepsy: Pregnancy	108	HOME OFFICE	121
■ Eyesight: Digital Technology	110	■ Airguns: Crime	121
■ General Practitioners: Coronavirus	110	■ Airguns: Scotland	122
■ Health Services: Artificial Intelligence	110	■ Animal Welfare	122
■ Health Services: Standards	111	■ Asylum	122
■ Health: Disadvantaged	111	■ Asylum: Children	123
■ HIV Infection: Drugs	111	■ Asylum: Croydon	125
■ HIV Infection: Ethnic Groups	113	■ Asylum: Homelessness	126
■ Hospitals: Admissions	113	■ Asylum: Penally	126
■ Hospitals: Coronavirus	114	■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation	127
■ Hospitals: Digital Technology	114	■ Catalytic Converters: Theft	129
■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Medical Treatments	114	■ Counter-terrorism	129
■ Influenza	115	■ Detention Centres	130
■ Mental Health Services	115	■ Gambling: Crime	131
■ Mental Health Services: Mothers	115	■ Health Services and Social Services: Migrant Workers	131
■ Mental Health Services: Napier Barracks	116	■ Human Trafficking: British Nationality	131
		■ Immigrants: Detainees	132
		■ Immigration: Health Insurance	132
		■ Immigration: Yemen	133

■ Members: Correspondence	133	■ Trade and Agriculture	
■ Police	134	Commission: Ethics	147
■ Police: Training	134	JUSTICE	148
■ UK Border Force: Coronavirus	134	■ Coroners: Gambling	148
■ Veterans: Commonwealth	135	■ Gambling: Crime	148
■ Visas: Families	135	■ Maternity Leave: Redundancy	148
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND		■ Offences against Children	149
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	136	■ Prison Officers: Coronavirus	149
■ Buildings: Insulation	136	■ Prison Officers: Pay	150
■ Construction: West Midlands	137	■ Probate	150
■ Homelessness: Coronavirus	138	■ Prosecutions	151
■ Housing: Construction	139	■ Remand in Custody	151
■ Housing: York	140	■ Remand in Custody: Ethnic	
■ Landlords: Registration	141	Groups	152
■ Local Government Finance:		■ Television Licences: Non-	
Coronavirus	141	payment	153
■ Local Government: Meetings	141	NORTHERN IRELAND	153
■ Regional Planning and		■ Loyalist Communities Council:	
Development	142	Meetings	153
■ Social Rented Housing:		■ Northern Ireland Government:	
Construction	142	Publications	153
■ Supported Housing	143	■ UK Trade with EU: Advertising	154
■ Supported Housing:		TRANSPORT	154
Inspections	143	■ Aircraft: Oxygen	154
■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund	144	■ Biofuels	154
■ Urban Areas: Regeneration	145	■ Bus Services: Finance	155
INTERNATIONAL TRADE	146	■ Cars	155
■ Coronavirus: TRIPS		■ Delivery Services: Exhaust	
Agreement	146	Emissions	156
■ Department for International		■ Driving Licences: EU	
Trade: Trade Promotion	146	Countries	156
■ Fossil Fuels: Export Credit		■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus	156
Guarantees	146	■ Driving: Licensing	157
■ Overseas Trade	147	■ High Speed Two: Wales	157
■ Shipping: Exports	147	■ Large Goods Vehicles: Kent	157

■ Liverpool Port: Roads	158	■ Mortgages	170
■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions	158	■ Mortgages: Interest Rates	171
■ Motor Vehicles: Safety	158	■ Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Hardship Fund: Wholesale Trade	171
■ Railway Stations: Access	159	■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	172
■ Railways: Cheshire	159	■ Public Libraries: Finance	173
■ Shipping: Exhaust Emissions	160	■ Retail Trade: UK Trade with EU	173
■ Transport: Coronavirus	161	■ Revenue and Customs: Contracts	174
TREASURY	162	■ Revenue and Customs: Correspondence	174
■ Amusement Arcades: VAT	162	■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services	175
■ Bank Cards: Fees and Charges	162	■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme	175
■ Bank Services and Small Businesses: Carbon Emissions	162	■ Social Enterprises: Tax Allowances	176
■ Business: Coronavirus	163	■ Supply Teachers: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	177
■ Business: UK Trade with EU	164	■ Tax Yields	177
■ Child Benefit: Age	164	■ Taxation: Self-assessment	178
■ Construction: VAT	164	■ UK Trade with EU: Customs	179
■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme	165	■ VAT: Registration	179
■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: NatWest	165	■ Working Hours	179
■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	166	WORK AND PENSIONS	180
■ Customs: ICT	167	■ Employment: Disability	180
■ Employment: Coronavirus	167	■ Employment: Health	180
■ Financial Services: UK Relations with EU	168	■ Food Banks: Research	180
■ Further Education: Sheffield	168	■ Food Supply: Surveys	181
■ Gaming Machines: Excise Duties	168	■ Industrial Injuries Advisory Council	181
■ Infrastructure: Finance	169	■ Jobseeker's Allowance	182
■ London Capital and Finance: Insolvency	169		

■ Poverty: Kingston upon Hull	182	■ Universal Credit: Rents	189
■ Self-employed: Retirement	182	■ Work Capability Assessment: Coronavirus	189
■ Social Security Benefits: Australia	183	MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS	191
■ Social Security Benefits: Canada	183	WORK AND PENSIONS	191
■ Social Security Benefits: Disability	184	■ Universal Credit: Publicity	191
■ Social Security Benefits: Kingston upon Hull	184	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	192
■ Social Security Benefits: Mortgages and Rented Housing	185	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	192
■ Supported Housing	186	■ Update on Zimbabwe	192
■ Unemployment: Coventry	186	HOME OFFICE	193
■ Universal Credit	186	■ Launch of the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) route	193
■ Universal Credit: Automation	187	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	194
■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus	187	■ Design Update	194
■ Universal Credit: Digital Technology	188	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	196
■ Universal Credit: ICT	188	■ The United Kingdom's Free Trade Agreements	196
■ Universal Credit: Maladministration	189	■ UK Trade Update	198

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

■ **Bounce Back Loan Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**

Lucy Powell:

[144687]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much interest the Government has paid to banks for (a) bounce back loans and (b) Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS); and how much banks have charged the Government for arranging CBILs loans.

Paul Scully:

The Government covers interest payments on behalf of borrowers for the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) for the first 12 months after drawdown of a facility. For CBILS, interest rates and fees will vary between banks and will depend on the specific lending proposal. The interest rate for Bounce Back loans is set at 2.5%.

As of 28 January 2021, the total value of interest payments made for both schemes is as follows:

- Total amount recorded for interest paid to Banks under BBLs: £193,269,778
- Total amount recorded for interest paid to Banks under CBILS: £81,991,145

For CBILS, the Government also covers arrangement fees on behalf of borrowers.

As of 28 January 2021, the total amount recorded for arrangement fees paid to banks is £24,256,440.

Banks are not permitted to charge any fees for administering BBLs.

■ **Business: Coronavirus**

Rosie Duffield:

[144803]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of pro-rata splitting of covid-19-related business grants when the business has passed between owners during the covid-19 lockdown period.

Paul Scully:

This point has been considered and is covered by the guidance issued to Local Authorities. In respect of the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Addendum payments from 5 January onwards and Closed Businesses Lockdown Payment, any changes to the rating list (rateable value or to the hereditament) after 5 January 2021, including changes which have been backdated to this date, should be ignored for the purposes of eligibility. Local Authorities are not required to adjust, pay or recover grants where the rating list is subsequently amended retrospectively to the date that national restrictions began.

In cases where it is factually clear to the Local Authority that the rating list was inaccurate on 5 January 2021, Local Authorities may withhold the grant and/or award the grant based on their view of who would have been entitled to the grant had the list been accurate. This is entirely at the discretion of the Local Authority and only intended to prevent manifest errors. By accepting grant support, business owners are confirming that they are eligible to receive that support.

Should further business grant support measures be introduced in future, new guidance on eligibility and other related matters would be issued to local authorities to ensure that grant funding can be directed to where it is needed as quickly as is practicable.

■ **Consumer Goods: Prices**

Owen Thompson: [\[144738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to prevent the practice of scalping to circumvent maximum purchase quantities in order to resell at an inflated price for profit.

Owen Thompson: [\[144739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will introduce legislative proposals to prohibit the resale of (a) gaming consoles and (b) computer components at prices significantly above manufacturer's recommended retail price on a similar basis to the law on secondary selling of tickets.

Owen Thompson: [\[144740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if the Government will bring forward legislative proposals to make the resale of goods purchased using an automated bot illegal.

Paul Scully:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answers given by my Hon. Friend the Minister of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to the Hon. Member for Dunfermline and West Fife on 22nd December 2020 to Questions [129026](#) and [130123](#).

■ **Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**

Laura Farris: [\[142090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the adequacy of scrutiny of the lending practices of Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme lenders.

Paul Scully:

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) operates as a delegated scheme, so all lending decisions are at the discretion of the lender. However, lenders are required to agree to and adhere to the Scheme's Legal agreement.

Furthermore, all CBILS accredited lenders must undergo thorough due diligence as part of the British Business Bank's accreditation process. Thereafter, lenders undergo periodic audits (including an audit prior to moving from a probationary to a full lender under the Scheme) to check that scheme eligibility rules and processes have been followed. The British Business Bank can suspend a lender from new lending or remove its accreditation if it is not following the correct lending practices.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Stephen Doughty:

[\[144691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 26 January 2021 to Question 141474, how many additional vaccine doses per month the expanded Vaccine Manufacturing Innovation Centre facility can produce as a result of the investment outlined in that Answer; and of which types of vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

When fully operationally in 2022, the Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre (VMIC) will have several Good Manufacturing Process suites that will be able to accommodate a range of production scale capabilities. For pandemic response, the VMIC will be able to make up to 70 million doses of a vaccine within a 6-month timeframe. This is a significant increase to the VMIC's originally anticipated capacity.

The VMIC has been designed to be a flexible manufacturing facility and will be able to manufacture a range of vaccine types, such as messenger RNA, viral vector, or protein sub-unit.

■ **Green Homes Grant Scheme**

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[143675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many vouchers have been (a) issued and (b) redeemed under the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As of 26 January, 17,618 vouchers have been issued under the Green Homes Grant. Vouchers will become redeemable once scheduled works are completed.

Official scheme statistics will be published in due course. BEIS will continue to monitor application data as the scheme progresses.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[143676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many installers (a) have been and (b) are waiting to be paid for completed work under the Green Homes Grant Scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Official scheme statistics will be published in due course. BEIS will continue to monitor application data as the scheme progresses.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[143677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how long on average it takes for installers to be paid for work after completion of that work under the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The payment process for Green Homes Grant scheme vouchers is a four step process that needs the customer to confirm the work has been completed, the installer to lodge the work with Trustmark, the scheme administrator to undertake scheme checks, and then proceeding to payment. In some cases, there will be a randomly selected on-site audit which will need to be carried out before the payment can be processed. As such the time it takes to process payments can vary.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[143678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on contractors of the time being taken for payments to be made to those contractors under the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The scheme administrator is prioritising the payment of vouchers and we are continuing to see an increase in the number of vouchers being paid out to installers once work is complete.

We are continuously listening to feedback from customers and installers and making improvements based upon it. We are working with consumers and installers to ensure they are clear on the information and checks required, so that vouchers can be paid as quickly as possible.

Sarah Olney:

[\[144787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of new jobs created by the Green Homes Grant scheme to date since its commencement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The scheme has the capacity to support 80,000 jobs. The extension announced on 18 November 2020 has allowed an extra year to take advantage of the Green Homes Grant, helping tradespeople and households plan their workload and create new jobs in their communities.

We have worked to ensure that jobs are created across the country and there are now, on average, 76 Green Homes Grant installers per local authority area in England. Official scheme statistics will be published in due course.

■ Hinkley Point C Power Station

Alan Brown:

[\[144728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his most recent estimate is for the commissioning date for Hinkley Point C (a) Unit 1 and (b) Unit 2.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Responsibility for the construction schedule of Hinkley Point C lies entirely with the developer and its investors, and not with the Government. EDF of France is the lead investor. On Wednesday 27th January, EDF published a notice saying that Unit 1 is expected to start generating electricity in June 2026, rather than in December 2025 as was previously anticipated. The revised forecast was put in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. The notice went on to highlight risks of further delay by 15 months to Unit 1 and 9 months to Unit 2.

■ Home Energy and Lifestyle Management: Misrepresentation**Margaret Ferrier:**[\[141999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on redress for victims of HELMS Green Deal mis-selling.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

No such formal discussions have taken place with Cabinet colleagues specifically on the subject of redress for victims of mis-selling by the former Green Deal Provider, Home Energy and Lifestyle Management Ltd (HELMS). The redress process is completed in line with the requirements of the Green Deal Framework Regulations.

■ Hydroelectric Power: Storage**Alan Brown:**[\[142025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment has he made of the potential merits of pumped hydro storage; what discussions his Department has held with developers on that matter; what steps he is taking to support a route to market for pumped hydro; and if he will make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Electricity storage, including pumped hydro storage, is an essential technology for a net zero energy system. It provides flexibility to the energy system which, alongside other technologies such as demand side response and interconnection, could unlock savings of up to £12 billion per year by 2050. The Government and Ofgem's 2017 Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan set out a range of actions to facilitate the deployment of storage of all sizes by removing regulatory barriers, reforming markets, and investing in innovation.

Following engagement with industry over the past year, we announced in the Energy White Paper that we will publish a new Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan in spring 2021 in partnership with Ofgem. This will outline our next steps for addressing barriers to smart and flexible technologies, including the deployment of large scale and longer duration storage such as pumped hydro storage.

■ Hydrogen

Alan Brown:

[\[142020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress has been made towards achieving the Government's target of 5GW hydrogen production.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Meeting the Government's ambition of 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030, outlined in the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and the Energy White Paper, will require a range of policies and action from various actors, including government of all levels, industry and investors.

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 on how the UK intends to deliver the 5GW ambition will be set out in the forthcoming UK Hydrogen Strategy, which will be published in the first half of this year.

■ Industrial Energy Transformation Fund

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[141998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to provide further financial support to the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF) was announced in November 2018 as a £315 million scheme to provide industry with support for energy efficiency and decarbonisation projects. The first Phase 1 competition, worth £30m, was held in 2020 and all applicants have now been notified of the outcome. The second Phase 1 competition will be held in Spring 2021. Projects funded by the IETF will help industry to reduce emissions and energy bills, while creating a green economic recovery.

The 2020 Spending Review announced increased investment to tackle climate change and deliver my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution. The IETF is a key part of the Government's plan to decarbonise industry and any further financial support will be considered at the next fiscal event.

■ Metals: Kingston upon Hull

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[143719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support Kingston upon Hull to become the location of Europe's first rare earth processing plant.

Paul Scully:

On 26th January, Pensana Rare Earths plc submitted a planning application for a proposed rare earth oxide separation facility at the Saltend Chemicals Park, Humber, Yorkshire. This will create Europe's first rare earth processing plant, generating 100 new jobs and establishing a UK source of critical materials for the powerful magnets needed for offshore wind turbines and electric vehicles.

■ Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[143779\]](#)

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

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has taken unprecedented steps to protect businesses and workers in the UK automotive sector. To date, our package of support available to businesses includes the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme which has now been extended until the end of March, the trade credit insurance guarantee and tax deferrals. In total, we have provided £2.4 billion in Covid Corporate Financing Facility support to the automotive sector.

The Government has been working closely with key automotive companies and industry stakeholders to understand how we can support the resilience and continued competitiveness of UK automotive manufacturing at this time. Our priority has always been to support people and to protect jobs and businesses through this crisis.

We are determined to ensure that the UK continues to be one of the most competitive locations in the world for the automotive sector and will continue to work closely with the automotive industry to ensure success.

Colleen Fletcher:[\[143781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support the automotive industry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We have provided comprehensive support during the pandemic, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the trade credit insurance guarantee, and tax deferrals. In total, we have provided £2.4 billion in COVID Corporate Financing Facility support to the automotive sector.

The Government has invested around £1.5 billion to support the research, development, and manufacture of zero and low-emission vehicles to date. This investment has created thousands of jobs in the sector and its supply chain, saved millions of tonnes of CO₂, and has helped the UK to lead the charge towards a low carbon automotive future.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently announced in his 10 Point Plan nearly £500 million of funding for the Automotive Transformation Fund over the next four

years to develop and embed the next generation of cutting-edge automotive technologies in the UK. This is part of a £2.8 billion package of measures to support industry and consumers to make the switch to cleaner vehicles. In addition, we are investing in schemes to support the delivery of chargepoint infrastructure to homes, workplaces, on residential streets, and across the wider roads network.

■ **Post Office: Fujitsu**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[144626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Post Office has to seek financial compensation from Fujitsu in response to the costs incurred in the civil litigation case Alan Bates and Others and Post Office Limited.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[144627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether (a) Post Office or (b) his Department (i) has taken or (ii) plans to take, any legal action against Fujitsu following the civil litigation case Alan Bates and Others and Post Office Limited.

Paul Scully:

While the Government sets the strategic direction for the Post Office, it allows the company the commercial freedom to deliver this strategy as an independent business. The details regarding contracts with Fujitsu and seeking financial compensation, are an operational matter for Post Office Limited.

The Department has not taken, and has no plans to take, any legal action against Fujitsu.

■ **Renewable Energy**

Alan Brown:

[\[144021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the modelling his Department holds on the comparative cost effectiveness, including grid balancing costs, of new large scale nuclear and renewable energy.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Department publishes information on one useful measure of cost effectiveness for generation technologies in its Electricity Generation Costs series. The latest report (2020) sets out the Levelised Cost Of Electricity (LCOE) for renewables, which can be compared against the LCOE for a generic large-scale nuclear plant published in the 2016 report. The true cost of any future nuclear plant would, however, be dependent on the outcome of negotiations with project developers.

It is important to note that other factors also influence the cost effectiveness of different generation technologies. For example, energy generated at times of high demand and low capacity is more valuable than energy generated at times of low demand and high capacity, and the location of specific generating capacity will further

affect costs. The effect of grid balancing on levelised costs is explored more in Section 7 of the 2020 Generation Costs Report.

■ Retail Trade

Alex Sobel: [\[143893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to tackle retail scalping in (a) low stock high demand consumer electronics and (b) other products.

Paul Scully:

The Government is discussing this issue with trade associations such as Ukie. We know that bulk purchasing through automated bots is a concern for some of their members who we understand are currently examining further actions they can take to prevent these behaviours, and are working with their retailers to improve experiences for customers.

■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus

Sir Mike Penning: [\[143717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing non-essential retail shops to run a click and collect service during the national covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the importance of allowing retailers to be able continue operating during these very challenging times which is why all shops can offer click-and-collect services.

Click-and-collect allow the public to have access to goods they need quickly, where they aren't available from retailers that can remain open and allows goods to be pre-ordered and collected without customers entering the premises, thus remaining in well ventilated spaces - which are, by definition, safer environments where transmission is less likely to occur.

■ Training

Navendu Mishra: [\[142077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support the Government is providing for workplace learning; and what recent estimate he has made of the number of people in receipt of that support.

Paul Scully:

There are a number of specific schemes through which the Government is providing support for workplace learning, including the following:

The Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) Kickstart Scheme Programme:

This provides fully funded six-month job placements for 16–24-year-olds on Universal

Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. Employers participating in the scheme are required to ensure that a young person receives training and support that will enable the young people to become more employable. Before their application is accepted, any employer has to demonstrate how their job placement will help the young person develop their skills and long term employability. Over 2,000 young jobseekers have started in Kickstart jobs with more starting every week.

DWP's Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAPs): In the 'Plan for Jobs', my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced an extra 32,000 SWAP participant starts in 2020/21, providing £17m for the Department for Education (DfE) to triple the number of associated vocational training placements. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions also pledged to increase further the number of people taking part in 2021/22. SWAPs offer unemployed benefit claimants in England and Scotland a short period of training, work experience and a guaranteed interview for a live job vacancy to help them move into work. Data up to 6th December 2020 shows that there have been a total of 44,130 starts to a Sector-based work academy programme.

Apprenticeships: These are jobs, created by employers, which offer high-quality on and off-the-job training. Employers can choose between nearly 600 apprenticeship standards that have been designed by employers to deliver the skills they need. To help employers offer new apprenticeships, as part of government's Plan for Jobs, they are now able to claim up to £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire until 31 March 2021. DfE are also working on the largest-ever expansion of traineeships and have introduced £1000 incentive payments for employers who offer traineeship work placements to support this.

Industry placements & T levels: Industry placements with an employer are also a key element of T levels which were introduced last September. T Levels offer students a mixture of classroom learning and 'on-the-job' experience during an industry placement.

Additional Measures: In addition, the Government is investing £2.5bn (£3 billion when including Barnett funding for devolved administrations) in the National Skills Fund. This is a significant investment and has the potential to deliver new opportunities to generations of adults who may have been previously left behind. This includes funding for the recently launched Skills Bootcamps, which are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. Skills Bootcamps have the potential to transform the skills landscape for adults and employers. The latest figures for apprenticeships and traineeships starts can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships/2020-21>.

■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans**Alan Brown:** **[142022]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the planned UK content is in the revised target for 40GW of offshore wind to be deployed by 2030.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The offshore wind industry has committed to delivering 60% UK content by 2030 and will be publishing analysis on how this could be achieved shortly and UK content figures for offshore wind farms are compiled and published by the Offshore Wind Industry Council (OWIC).

We are however, seeking views on proposals[1] for a new Supply Chain Plan questionnaire for the Contracts for Difference (CfD) Applicants to complete. The proposed new Supply Chain Plan questionnaire will be aligned to the Industrial Strategy and is strengthened by containing more specific questions, including on the level of anticipated UK content. This consultation closes on 11 March.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/contracts-for-difference-cfd-for-low-carbon-electricity-generation-new-supply-chain-plan-questionnaire>

Alan Brown: **[142023]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the extent of the UK content within each of the offshore wind contracts for difference awards to date; and if he will make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

UK content figures for offshore wind farms are compiled and published by the Offshore Wind Industry Council (OWIC). We are currently consulting on proposals[1] for a new Supply Chain Plan questionnaire for the Contracts for Difference (CfD) Applicants. This consultation closes on 11 March.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/contracts-for-difference-cfd-for-low-carbon-electricity-generation-new-supply-chain-plan-questionnaire>

Alan Brown: **[142024]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to incorporate 60 per cent UK content within the contracts for difference auctions for offshore wind.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government is committed to leveraging the economic benefits from our investments in renewable electricity generation and achieving net zero emissions by 2050. BEIS is currently consulting on proposals[1] for a new Supply Chain Plan questionnaire for the Contracts for Difference (CfD) Applicants which is aligned to the Industrial Strategy. The offshore wind industry has set its own target to achieve 60% UK content in the Offshore Wind Sector Deal. This consultation closes on 11 March.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/contracts-for-difference-cfd-for-low-carbon-electricity-generation-new-supply-chain-plan-questionnaire>

CABINET OFFICE

■ Blood: Contamination

Jessica Morden:

[142852]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking to equalise payments to infected blood victims throughout the UK.

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: Marketing

Owen Thompson:

[144743]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department spent on (a) communications, (b) advertising and (c) marketing in (i) the UK, (ii) England, (iii) Northern Ireland, (iv) Scotland and (v) Wales in each month from (A) August 2020 to (B) December 2020.

Penny Mordaunt:

Cabinet Office publishes expenditure on government communication spend, including our national campaigns, on a rolling monthly basis on gov.uk as part of routine government transparency arrangements at the link below:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/cabinet-office-spend-data.

We work closely across all four nations to ensure that our communication activity reaches the intended audiences effectively.

■ Civil Servants: Bradford

Philip Davies:

[141954]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will relocate some civil services jobs to Bradford district.

Philip Davies:

[141955]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what representations he has received from Bradford Council on the merits of relocating civil service jobs to Bradford district.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to PQ. [133645](#).

Elections: Coronavirus**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[142068\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of altering the candidate nomination requirements for elections during a pandemic.

Chloe Smith:

We have received representations from Parliamentarians on this issue, and we are currently considering the matter.

As I have stated in the House, we will keep Parliament updated on the election preparations, will engage with political parties and will publish detailed guidance in due course.

EU Nationals: Oxford West and Abingdon**Layla Moran:** [\[144835\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many EU citizens live in Oxford West and Abingdon constituency.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. Response to PQ144835 [Response to PQ144835.pdf]

G7: Cornwall**Luke Pollard:** [\[143093\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the education of school children in St Ives of the decision to host the G7 summit in Cornwall in June 2021.

Penny Mordaunt:

We are working with community partners, including the police, St Ives Town Council and Cornwall Council, to minimise local disruption in and around St Ives.

The G7 Summit presents a huge opportunity for the local area, supporting local businesses and creating a lasting legacy. We are looking at ways that we can engage local schoolchildren as a part of that legacy, using the Summit to educate and inspire.

Government Departments: Procurement**Shabana Mahmood:** [\[142876\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 130678 on Import: Ethics, when his Department plans its next review on commercial policy and guidance advocating a systematic approach to identifying and tackling modern slavery and labour abuses in Government supply chains to be (a) undertaken and (b) completed.

Julia Lopez:

Procurement Policy Note 05/19: Tackling Modern Slavery in Government Supply Chains was published in September 2019 and sets out how UK Government departments must take action to ensure modern slavery risks are identified and managed in government supply chains.

Public Sector: Procurement**Navendu Mishra:**[\[142078\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason information on the number of businesses supplying public bodies that have been deemed to be at risk under the terms of procurement is not held centrally.

Julia Lopez:

As has been the case under successive administrations, contracting Authorities are responsible for their own commercial contracts.

DEFENCE**Armed Forces Compensation Scheme: Coronavirus****Sarah Atherton:**[\[143943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether armed forces personnel exposed to covid-19 in the course of their duties will be able to claim compensation under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

Johnny Mercer:

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme provides compensation for injury, illness, or death which was caused by service in the UK Armed Forces on or after 6 April 2005. Personnel who believe they have contracted Covid-19 in the course of their duties may apply for compensation from the Scheme, as they would with any other injury or illness caused by Service. The Armed Forces Pension scheme also provides benefits for injury, illness, or death, regardless of the cause of illness or death.

Armed Forces: Addictions**Dan Carden:**[\[911632\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of drug and alcohol addiction support services for (a) serving armed forces personnel and (b) veterans.

Johnny Mercer:

Drug and alcohol abuse is incompatible with the standards we expect of those who Serve in the Armed Forces. For those Serving Personnel needing help to overcome addiction, treatment is provided via the Defence Medical Establishment. Veterans' healthcare, including treatment for drug and alcohol dependency, is the responsibility of the NHS in England and the Devolved Administrations.

■ Armed Forces: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

Stephen Morgan:

[\[144827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what data his Department holds on the number of armed forces personnel that have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder in each of the last ten years.

Johnny Mercer:

The following table shows the number of UK Armed Forces personnel with an initial assessment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at a Ministry of Defence Department for Community Mental Health (DCMH) from 2010-11 to 2019-20:

2010-11	244
2011-12	269
2012-13	330
2013-14	375
2014-15	274
2015-16	297
2016-17	307
2017-18	299
2018-19	301
2019-20	366

Source: Defence Medical Information Capability Programme (DMICP)

The rate of UK Armed Forces personnel assessed with PTSD remains low at 0.2% in 2019-20, equivalent to 2 in 1,000 personnel.

■ Defence: Climate Change

Anna McMorris:

[\[911639\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the effect of the international climate emergency on UK defence preparedness.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence recognises that climate change is already having an impact on Defence. A review is ongoing to assess the wider implications and to identify actions needed to enable defence to operate at full potential in an increasingly challenging security and physical environment.

■ Defence: Employment

Andrew Jones:

[\[911619\]](#)

What assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on employment of the defence settlement.

Mr Ben Wallace:

The Ministry of Defence already supports over 390,000 jobs in the UK and in 2019, the UK won £11 billion worth of export orders. The multi-year defence settlement will protect this important contribution and build on it by investing in cutting edge capabilities, research and development.

■ Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review

Emma Hardy:

[\[911618\]](#)

When he plans to publish the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Ben Wallace:

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, expects to be able to publish the Review's conclusions in the spring.

In relation to the Defence elements of the Review in particular, I can tell the House that I intend to set out further details of our plans in the weeks after the Integrated Review's publication.

■ Military Aid: Coronavirus

Alexander Stafford:

[\[143176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what support his Department has provided in tackling the covid-19 outbreak in each region of the UK.

James Heapey:

As part of the national COVID-19 response, Defence has been active in all regions of the UK providing support in a variety of ways including: the distribution of PPE and diagnostic equipment; the planning, construction and staffing of Nightingale hospitals; conducting schools and community testing; providing military support to NHS Trusts; and support to the Vaccine Programme. As of 28 January, there are approximately 14,500 personnel committed or at readiness, and Service personnel are deployed in every region of the UK.

Updates on Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA) activity across the UK is made available to Members weekly. The latest version, as at 18 January, can be accessed at:

<https://depositedpapers.parliament.uk/depositedpaper/2282861/details#>

Patricia Gibson:

[\[144719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information he holds on the number of military personnel who assisted with covid-19 testing in Liverpool who are currently in

isolation at Catterick Garrison; and what representations he has received on the standard of catering services in that location for those personnel affected.

James Heappey:

Of the Service personnel who assisted with COVID-19 testing in Liverpool, which ended in November 2020, none are currently in isolation at Catterick Garrison.

At present, neither the chain of command nor the catering department at Catterick Garrison have received negative comments from personnel in isolation. Spot checks on meals are conducted daily by duty personnel, and menus are routinely monitored by Food Service Warrant Officers to guarantee appropriate standards are maintained.

■ **Military Aid: Mozambique**

Kate Osamor:

[\[143027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Government has plans to send military troops for (a) training, (b) combat support and (c) other purposes to Mozambique.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence, with other Departments, is supporting the British High Commission in Maputo in developing a varied programme of assistance under the framework of the UK-Mozambique Defence Memorandum of Understanding agreed in 2019. This involves defence cooperation and aims to assist the Government of Mozambique in addressing terrorism and promoting respect for human rights. As the security situation evolves, we will continue to review and adapt that programme in consultation with the Government of Mozambique.

■ **Military Alliances: France**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[142809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the level of Anglo-French interoperability, ten years after the Lancaster House Treaties.

Jeremy Quin:

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and the French Minister for the Armed Forces announced on 2 November 2020 (on the tenth anniversary of the Lancaster House treaties), “Ten years on from Lancaster House, our Armed Forces are better able to operate together around the world when we ask them to do so than they have ever been”. It is testament to our close defence relationship that we have achieved all the milestones set out in the Lancaster House treaties 10 years ago, working together to protect our mutual interests.

This was demonstrated last year when the UK-French Combined Joint Expeditionary Force successfully completed an extended 10-year programme of development and training to reach full operating capacity. This provides the capability to deploy rapidly over 10,000 UK and French personnel as a single force to conduct a range of tasks including high intensity operations, peacekeeping, disaster relief or humanitarian assistance.

■ Ministry of Defence: Cost Effectiveness

John Healey: [\[143686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress has been made in establishing a unit to ensure his Department secures value for money from the defence spending settlement.

John Healey: [\[143687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Prime Minister's Statement of November 19 2020 on the Integrated Review, Official Report, Column 499, what powers the unit that will ensure value for money of his Department's expenditure will have.

John Healey: [\[143688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Prime Minister's Statement of November 19 2020 on the Integrated Review, Official Report, Column 499, how much funding from the public purse will be allocated to the unit for ensuring value for money from his Department's expenditure.

John Healey: [\[143689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Prime Minister's Statement of November 19 2020 on the Integrated Review, Official Report, Column 499, how many staff will be employed by the unit that will ensure value for money for his Department's expenditure.

John Healey: [\[143690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Prime Minister's Statement of November 19 2020 on the Integrated Review, Official Report, Column 499, what assessment the unit established to ensure value for money of his Department's expenditure has made of previous policies to improve value for money from his Department's expenditure.

Jeremy Quin:

Since my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's statement announcing this historic settlement, we have worked to ensure we have robust mechanisms in place to drive and assure value for money. The Defence Secretary has been clear that the Department's spending must return to a sustainable footing and our whole approach is predicated on meeting the threats we face affordably and at the pace required to keep us safe.

We will report the value gained from this investment through the Government's planning and performance framework, which will measure progress towards delivering the Ministry of Defence's priority outcomes. Through these regular updates and other means, Ministers will be able to track performance and take early action where delivery may be under pressure.

We are driving improvements in programme delivery, procurement, and acquisition to manage complexity, risk, and the pace of technological change affordably and rigorously.

■ MOD Boscombe Down

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[141936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reasons the Government declined Boeing's offer of a mega rotary support hub at Boscombe Down.

Jeremy Quin:

Although preliminary discussions took place in 2018, no formal offer was received by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) from Boeing to locate a rotary support hub at MOD Boscombe Down.

■ Unemployment: Young People

Steve McCabe: [\[911613\]](#)

What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on taking steps to work together to help tackle youth unemployment.

Johnny Mercer:

Defence has a close relationship with the Department for Work and Pensions. Initiatives include the Armed Forces Employability Pathway Scheme, contributing to Job Centre Plus resources in support of Work Coaches and their clients, and Job Centre Plus support for online Armed Forces workshops. The Armed Forces continue to offer young people world class training through highly respected Apprenticeship schemes and a uniquely challenging and constructive career.

■ Veterans: Civil Proceedings

Carla Lockhart: [\[911634\]](#)

What progress is being made with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on bringing forward legacy legislation on tackling vexatious claims against veterans who have served in Northern Ireland.

Johnny Mercer:

This Government is committed to bringing an end to vexatious claims against the Armed Forces. We have introduced the Overseas Operations Bill to reduce the uncertainty faced by our Service personnel and veterans in relation to historical allegations and claims arising from overseas operations. We have also been clear that we will bring forward separate legislation to address the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland - including delivering on our commitment to Northern Ireland veterans - as soon as possible.

■ Warrior Armoured Vehicle: Procurement

Mohammad Yasin: [\[144788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to award a production contract for the Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme.

Jeremy Quin:

The Full Business Case for the Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme is currently being considered through our internal approvals process, and is subject to commercial negotiations. It would not therefore be appropriate to comment further at this time. All decisions are subject to the ongoing Integrated Review.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts: Visas****Kate Osamor:**[\[143022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with the Home Office on including creative professionals on the list of self-employed workers benefiting from visa-free travel for work purposes.

Caroline Dinenage:

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

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

As with legal text shared in confidence with trading partners, elaborating on discussions between departments related to the development of legal text for trade agreements would not be appropriate as these discussions took place in confidence.

Kate Osamor:[\[143023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate his Department has made of the income lost by creative professionals as a result of visa restrictions imposed after the end of the transition period.

Caroline Dinenage:

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

We know that while leaving the EU will bring changes and new processes to touring and working in the EU, it will also bring new opportunities.

Leaving the EU has always meant that there would be changes to how practitioners operate in the EU. DCMS has engaged with the sector extensively throughout negotiations and since the announcement of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement to understand the diverse circumstances of companies, organisations and individual

practitioners and how they may need to adapt as they plan activity across the European Union.

Going forward we will continue to work closely with the sector, including with representative organisations, to assess the impact and to ensure businesses and individuals have the advice and guidance they need to meet new requirements. This includes the creation of a DCMS-led working group to bring together sector leads and other government departments to address technical questions from the sector in more detail.

■ **Culture Recovery Fund: Greater London**

Sir David Evennett:

[\[142798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress his Department has made on providing support for the culture and heritage sector through the Culture Recovery Fund in (a) Greater London, b) the London Borough of Bexley and (c) Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency.

Nigel Huddleston:

Over £1bn from the Culture Recovery Fund has been distributed to over 3000 organisations across England.

Across recovery grants, repayable finance, and capital awards so far, support for London (including Greater London) in the first round of funding was over £300m.

Across recovery grants, repayable finance, and capital awards so far, support for Bexley Borough in the first round of funding was approximately £340,000.

Across the arts and heritage recovery grants, support for Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency was approximately £310,000.

This included funding for councils and local government owned assets including museums, theatres and music venues. Organisations and sites including museums; archives; historical areas; designed landscapes; buildings; monuments and industrial transport also received support.

■ **Data Protection: EU Law**

Simon Hoare:

[\[144768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Court of Justice of the European Union judgment on the Privacy International case (C-623/17), what steps he is taking to ensure that data collection by UK (a) law enforcement agencies and (b) national security and intelligence agencies complies with EU data protection standards.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The CJEU Judgement of 6 October 2020 relates to a previous power, Section 94 Directions under the Telecommunications Act 1984, that has since been replaced by

provisions in the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA). The IPA sets strict requirements of necessity and proportionality for the use of these powers, and provides significant safeguards and independent oversight. All warrants permitting the use of these powers are subject to the 'double lock' safeguard requiring that an independent Judicial Commissioner approve the Secretary of State's decision before the warrant is issued. This 'double lock' ensures that the UK has one of the strongest oversight regimes anywhere in the world.

The Judgment will now be referred back to the Investigatory Powers Tribunal for interpretation for domestic law purposes.

The UK is committed to maintaining high data protection standards for personal data, and we will continue to be a global leader in ensuring personal data is properly protected.

■ **Gambling: Advertising**

Carolyn Harris:

[142030]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the gambling industry on the potential merits of a cessation of gambling advertising during the 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Carolyn Harris:

[142031]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January 2021 to Question 134495 on Gambling: Advertising, for what reasons the depiction of a team football shirt which features the logo of a gambling operator is not considered advertising.

Nigel Huddleston:

I refer to the answer to Question 140004. The government and the Gambling Commission have been clear that gambling operators must act responsibly during the Covid 19 period. Details of ministerial meetings are publicly available and can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/search/transparency-and-freedom-of-information-releases?content_store_document_type=transparency&organisations%5B%5D=department-for-digital-culture-media-sport.

Gambling operators advertising in the UK must abide by the advertising codes issued by the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP) and the Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP). A wide-range of provisions in these codes are designed to protect children. For example, gambling adverts must not be targeted at children or feature content which appeals particularly to them. Sponsorship, as a form of commercial arrangement distinct from the purchase of media space to show or display advertising content, does not fall within scope of these codes. Further detail about the codes and their scope can be found at: <https://www.asa.org.uk/codes-and-rulings/advertising-codes.html>

Gambling operators providing facilities to consumers in Great Britain must be licensed by the Gambling Commission and abide by its licence conditions and codes

of practice (LCCP), which require all marketing activities, including sponsorship, to be carried out in a socially responsible way. Specific restrictions on the placement of operator logos on merchandise designed for use by children are set out in the Gambling Industry Code for Socially Responsible Advertising.

The government launched its Review of the Gambling Act 2005 on 8th December with the publication of a Call for Evidence. As part of the wide scope of that Review, we have called for evidence on the benefits or harms of allowing gambling operators to advertise and engage in sponsorship arrangements. In addition, CAP recently concluded a consultation on proposals to amend the advertising codes to further minimise the potential for gambling adverts to appeal to children, and is evaluating responses.

■ **Gambling: Black Economy**

Paul Blomfield:

[141968]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of the scale of black market gambling throughout the country.

Nigel Huddleston:

Data released by the Gambling Commission in May 2020 on the black market suggested that the scale of the black market had remained low and stable, with little variation in the number of complaints it had received about illegal gambling websites over the previous 12 months. The Commission continues to monitor this area closely and take action against unlicensed operators where needed.

However, new technologies have the potential to increase the risk posed by illegal unlicensed operators, so it is important that we improve our understanding of these risks and the exact scale of the black market. That is why our Review of the Gambling Act 2005 will consider issues around black market gambling as part of its wide scope, and we have called for evidence on the extent of the black market, its accessibility to consumers, and the risk of one emerging in the future. We have also launched our consultation proposing an uplift to industry licence fees, which will provide the Commission with greater capacity in the short to medium term to investigate and tackle the threat caused by the black market.

The Call for Evidence will be open until 31 March 2021, and further details, including how to make a contribution, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-gambling-act-2005-terms-of-reference-and-call-for-evidence/review-of-the-gambling-act-2005-terms-of-reference-and-call-for-evidence>.

■ **Golf: Coronavirus**

Jane Hunt:

[143940]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the feasibility of removing the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown restrictions on solitary golf.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

On Monday 4 January the Prime Minister announced a national lockdown and instructed people to stay at home to control the virus, protect the NHS and save lives. The National Restrictions are designed to get the R rate under control through limiting social contact and reducing transmissions.

In order for these measures to have the greatest impact, we will all need to sacrifice doing some things that we would otherwise like to do. We have not introduced further exemptions because when you unpick at one activity the effectiveness of the whole package is compromised.

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

■ Leisure: Coronavirus**Tom Tugendhat:**[\[144723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what guidance his Department issued to Sport England on the criteria used to determine how much Leisure Trusts could receive under the Notional Fund Allocation of the National Leisure Relief Fund.

Nigel Huddleston:

The National Leisure Recovery Fund seeks to support eligible public sector leisure centres to reopen to the public, giving the sport and physical activity sector the best chance of recovery to a position of sustainable operation over the medium term.

A total of £100 million is available as a biddable fund to eligible local authorities in England, which will be allocated in a single funding round covering the period 1 December 2020 to 31 March 2021. Eligible local authorities include: those in England who hold responsibility for the provision of leisure services, those who have outsourced their leisure provision to an external body to and those whose outsourced leisure arrangements have ended since 20 March 2020 and services are now delivered as an in-house function.

To help ensure an equitable distribution of the National Leisure Recovery Fund, a Notional Funding Allocation has been calculated for each eligible local authority and funding awards will only be made in excess of the Notional Funding Allocation in the most exceptional circumstances. The basis of the Notional Funding Allocation is a per capita allocation. This has then been adjusted to take into consideration physical activity levels, number of facilities and health outcome indicators.

Government has worked closely with the Local Government Association (LGA), ukactive, the District Councils' Network, Community Leisure UK, Chief Cultural and

Leisure Officers Association and others to make sure the application and funding process is as fast and simple as possible.

■ Lotteries

Scott Benton: [\[143138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, on how many occasions the Gambling Commission has deemed the expenses of a society lottery to be unreasonable.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Gambling Commission monitors the expenses of society lotteries through the regular reporting required of operators by their licences.

Gambling Commission will discuss any concerns with operators as they arise. Society lottery operators are able to make changes to address concerns raised by the Commission. The number of instances where this occurs is not recorded by the Commission, but it has not had any cases where discussions with operators have resulted in formal action related to unreasonable expenses.

■ Ofcom: Annual Reports

Chi Onwurah: [\[144678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Telecommunications (Security) Bill 2019-21 Committee on 26 January 2021, if the Ofcom Annual Report will include headcount per group and function.

Matt Warman:

Ofcom's [Annual Report](#) and accounts are published each July, and includes details of Ofcom's strategic priorities, financial affairs and resourcing.

Ofcom follows the disclosure requirements of the Government's Financial Report Manual and guidelines provided in the Public Expenditure System (PES) Guidance on the preparation of Annual Report and Accounts. As such, Ofcom's Annual Reports and Accounts show staff resources at the organisational level.

■ Public Libraries: Wales

Ben Lake: [\[143880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on Central Libraries Funding.

Caroline Dinenage:

My department regularly discusses with the Welsh Government issues related to our respective library services. Public library policy and funding of libraries and their services is a devolved matter and is for each government to determine.

■ Sports: Coronavirus

Andrea Jenkyns:

[144763]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing support to sports clubs to encourage more people to take up more sports once national covid-19 lockdown restrictions have been lifted.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many sport clubs have benefited from. The £300m Sports Winter Survival Package also aims to protect the immediate futures of major spectator sports in England over the winter period. On 22 October 2020, the Government also announced a £100m support fund for local authority leisure centres. We have no plans to provide additional bespoke support for indoor tennis centres.

In addition, Sport England's Community Emergency Fund has provided £220 million directly to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through this pandemic. On 26 January Sport England also published their strategy 'Uniting the Movement' and as part of this have committed an extra £50million to help grassroots sports clubs and organisations affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

We are continuing to work with organisations to understand what they need and how we may be able to support them. We will also continue to promote exercise throughout the pandemic and encourage the usage of sports facilities when they are able to open again.

■ Video Games: Data Protection

Jonathan Gullis:

[143150]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of not having an EU Data Adequacy Agreement on the UK video games sector.

Mr John Whittingdale:

We see no reason why the UK should not be awarded data adequacy by the EU and we expect the process to be concluded promptly. However, we advise UK organisations to take sensible steps to prepare for a situation where the EU does not adopt adequacy decisions for the UK.

In such a scenario, businesses and other organisations would be able to use alternative legal mechanisms to continue to transfer personal data. Standard Contractual Clauses (SCCs) are the most common legal safeguard and will be the relevant mitigation for most organisations. Guidance can be found on GOV.UK and

the ICO's websites regarding steps organisations may be required to take relating to data protection and data flows by the end of the bridging period.

We have liaised extensively with representatives from the video games industry and fully recognise the key role the sector can play in the future prosperity of the UK.

Video games contributed an estimated £2.9 billion to the UK economy in 2019.

■ Video Games: UK Relations with EU

Jonathan Gullis:

[143151]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment the Government has made of the effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the video games sector.

Caroline Dinenage:

We recognise the importance of the UK video games industry, which is a significant player in the global games industry, with scope to deliver powerful economic benefits for the UK. The sector contributed an estimated £2.9 billion to the UK economy in 2019, a 9.1% year-on-year increase from 2018.

The UK games industry relies on a highly skilled workforce that possesses leading technical and creative expertise. The UK and the EU have agreed to a list of activities that can be carried out by short-term business visitors without the need for a work permit, on a reciprocal basis in most Member States, subject to any reservations taken. Domestically, the UK's new Points Based System will enable companies to attract the best and brightest from around the world.

Data is of fundamental importance to the video games industry. The Trade and Cooperation Agreement helps to facilitate the cross-border flow of data by prohibiting requirements to store or process data in a specific location. As the EU left insufficient time to ratify data adequacy decisions before the end of 2020, we have agreed a time limited 'bridging mechanism' which will allow personal data to continue to flow as it does now whilst EU adequacy decisions for the UK are adopted, and for no more than 6 months. We see no reason why the UK should not be awarded data adequacy by the EU and we expect the process to be concluded promptly. However, we advise UK organisations to take sensible steps to prepare for a situation where the EU does not adopt adequacy decisions for the UK.

The video games sector relies on continued market access to export digital goods and services throughout the EU. The Trade and Cooperation Agreement maintains zero tariffs and zero quotas on trade in goods between the UK and the EU. The Agreement also secures commitments on the promotion of cross border trade in services by providing service suppliers and investors with transparency and certainty about future trade with the EU.

The sector also relies on a strong and stable framework governing Intellectual Property rights. The Trade and Cooperation Agreement represents a good balance

between securing high standards for copyright protection and securing the UK's domestic flexibility to continue to improve and adapt the copyright framework to meet future opportunities and challenges.

■ Winter Sports

Olivia Blake:

[\[138108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of categorising (a) figure skating, (b) ice hockey and (c) other ice-based sports, as sports rather than as leisure activities.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus. The Prime Minister announced a national lockdown on Monday 4 January meaning that indoor facilities including ice rinks must close.

Previously, ice rinks were closed in tier 3 and 4 as they are primarily used for the purpose of entertainment. This is consistent with other venues used for entertainment purposes across the economy which were also closed. To allow those who need to access ice rinks, in tier three, exemptions were made for sport for educational purposes, people with disabilities, supervised activity for under-18s and elite athletes.

EDUCATION

■ Assessments: Coronavirus

Sarah Olney:

[\[143049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to support private candidates not affiliated with a school, during the covid-19 outbreak.

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 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 Department and Ofqual have strongly encouraged all our stakeholders, including private candidates and their parents, to respond. The Department 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.

Olivia Blake:

[143944]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what training will be given to teachers awarding teacher-assessed grades in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

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

The Department and Ofqual launched a two week consultation on how to fairly award all pupils a grade that supports them to progress to the next stage of their lives.

The consultation can be accessed here and closed on 29 January 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-how-gcse-as-and-a-level-grades-should-be-awarded-in-summer-2021>. 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.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has confirmed he wishes teachers to assess the standard at which pupils are performing and thus the grade they should receive. The consultation proposes that teachers will be supported in doing so through training, guidance, and papers to inform assessments. Guidance materials will be made available after the consultation has closed and the detail of the approach is agreed. The consultation also proposes and seeks views on approaches to assessment which will allow teachers to assess pupils' performance on content they have had an opportunity to study, despite the disruption, whilst continuing to ensure they have sufficient breadth of knowledge to enable them to successfully progress.

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

■ Children in Care

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[143768]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 19 November 2020 to Question 115686 on Children in Care, when his Department plans to bring forward legislative proposals to amend the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations (2020) to make explicit reference to the importance of children living in care having contact with all their siblings.

Vicky Ford:

I am pleased to have the opportunity to reaffirm the government's commitment to updating the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 as we set out during the passage of the Children and Social Work Bill in 2017.

Due to the circumstances over the past year, where our priority has been to keep children, young people, and those who work with them safe during the COVID-19 outbreak, we have been unable to identify an appropriate opportunity to consult on this amendment so far. However, I would like to reassure you that this remains an important action and we will seek to complete it as soon as possible.

■ Coronavirus: Key Workers**Mike Amesbury:**[\[142055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential risk to key workers employed in early years childcare settings continuing to work during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown where they have clinical extremely vulnerable family members at home.

Vicky Ford:

Keeping staff and children safe is our utmost priority and early years settings remain low risk environments for children and staff.

Current evidence suggests that pre-school children (0 to 5 years) are less susceptible to infection and are unlikely to be playing a driving role in transmission. There is no evidence that the predominant new variant of COVID-19 disproportionately affects young children. The current confirmed case rate of COVID-19 amongst young children remains the lowest of all age groups.

Early years settings remain low risk environments for children and staff. Current evidence suggests that the Public Health England (PHE) endorsed 'system of controls' that have been in use throughout the COVID-19 outbreak continue to be right measures to take. PHE keeps these controls under review based on the latest evidence. These measures create an environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission is substantially reduced.

Early years practitioners who live with those who are clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable, can attend the setting but should ensure they maintain good prevention practice in the setting and at home.

■ Covid-19 Education Catch-up Fund: Greater London**Catherine West:**[\[144781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of his Department's funding for covid-19 related catch-up will be spent in (a) London, (b) Haringey and (c) Hornsey and Wood Green constituency.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has committed to a catch-up package worth £1 billion. This includes a universal 'catch-up premium' worth £650 million to support schools to make up for the impact of time outside of the classroom. The universal catch-up premium funding will be delivered in three payments across the 2020/2021 academic year in the autumn, late spring, and summer term. The first payment (25% of total) has been made to schools, providing the following amounts: (a) £24,218,670 for London, (b) £716,980 for Haringey and (c) £397,260 for Hornsey and Wood Green. Total payments of the 2020/2021 catch-up premium are provisionally set for each constituency: (a) London will receive £96,874,680, (b) Haringey will receive £2,867,920 and (c) Hornsey and Wood Green will receive £1,589,040.

On 27 January 2021, the Government announced a further £300 million of new funding for high-quality tutoring to help children and young people catch up. The Government will be working in collaboration with the education sector to develop specific initiatives for summer schools and a COVID-19 premium to support catch up, alongside developing a long-term plan to support pupils to catch up over the course of this Parliament. Further detail on this funding and support will be confirmed in due course.

■ Education: Coronavirus**Wes Streeting:**[\[131337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 8 December to Question 124804 on Students: Coronavirus, what the terms of reference are for the group monitoring and advising on lost and differential learning due to the covid-19 outbreak; when its members were appointed; who those members are; how many times the group plans to meet; and when it plans to report.

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.

The Department has confirmed our proposal that, in summer 2021, students taking GCSE, AS and A levels regulated by Ofqual should be awarded grades based on an assessment by their teachers. To provide further clarity to the sector as soon as possible, Ofqual and the Department have launched a two-week consultation on how to fairly ensure all young people are supported to progress to the next stage of their lives.

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 refocusing this group and is working to finalise the terms of reference and membership. 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.

■ **Extended Services: Coronavirus**

Judith Cummins:

[142951]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will provide targeted funding to wraparound care providers to ensure that they can continue to provide support to (a) key workers, (b) vulnerable children and (c) other working parents during the covid-19 lockdown.

Judith Cummins:

[142952]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment has been made of the effect of closures in the wraparound care sector during the covid-19 outbreak on levels of children's physical activity.

Vicky Ford:

Ensuring sufficient childcare for families continues to be a government priority. This is why we have ensured that wraparound childcare settings have been able to remain open for vulnerable children and children of critical workers during the current national lockdown, in line with those children eligible to attend school for onsite provision; and have updated our guidance for providers of after-school and holiday clubs and other out-of-school settings to support providers to operate as safely as possible, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/guidance-for-schools-coronavirus-covid-19>.

However, 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, 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 (CJRS), and the Self-Employed Support Scheme (SEISS), 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.

We have also encouraged all local authorities to consider using local grants that have been made available to them during the COVID-19 outbreak, to support the wraparound childcare sector in their areas, and to safeguard sufficient childcare provision for all families, but particularly those with vulnerable children and children of critical workers. This includes funding streams such as the discretionary fund already mentioned, as well as the expanded Holiday Activities and Food Programme, which comprises a £220 million fund to be delivered through grants to local authorities. This programme will give children eligible for Free School Meals the option to join a free holiday-time programme that provides healthy food and enriching activities during the summer, Christmas and Easter holidays in 2021 – giving disadvantaged young people opportunities they might otherwise lose out on.

The department does not hold a central register of wraparound providers, and so we are unable to make an official assessment of the effects wraparound closures on levels of children's physical activity. However, we are acutely aware of the benefits to children's physical and mental wellbeing of attending these settings. Therefore, the Youth Investment Fund remains an important manifesto commitment. In the recently announced Spending Review, £30 million of capital investment was committed for 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

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[144694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much money from the public purse has been provided to schools for the provision of free school meals but has not been used.

Vicky Ford:

Maintained schools, academies and free schools are required to provide benefits-related free school meals (FSM) under section 512ZB of the Education Act 1996.

Schools fund FSM from their core budget. For the academic year 2020/21, a factor value of £450 was included in the national funding formula for each FSM pupil. However, both local authorities and schools can apply their own local formulae. Schools must meet their statutory requirements to provide meals free of charge to eligible pupils, but they can decide how much of their budget to allocate to this.

During the current school opening restrictions, we have asked schools to continue providing support to free school meal pupils who are eligible for benefits-related FSM, and who are learning at home. We will provide £3.50 in top-up funding per eligible child per week for schools providing lunch parcels and £15 per eligible child for vouchers. This is in addition to the usual funding schools receive.

■ Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[142884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason colleges are neither eligible to access the £15-a-week national voucher scheme, nor the £15 weekly payment available to schools for the provision of locally-arranged food vouchers for Free School Meals students during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

Further education (FE) institutions should continue to provide support for students who are eligible for free meals, whether they are attending or studying remotely due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Institutions should continue to provide support in the most appropriate way based on their local circumstances, and FE providers can use their FE Free Meals allocation flexibly with their discretionary 16-19 Bursary Fund allocation. The Education and Skills Funding Agency expects that a meal, voucher or credit will be provided to

eligible students. However, this may not be practical in some situations and institutions are permitted to make cash payments to students in exceptional circumstances.

As was the case over Christmas, vulnerable families will continue to receive meals and other essentials over February half term via councils through the £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme launched last year.

Sarah Olney:

[\[144785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made the profit made by private companies awarded contracts to deliver the free school meals voucher scheme throughout the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The department do not comment on the commercial arrangements of third parties. However, we can confirm that we have paid no more than the face value of goods received - in this case, vouchers.

■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments

Julian Sturdy:

[\[141973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the feasibility of holding mini-exams for (a) GCSE and (b) A-level students in summer 2021.

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. To provide clarity to the sector as soon as possible, and to ensure that our approach is developed with the sector, Ofqual and the Department have launched a two-week consultation.

Ofqual and the Department will consult on the evidence needed to inform teachers' assessments of their pupils' grades, including providing externally set papers to support their assessments. Teachers' assessments of the evidence of the standard at which their pupils are performing should indicate their demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills. To support this, teachers will be provided with training and guidance.

Further details of alternative arrangements to exams will be confirmed as soon as possible, ensuring that students have the confidence that they will be fairly treated for assessments in 2021.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[143020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to announce the details on GCSE and A-level assessments for summer 2021.

Nick Gibb:

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

We have already confirmed our proposals that in summer 2021 students taking GCSE, AS and A levels regulated by Ofqual should be awarded grades based on an assessment by their teachers.

To provide clarity to the sector as soon as possible, and to ensure that our approach is developed with the sector, Ofqual and the Department launched a two week consultation on how to ensure all students are supported to move to the next stage of their lives.

Further details of alternative arrangements to exams will be confirmed as soon as possible, ensuring that students have the confidence that they will be fairly treated in terms of assessment in 2021.

■ IGCSE: Assessments**Sarah Olney:****[143047]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will (a) require private schools to review their decision to proceed with International GCSEs this summer and (b) ensure that all pupils in England are awarded grades based on teacher assessment.

Nick Gibb:

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, the Government considers that exams cannot be held this summer in a fair way. The Government has therefore announced that exams for GCSEs, AS and A levels and for many other regulated qualifications should not go ahead this summer as planned.

Together with Ofqual, we launched a consultation on 15 January 2021 on our proposals that in summer 2021, students taking GCSE, AS and A levels regulated by Ofqual should be awarded grades based on teacher assessment. The landscape for other regulated qualifications is diverse and teacher assessment is not appropriate for all vocational, technical and other general qualifications that are not GCSEs, AS or A levels, particularly where the qualification demonstrates occupational competency. The approaches proposed for these other regulated qualifications are set out in the consultation.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has asked the interim chief regulator at Ofqual, Simon Lebus, to find a clear and accessible route for private candidates, and those not in school this year, to be assessed and receive a grade.

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.

■ Institute of Teaching

Wes Streeting: [\[143848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the creation of the Institute of Teaching is a separate policy from his Department's Initial teacher training market review.

Nick Gibb:

The Institute of Teaching is separate from the initial teacher training market review, although both share the aim of ensuring the best possible training for teachers.

■ Institute of Teaching: Finance

Wes Streeting: [\[143847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding his Department plans allocate to the Institute of Teaching from the £22 million allocated for teacher quality at the 2020 Spending Review.

Nick Gibb:

The Institute of Teaching is part of a live commercial exercise meaning we cannot provide precise detail on funding at this stage. The Department can confirm that the £22 million included in the Department settlement in the Spending Review will be used to fund a range of priorities to support more teachers to access high quality training and professional development.

■ Institute of Teaching: Qualifications

Wes Streeting: [\[143845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether it is his policy for the Institute of Teaching to obtain degree or qualification awarding powers so that it can offer its own academic awards.

Wes Streeting: [\[143846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether it is his policy for the Institute of Teaching to apply for registration with the Office for Students to recruit Initial Teacher Training students to that institution.

Nick Gibb:

As an Initial Teacher Training (ITT) provider, the institute will be subject to the same requirements that apply to all other ITT providers. The institute will need to secure accreditation to deliver ITT, or partner with an accredited provider, prior to delivery.

The Department expects that the institute will register as a higher education provider with the Office for Students in order to acquire degree awarding powers. This will give the institute the ability to independently award its own Postgraduate Certificates in Education.

■ National Tutoring Programme

Robert Halfon:

[\[142897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to reopen applications for tutoring organisations to become approved tuition partners as part of the national tutoring programme, run by the Education Endowment Foundation.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is very pleased that the National Tutoring Programme can be extended for another year, to the 2021/2022 academic year. Earlier this month, we held a market warming event for the second phase of the programme and we hope to be in a position where we can publicly confirm the procurement arrangements for the second phase soon.

■ Office for Students: Coronavirus

Karin Smyth:

[\[141516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of whether the Office for Students has fulfilled its four primary regulatory objectives in response to the covid-19 pandemic.

Michelle Donelan:

We work closely with the Office for Students (OfS) to ensure that it is working with universities and that universities are delivering what students expect and require for their studies. We will always work closely with the OfS to deliver the very best for students and ensure that universities deliver on students' behalf.

To support students, the OfS has funded mental health support, distributed hardship funding, monitored quality, issued guidance and set expectations for providers concerning support for self-isolating students throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

The performance of the OfS is closely monitored at all times by the department and its board, as set out in the framework agreement between the OfS and the Department for Education, and in line with the Cabinet Office code of good practice on arms-length bodies.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Apsana Begum:

[\[134226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what processes are in place to ensure the regular testing of (a) staff and (b) children attending early years settings.

Vicky Ford:

We are continuing to work closely with other government departments and local authorities to secure the most effective approach to asymptomatic testing for the whole of the early years sector. This includes ongoing discussions about providing testing via the education testing programme, as well as encouraging local authorities to consider prioritising appropriate testing for early years staff via community testing programmes, which is now available to all local authorities.

We have urged all local authorities to consider prioritising early years staff in their community testing programme.

The Department for Education is rolling out our asymptomatic testing programme to primary schools, schools-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools. The asymptomatic testing programme will offer all primary school, schools-based nursery and maintained nursery school staff home lateral flow device test kits for twice-weekly testing. This will help to break the chains of transmission of COVID-19 in education settings by identifying asymptomatic positive cases. Those who test positive will then self-isolate, helping to reduce transmission of the virus.

Anyone who displays symptoms of COVID-19 can and should get a test. Tests can be booked online through the NHS website, or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet. All children can be tested if they have symptoms, including children under 5, but children under 11 will need to be helped by their parents or carers if using a home testing kit. Relevant guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested> and <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

The Department for Education has published the 'Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak' which provides further information about how early years staff and children can access testing, and on what to do when an individual develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures#track>.

Theresa Villiers: [142826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will ensure that all early years' settings in England have access to regular asymptomatic covid-19 testing.

Theresa Villiers: [142827]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will include early years settings in the charitable and private sector in his Department's programme of regular asymptomatic covid-19 testing.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is continuing to work closely with colleagues across government and local authorities to secure the most effective approach to asymptomatic testing for the whole of the early years sector.

We are rolling out our asymptomatic testing programme to primary schools with deliveries of test kits which started from 18 January 2021. This programme will offer all primary school, schools based nursery and maintained nursery school staff home Lateral Flow Device test kits for twice weekly testing. This will help to break the chains of transmission of COVID-19 in nurseries and schools by identifying asymptomatic positive cases. Those who test positive will then self-isolate, helping to reduce transmission of the virus.

Community testing programmes are currently being rolled out across the country. These are led by local authorities and provide asymptomatic testing through testing sites based in the local community. This testing is primarily focused on those who must leave home to work during lockdown.

Early years staff, as critical workers, continue to have priority access to DHSC-led symptomatic PCR testing via the online portal:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>.

Tulip Siddiq:

[143032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason maintained nursery schools are receiving covid-19 home testing kits a week later than primary schools and school-based early years provision.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is rolling out its asymptomatic testing programme to primary schools with deliveries of test kits starting from 18 January 2021. The asymptomatic testing programme will offer all primary school, schools based nursery and maintained nursery school staff home Lateral Flow Device test kits for twice weekly testing. This will help to break the chains of transmission of COVID-19 in nurseries and schools by identifying asymptomatic positive cases. Those who test positive will then self-isolate, helping to reduce transmission of the virus.

Due to delivery logistics, maintained nursery schools will start to receive home testing kits from week commencing 1 February 2021 .

Tulip Siddiq:

[143033]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason private, voluntary and independent early years providers are not eligible for the roll-out of covid-19 home testing kits.

Nick Gibb:

The Department considers that prioritising staff in private, voluntary and independent early years providers in the community testing regime is the most effective way of providing them with testing.

Community testing programmes are currently being rolled out across the country. These are led by local authorities and provide asymptomatic testing through testing sites based in the local community. This testing is primarily focused on those who must leave home to work during lockdown.

Early years staff, as critical workers, continue to have priority access to the Department of Health and Social Care led symptomatic PCR testing via the online portal: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>.

Emma Hardy:

[143068]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what risk assessment his Department has conducted on allowing early years providers to remain open during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Vicky Ford:

We continue to prioritise keeping early years settings open in full because of the clear benefits to children's education and wellbeing and to support working parents. Early education gives children the communication and social skills which set them up for life. Caring for the youngest age group is not something that can be done remotely.

Public Health England's advice remains that young children are less susceptible to the virus and play a lower role in transmission, usually because young children have lower contact outside their household.

Early years settings remain low risk environments for children and staff. Current evidence suggests that pre-school children (0 to 5 years) are less susceptible to infection and are unlikely to be playing a driving role in transmission. There is no evidence that the new variant of COVID-19 disproportionately affects young children. The current confirmed case rate of COVID-19 amongst young children remains the lowest of all age groups.

Furthermore, settings should continue to undertake risk assessments and implement the system of controls. It is a legal requirement that settings should revisit and update their risk assessments (building on the learning to date and the practices they have already developed). It is good practice to treat risk assessments during COVID-19 as a "living document" and keep them under very regular review in the light of any changing circumstances.

Further information on risk assessments and the system of controls can be found in the guidance here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950653/Education_and_childcare_settings_-_national_lockdown_from_5_January_2021_.pdf.

Tulip Siddiq:**[143852]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will set out all circumstances in which early years staff may be furloughed.

Vicky Ford:

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

On 17 December 2020, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced that both the CJRS and SEISS will be extended to April 2021. We also updated the CJRS guidance for early years so that all providers who have seen a drop in their overall income are able to furlough any staff (who were on payroll on or before 30 October) and who are not required for delivering the government's funded entitlements.

The early years sector has benefitted from the continuation of early years entitlement funding during the summer and autumn terms in 2020, and providers have been able to furlough their staff via the CJRS. As long as the staff meet the other criteria for the scheme, schools and early years providers are able to furlough their staff if they have experienced a drop in either their income from parents or the government. Eligible nurseries can also benefit from a business rates holiday and can access the business loans as set out by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

We stay in regular contact with the early years sector and will keep under constant review whether further action is needed.

■ Pre-school Education: Finance

Darren Jones:

[142045]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the decision to fund local authorities on the basis of their January 2021 census for early years provision, what assessment he has made of the effect of that decision on the financial viability of early years providers; and if he will bring forward proposals to raise the cap on top-up funding to 100 per cent of the January 2020 level for local authorities that demonstrate a commensurate growth in spring term attendance.

Vicky Ford:

On 17 December 2020 the government announced a return to funding early years settings for the spring term on the basis of attendance, as measured by the January 2021 census. The early years census count has gone ahead as expected and the census guidance is unchanged. To support local authorities, we issued some technical advice on how that guidance can be applied this year.

If attendance rises after the census is taken, we will top-up councils to up to 85% of their January 2020 census level, where a local authority can provide evidence for increased attendance during the spring term. This will give local authorities additional financial confidence to pay providers for increasing attendance later in the spring term. We were expecting a small decrease in the number of children taking up the entitlements to manifest in the January 2021 census due to projected demographic changes, irrespective of the COVID-19 outbreak. Therefore, there will be fewer children to fund for the entitlements than last year.

As is usual, the Early Years dedicated schools grant funding allocations published in December are provisional and based on the January 2020 census, as the most recent available data point. We expect lower demand to manifest in the January 2021 census due to a range of factors, including known demographic changes, irrespective of the COVID-19 outbreak, which will feed into future allocations updates.

We plan to spend £3.6 billion on the early years budget envelope in the 2020-21 financial year to fund the free early education and childcare entitlements.

We stay in regular contact with the early years sector and have heard from them already on this subject. We publish regular official statistics on attendance in early years settings here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find->

[statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak](#). We will be closely monitoring both parental take-up of places and the capacity and responses of providers.

■ Pupil Premium

Wes Streeting:

[144769]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils were eligible for pupil premium according to the schools census conducted in January 2021.

Vicky Ford:

The January 2021 census will be used to determine pupil premium eligibility for alternative provision and pupil referral units for the financial year 2021-22. Pupil premium eligibility for mainstream and special schools will be based on the October 2020 census.

We will confirm pupil premium allocations in June 2021, once pupil number data from the January 2021 census has been validated.

The department publishes information on pupil premium allocations and the number of pupils eligible annually. The most recent publicly available figures can be found via this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021>.

■ Pupils: Attendance

Dan Jarvis:

[144680]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department made of the effect of recording vulnerable children under a separate attendance code where they have opted for remote learning on their (a) attendance record and (b) college applications.

Nick Gibb:

Attendance at school is a protective factor and is beneficial for children's education, welfare, and long-term development, which is why vulnerable children are strongly encouraged to attend so that they can receive support during this period.

If parents of vulnerable children do not want their child to attend school, we have made clear that schools should grant a leave of absence given the exceptional circumstances, so no pupil is unfairly penalised for their absence. Moreover, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has issued a temporary disapplication notice to suspend the offences related to absence from school so parents cannot be sanctioned for their child's absence at this time.

Additionally, last year, the Department amended regulations to remove the requirement on schools to report on pupils' attendance for academic year 2019/20 in pupils' reports and advised schools to take a proportionate approach in deciding what information to include. Where a pupil is no longer of compulsory school age, and is leaving school, headteachers must provide a school leaver's report containing brief

particulars of the pupil's progress and achievements in subjects and activities forming part of the school curriculum.

In light of the disruption to school attendance again this year, we will review and provide further advice to schools about what should be included in pupils' attendance records in end of year and school leavers' reports to ensure no pupil is unfairly penalised for their attendance during the current restrictions.

■ Pupils: Mental Health

Robert Halfon:

[141430]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding his Department is providing to (a) Place2Be and (b) other children's mental health charities that provide support within schools and colleges, in academic year 2020-21; and how much of that funding has been distributed to date, by region.

Vicky Ford:

The department does not provide specific funding to Place2Be or other mental health charities to provide support within schools and colleges.

It is up to schools and colleges to decide what support to offer to students, drawing on support from specialist services. Many schools use their funding to bring in support from charities, but we do not collect details of spend.

The Department for Education is currently providing the biggest increase to schools funding in a decade, with total additional investment of £14 billion across the next 3 years. There has already been a £2.6 billion increase in 2020-21, including £780 million for high needs, and there will be an increase of £4.8 billion compared to 2019-20 in 2021-22, including £730 million for high needs. There will also be an increase of £7.1 billion for schools and high needs compared to 2019-20, in 2022-23. High needs funding provides for children with complex special educational needs and disabilities including social, emotional and mental health issues, continues to be provided to local authorities as normal.

To support the return to school, the government has also announced an additional £650 million 'catch up' premium, as part of our wider £1 billion COVID-19 catch up package, to be shared across all state-funded schools over the 2020/21 academic year. This can be used to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing, as a method of helping pupils to catch up after a period of disruption to their education.

On 27 January 2021, the government announced a further £300 million of new funding for high-quality tutoring to help children and young people catch up. The government will be working in collaboration with the education sector to develop specific initiatives for summer schools and a COVID premium to support catch up, alongside developing a long-term plan to support pupils to catch up over the course of this Parliament. Further detail on this funding and support will be confirmed in due course.

As part of our joint Green Paper delivery programme with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England, we are introducing Mental Health Support Teams to provide mental health support to groups of schools and colleges. These are currently being rolled out across England and charities are leading the provision of teams in some areas.

The government is also funding charities to provide wider support to children, young people and families affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. The department is providing £11 million to the See, Hear Respond programme between June 2020 and March 2021), delivered by a consortium of national and local charities to support vulnerable children and young people whose usual support networks have been impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak and associated restrictions. The programme provides support to those at risk of harm outside of the home, for new or struggling parents and to successfully connect or reintegrate children and young people back into education. It is particularly equipped to work with children under 5 years old and those who are experiencing a negative impact on their mental health.

Additionally, the government has provided £9 million funding to mental health charities – including Mind, the Samaritans, Young Minds, and Bipolar UK to help them adapt, expand and reach those who are most vulnerable.

■ Pupils: Sanitary Protection

Richard Burgon:

[143012]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to support schools in distributing period products to pupils who are learning from home during the covid-19 lockdown.

Vicky Ford:

On 20 January 2020, the department launched a new scheme which makes free period products available for state-funded primary schools, secondary schools, and colleges in England. In December 2020, we announced that this scheme was extended for 2021.

This scheme is in place to ensure that no learner misses out on education due to their period. Schools and colleges should have period products available, should learners need them. They may choose to order products through this scheme or through an alternative route.

The scheme has remained in operation during partial school and college closures, and these organisations are still able to order a range of period products and distribute them to learners who need them.

We continue to work with our delivery partner, Personnel Hygiene Services Limited, to encourage engagement with the scheme. We have engaged with schools and colleges on social media, and via direct communication in email and newsletter form.

■ Remote Education

Chi Onwurah:

[\[142923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the (a) overall cost to schools of delivering online learning and (b) specific cost of live online learning via Microsoft Teams; whether the cost of learning via Microsoft Teams has changed since the start of the 2020-21 academic year; and what assessment he has made of potential for centralised procurement to reduce those costs.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. This includes over 870,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities by 25 January.

Schools have continued to receive their core funding throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, regardless of any periods of full or partial closure, with this year marking the first year of a three-year increase to core funding - the biggest in a decade. This will ensure they can continue to pay their staff and meet other regular financial commitments.

The Microsoft Teams A1 license is free to the education sector, so there are no costs that will have changed since the start of the 2020-21 academic year for use of that, and therefore no requirement for centralised procurement.

■ Remote Education: Bristol West

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[142007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, by what date all laptops are planned to be delivered to schools in Bristol West constituency that have not yet received their allocation.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[142008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support he plans to provide to schools in Bristol West constituency that need more laptops provided than their current allocation in order to ensure that all students can access online learning 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 2021, over 870,000 laptops and tablets had been delivered to schools, academy trusts and local authorities across England, who are responsible for distributing them onward to disadvantaged children and families.

Regional figures for delivery of devices are currently not available for the period requested and figures by Parliamentary constituency are also not available.

All schools, academy trusts and local authorities have now been given the opportunity to order devices. Laptops and tablets are owned by schools, academy trusts or local authorities to lend to the children and young people who need them most during the current COVID-19 restrictions.

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/2021-week-4>.

Where schools need additional devices above their allocations, they should contact the Department for Education's service team at covid.technology@education.gov.uk. They should include the number of disadvantaged children in years 3 to 11 who require support and an explanation of how they have gathered this evidence.

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 have also delivered 54,000 4G wireless routers for pupil and care leavers without connection at home.

■ Remote Education: ICT

Rosie Cooper:

[141416]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of schools in England have received their requested allocation of devices to support remote learning.

Nick Gibb:

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

All schools have been invited to order their full allocation of devices. Schools, academy trusts and local authorities are responsible for distributing the laptops and tablets and are best placed to know which children and young people need access to a device.

Figures on the number of devices delivered are available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data/2021-week-4>.

The Department announced on 12 January 2021 that it is purchasing 300,000 more laptops and tablets, bringing the total number we have secured from one million to 1.3 million. The Get Help with Technology scheme will email all schools with information on the number of additional devices allocated to them, and when they will be able to order. 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 experience barriers to digital remote education, we expect schools to offer different forms of remote education such as printed resources or textbooks. This should be supplemented with other forms of communication to keep pupils on track or answer questions about work.

Where schools need additional devices, above their allocations, they should contact the Department for Education's service team at covid.technology@education.gov.uk. They should include the number of disadvantaged children in years 3 to 11 who require support and an explanation of how they have gathered this evidence.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[143721]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to increase the speed of the rollout of (a) digital devices and (b) access to the internet to children who are not in school as a result of the covid-19 outbreak in (a) Yorkshire and The Humber, (b) Kingston Upon Hull and (c) the UK.

Nick Gibb:

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

As of Monday 25 January, this includes over 870,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities.

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

The Government is providing this significant injection of devices on top of an estimated 2.9 million laptops and tablets already owned by schools before the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Figures on the number of devices already delivered is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data/2021-week-4>. We have also delivered devices to academy trusts that include schools in Yorkshire and Humber, which are not included in this figure.

Regional figures for delivery of devices are currently not available for the period requested and figures by Parliamentary constituency are also not available.

Where schools need additional devices, in order to support disadvantaged children, they should contact the Department for Education's service team at covid.technology@education.gov.uk. They should include the number of pupils in years 3-13 who require support and an explanation of how they've gathered this evidence.

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

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

■ Remote Education: York

Rachael Maskell:

[140185]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many dongles have been requested by City of York Council to support remote learning during the covid-19 outbreak; and how many of those dongles have been delivered.

Rachael Maskell:

[140187]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the levels of adequacy of home learning environments (a) nationally and (b) in York for pupils of (i) secondary age and (ii) primary age 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, 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 have been delivered to state schools, trusts and local authorities.

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

The Department has delivered 787 laptops and tablets directly to York local authority. We have also delivered devices to academy trusts that include schools in York, which are not included in this figure.

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

Where schools need additional devices, in order to support disadvantaged children, they should contact the Department's service team at: covid.technology@education.gov.uk. They should include the number of pupils who require support and an explanation of how they have gathered this evidence.

Figures on the number of devices delivered are available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data/2021-week-4>.

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

The Department has partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online, as well as delivering 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home on a daily basis.

Local authorities, academy trusts and schools can identify any 4G wireless routers they have received that are not being used and reallocate them to children and young people with the greatest need.

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

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Mr Kevan Jones:

[141931]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Department's policy was on whether pupils without access to a computer or the internet were entitled to be in school during the covid-19 lockdown announced in March 2020.

Nick Gibb:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave on 22 January 2021 to [136013](#).

Guidance is available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>. The overall definition of vulnerable children has been in place since March 2020. It includes children who are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, children who have an education, health and care plan (EHCP) and children who have been identified by the school or local authority as otherwise vulnerable for any other reason. Therefore, since the outset, guidance has been clear that schools and local authorities have had full flexibility to allow children to attend school based on their assessment of the child's needs.

A number of examples of the factors that schools may wish to consider under this third category of vulnerability (otherwise vulnerable category) have been provided throughout the outbreak. This is not an exhaustive or definitive list and the guidance states that these categories are given as examples that schools might wish to factor in when identifying otherwise vulnerable children. Schools should interpret this in light of the wide range of information they have available to them, such as the needs of the child and their family.

One specific example within this list includes the term "those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)". This was first cited in published guidance on 28 Aug 2020 to include reference to the fact that children having difficult engaging in remote education might be a factor that schools may wish to consider when identifying children who may be vulnerable.

Sajid Javid:

[141960]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional financial support his Department is allocating to schools to help with exceptional costs incurred as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has provided additional funding to schools, on top of existing budgets, to cover unavoidable costs incurred between March and July 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak that could not be met from their budgets. We have paid schools £102 million for all claims in the first claims window that were within the published scope of the fund, and we will shortly process claims made in the second window in December 2020.

Last term, the Department announced a COVID-19 Workforce Fund for schools and colleges, to help those with high staff absences and facing significant financial pressures to stay open. It funded the costs of teacher absences over a threshold from 1 November 2020 until the end of the autumn term. We expect the schools claims form to be launched in Spring 2021.

The Department will also fund school and colleges, which have remained open, for costs relating to COVID-19 testing. We have published a workforce planning tool which illustrates the levels of funding available. Funding will be paid to schools who have conducted testing in respect of workforce costs and other incidental costs relating to testing such as waste disposal.

The Government is delivering catch-up funding worth £1 billion, including a 'Catch-Up Premium' worth a total of £650 million to support schools to make up for lost teaching time. Alongside this, we have also announced a new £350 million National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged pupils, including the National Tuition Fund for students age 16-19.

Finally, schools have continued to receive their core funding throughout the outbreak, regardless of any periods of full or partial closure, with this year marking the first year of a three-year increase to core funding - the biggest in a decade. This will ensure schools can continue to pay their staff and meet other regular financial commitments

Thangam Debbonaire:

[142005]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to mass asymptomatic testing in schools and colleges, what support his Department has provided for school staff to carry out track and trace for students and staff who test positive for covid-19.

Nick Gibb:

In collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS Test and Trace, the Department has provided help and support to all schools and colleges in scope. This support can vary, depending on the settings, but at a minimum all schools and colleges have had access to the following:

1. Published guidance including: Handbook, How to Guide, Standard Operating Procedure, FAQs.

2. We have run a number of webinars to help educational settings understand what is required and how best to implement test and trace.
3. Provided access to an online training package.
4. Access to a dedicated Department for Education Helpline.
5. Supplies of lateral flow antigen test kits and PPE.

Additionally, state funded secondary schools, further education colleges and special schools have been able to access further support to help with setting testing sites up, which includes:

1. Through a triage process, additional support in setting up the testing sites, which in some cases may be on the ground support from the military.
2. Funding is also being provided to help with the set up costs of the testing sites within the educational settings.

The Department is also liaising with the Community Testing Programme to ensure that those educational settings that are not within scope can access this programme.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[142006]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the mass asymptomatic testing in schools and colleges, what support his Department is providing to schools to carry out serial testing to all close contacts after finding a positive case of covid-19.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has currently paused daily contact testing, previously known as serial testing, in all but a small number of secondary schools and colleges, where it will continue alongside detailed evaluation. This is following updated advice from NHS Test and Trace and Public Health England which concluded that, in light of the higher prevalence and rates of transmission of the new variant of the virus, further evaluation work is required to make sure that daily contact testing is achieving its aim of breaking chains of transmission.

We will be working closely with the small number of secondary schools and colleges that will be continuing daily contact testing as part of the evaluation.

Navendu Mishra:

[142073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional funds to schools that are incurring increased costs as a result of covering staff absence due to self-isolating as those absences are not included in staff absence insurance policies.

Nick Gibb:

Last term, the Department announced a new COVID-19 workforce fund for schools facing significant staff absences and financial pressures to help them with the costs of staff cover. It funded the costs of teacher absences over a threshold in eligible schools for the period from 1 November until the end of the autumn 2020 term. Guidance on the fund was published on GOV.UK. Further information on COVID-19

workforce funding can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-workforce-fund-for-schools>.

Currently, schools remain open to vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers only. All other pupils should receive remote education. The Department therefore expects that many schools will currently be providing onsite education for fewer pupils, giving them greater flexibility in how they deploy their staff and manage any staff absences due to COVID-19. The Department has provided schools with guidance to support their workforce planning here:

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

As set out in the guidance, schools can continue to engage supply teachers and other supply staff during this period.

Schools have continued to receive their core funding allocations throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, and will continue to do so for the coming year as usual, regardless of any periods of closure or reduced operation. Following the 2019 Spending Round, school budgets are rising by £2.6 billion in the 2020-21 financial year, £4.8 billion in 2021-22 and £7.1 billion in 2022-23, compared to 2019-20. On average, schools are attracting 4.2% more per pupil in 2020-21 than in 2019-20.

Daisy Cooper:

[143125]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether schools will be closed to all children in the February 2021 half term.

Nick Gibb:

Schools will close as usual over February half term and are not expected to remain open to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers during that week.

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

Ensuring continued access to childcare for parents and carers remains a priority for the government. We have ensured that all before and after-school clubs, holiday clubs, and other out-of-school settings have been able to continue to stay open for vulnerable children and children of critical workers, during the national lockdown, including the February half term, in line with the protective measures guidance for the sector.

People can also continue existing arrangements for childcare bubbles, and for contact between parents and children where they live apart.

Wes Streeting:

[144770]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional safety measures will be put in place to ensure the safe opening of schools during the covid-19 outbreak from 8 March 2021.

Nick Gibb:

At each stage of its response to COVID-19, the Government has listened to and acted on the latest medical and scientific advice. The Government has always been clear that it will not hesitate to take swift and decisive action to control the virus and save lives.

The Department has worked closely with Public Health England to publish comprehensive guidance based on a 'system of controls' which, when implemented in line with a revised risk assessment, create an inherently safer environment for staff and pupils, where the risk of transmission of the infection is substantially reduced. This provides a framework for schools to put in place proportionate protective measures to manage risk effectively. The full guidance is available here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952443/210114_School_national_restrictions_guidance_FINAL_14012021.pdf.

Schools will already be familiar with much of this guidance, which they have been implementing since the start of the autumn term. If schools continue to assess risk and implement the measures set out in the guidance, they will effectively reduce risks in their school and create an inherently safer environment.

The Department will continue to keep our guidance and advice to schools under review to help ensure they remain as safe as possible.

■ Skilled Workers: South Yorkshire**Dan Jarvis:****[R] [144683]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of his Further Education Reform White Paper on the future role of Skills Advisory Networks (a) for understanding local skills needs and (b) in the South Yorkshire economy.

Gillian Keegan:

We have considered the implications for the 36 Skills Advisory Panels across the country and will not make any changes at this time.

Our reforms will build on the work the Panels have been doing to date to understand local skills needs, including the Local Skills Reports due to be published at the end of March. We plan to continue funding all Panels, including Sheffield City Region's Skills Advisory Network, as we trailblaze Local Skills Improvement Plans in a small number of areas.

■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus**Caroline Lucas:****[141957]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of covid-19 infection rates at schools for children with special educational needs and disabilities; what discussions he has had with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on

the prioritisation of teaching staff working with children with special educational needs and disabilities for vaccination against covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Vicky Ford:

The current national restrictions limiting attendance are about reducing the number of contacts that people have with other households, given the rapidly rising numbers of cases across the country and the intense pressure on the NHS. For those pupils and staff still attending school, the system of protective measures that we have asked schools to implement continues to mean that any risks are well managed and controlled. We are not seeing significant pressure from COVID-19 in paediatrics across the UK.

Public Health England (PHE) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) endorsed system of controls sets out the measures that school leaders and all staff should follow. Where schools implement the system of controls, in line with their own workplace risk assessment, PHE and DHSC confirm that these measures create an inherently safer environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced.

The department collects daily data from schools and colleges via the educational setting status form, which was set-up to help the government monitor the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on schools and colleges. This data is as reported directly by schools via the department's daily education settings survey. It is not the primary source of data on infection, incidence and COVID-19 cases overall.

The department has published the number and proportion of pupils absent due to a confirmed case of COVID-19, a suspected case of COVID-19 or self-isolation in state-funded schools in England on each Thursday between 15 October and 17 December 2020, excluding the October half term period. The department has published the number and proportion of i) teachers and school leaders and ii) teaching assistants and other staff absent due to a confirmed case of COVID-19, a suspected case of COVID-19 or self-isolation in state-funded schools in England on each day between 12 October and 17 December 2020, excluding the October half term period.

The department has also published this data for all local authorities in England, broken down by school type. This is available in Table 1C of the 'Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak' statistical publication, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/2021-week-4>.

On prioritisation of vaccines, frontline social care workers directly working with people clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 who need care and support, irrespective of where they work and whether they care for adults or children, will be prioritised as part of Phase 1 of vaccine rollout. This includes some staff who work in special schools.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation and the government, including the Department for Education, are considering essential workers, such as

the education, childcare and the wider children's social care workforce in the next phase of vaccine rollout.

■ **Students: Fees and Charges**

Dr Julian Lewis:

[142755]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent progress he has made in developing a scheme for the financing of the fees of British Muslim students in a way which is compatible with the provisions of the Islamic faith.

Michelle Donelan:

I refer my right hon. Friend, the Member for New Forest East, to the answer I gave on 14 January 2021 to Question [135997](#).

■ **Students: Housing**

Hilary Benn:

[142784]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will introduce a rent refund policy for higher education students who are unable to live in their student accommodation as a result to covid-19 restrictions; and if he will make a statement.

Michelle Donelan:

Universities and private accommodation providers are autonomous and responsible for setting their own rent agreements. The government plays no direct role in the provision of student accommodation.

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

We recognise that, in these exceptional circumstances, some students may face financial hardship. The Department for Education has worked with the Office for Students to clarify that providers are able to draw on existing funds, worth around £256 million for the academic year 2020/2021, towards hardship support. The government is making available up to a further £20 million on a one-off basis to support those that need it most, particularly disadvantaged students. As my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, said on 7 January, we are considering what more we can do to provide further support to students.

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

If a student thinks their accommodation provider is treating them unfairly, they can raise a complaint under the accommodation codes of practice as long as their provider is a code member. The codes can be found at: <https://www.thesac.org.uk/>,

<https://www.unipol.org.uk/the-code/how-to-complain> and
<https://www.rla.org.uk/about/nrla-code-of-practice.shtml>.

■ Supply Teachers: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper:

[142059]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's guidance, Coronavirus (COVID-19): financial support for education, early years and children's social care and Cabinet Office guidance, PPNs 2/20 and 4/20: Supplier relief due to coronavirus (COVID-19), updated on 21 January, whether schools are expected to pay for ongoing supply staff engagements and not terminate those engagements early and require those staff to seek state funded support.

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.

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

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. Information on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>. Information on eligibility criteria is available here:

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

Alex Cunningham:

[142917]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support is available for casual supply teachers who are not contracted to a school during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

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. Information on the

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>. Information on the eligibility criteria is available here: <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 work pattern but they cannot do any work for their employer during hours that employers record them as being on furlough. Further information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme#flexible-furlough-agreements>.

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 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 here: <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-coronavirus>.

Alex Cunningham:

[142919]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the (a) employment and (b) income of supply teachers.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not hold data on the rate of employment or the income of supply teachers.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has released estimates of the number and value of claims made to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). This outlines the number of companies, and employees who have been supported by the CJRS by employment sector, including education. However, the statistical release does not provide data on specific job roles within a sector. The information is available to view here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-december-2020>

If supply staff employed via employment agencies are unable to find work, their employment agency can place them on furlough and use the CJRS to claim for 80% of their wages, including during school holiday periods, provided that the eligibility criteria are met. Information on the CJRS is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>. Information on the eligibility criteria is available here:

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

Kate Green:

[144676]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the effect on supply teaching staff of rules requiring employers to meet (a) national insurance and (b) pension costs for furloughed staff.

Nick Gibb:

Department officials continue to engage with their counterparts across Government to co-ordinate the Government's response to COVID-19.

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 (CJRS) to claim for 80% of their wages, including during school holiday periods, provided that the eligibility criteria are met, further details can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-which-employees-you-can-put-on-furlough-to-use-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>.

From 1 November 2020 employers must pay employer National Insurance contributions (NICs) and pension contributions for the hours the employee is on furlough. Employer NICs and pension contributions are the only required contributions under the extension to the CJRS. For an average claim, this accounts for just 5% of total employment costs or £70 per employee per month.

This is a fair way to ask employers to contribute because it protects lower paid workers by limiting the cost to employers of lower paid workers. Indeed, an early assessment of CJRS claims suggested around 40% of employees using the scheme are below the NICs and pensions threshold and will therefore have no employer costs in the CJRS. Furthermore, many small employers can benefit from the Employment Allowance for support with their NICs bill.

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 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): what to do if you're employed and cannot work' guidance which can be found here: <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>.

■ Teachers: Training

Wes Streeting:

[143850]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether an equalities impact assessment was undertaken before his Department made changes to initial teacher training bursaries for the 2021-22 academic year.

Nick Gibb:

The Department completed an equalities impact assessment before deciding the initial teacher training bursaries and other financial incentives for academic year 2021/22.

Universities: Coronavirus**Karin Smyth:**[\[141514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Office for Students regarding the level of likelihood of enforcement action under the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 against universities in respect of potential non-compliance with the general ongoing conditions of registration due to the covid-19 pandemic.

Michelle Donelan:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and I have regular discussions with the Office for Students (OfS) on a range of issues, including their regulatory approach and the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on students and universities. The government has made it clear to the OfS that our priority is to support the wellbeing of students and staff throughout higher education and to enable students to complete their courses and secure excellent outcomes. I wrote to the OfS on 13 January 2021 to support their intention to reiterate to providers their obligation to have regard to relevant guidance about consumer protection law. The government has been very clear to the OfS that higher education providers are expected to maintain quality and academic standards, and the quantity of tuition should not drop. Universities and colleges have risen to the challenges of the COVID-19 outbreak, producing interactive, high quality and innovative remote learning.

Karin Smyth:[\[141515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy regarding the level of likelihood of enforcement action by the Competition and Markets Authority against universities in response to potential breaches of consumer law as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Michelle Donelan:

The government has been clear throughout the COVID-19 outbreak that we expect providers to ensure they are fully complying with their consumer law obligations. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) offers guidance on consumer law for higher education (HE) providers. The CMA has been clear that obligations under the law have not changed and providers must ensure they are meeting them.

The CMA currently has a programme of work relating to cancellations and refunds, and has issued advice and taken enforcement action in several sectors. Officials at the Department for Education are in regular contact with the CMA and the Office for Students (OfS) in relation to relevant issues in the HE sector which have arisen due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

On 30 November 2020, the CMA published a re-statement of their views on consumer law in relation to HE. The CMA had also previously published guidance on consumer contracts, cancellation and refunds affected by COVID-19. This sets out the CMA's view on how the law operates to help students understand their rights and help providers treat their students fairly. This is available via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/cma-cases/consumer-protection-review-of-higher-education>.

Although the CMA is able to take enforcement action where there are breaches of consumer law, in HE the OfS as the regulatory body also has an important role. All registered providers are subject to ongoing OfS conditions of registration relating to student protection and consumer law.

The government expects quality and academic standards will be maintained, and the OfS has made it clear that all HE providers must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and standards. I wrote to the OfS on 13 January 2021, outlining the government's expectations of the higher education sector following the new national measures put in place.

Following this, the OfS wrote to providers' Accountable Officers, setting out the actions they are taking in connection with providers' compliance with existing regulatory requirements. The OfS has produced specific guidance as to how compliance will be assessed in the light of the COVID-19 outbreak.

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

If students have concerns, they should first raise their concerns with their university. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for higher education to consider their complaint.

Hilary Benn:

[143694]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with universities on the potential merits of adopting a no detriment policy for students this academic year in response to disruption experienced during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Michelle Donelan:

The government recognises that students have faced many changes over the last year, as higher education (HE) providers have had to adapt teaching, learning and assessment methods in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Last year, these adaptations included some providers putting in place no detriment policies to ensure that students were not unfairly affected by these challenging circumstances.

It is vital that a fair approach to exams and assessment is in place and understood by students. This must enable students to progress and leave with qualifications that reflect their hard work. The government's clear expectation is that quality and

academic standards must be maintained. We expect providers to make all reasonable efforts for student achievement to be reliably assessed and for qualifications to be awarded securely.

The Office for Students (OfS), the regulator in England, has committed to protecting students throughout the present crisis, whilst ensuring that quality and standards are upheld. Guidance for providers, published by the OfS and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, makes clear that all HE providers must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and standards. This means ensuring that courses are high quality, students are supported and achieve good outcomes, and standards are protected.

Sarah Olney:

[144786]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to encourage universities to deliver high quality learning for students throughout the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

On 13 January, I wrote to the Office for Students (OfS), as regulator for English higher education (HE) providers, outlining the government's expectations of the higher education sector. Following this, the OfS wrote to HE providers setting out the actions they are taking in connection with providers' compliance to existing regulatory requirements.

The government's clear and stated expectation is that universities should maintain the quality and quantity of tuition and seek to ensure that all students regardless of their background have the resources to study remotely. This is more important than ever at the moment, with the vast majority of students studying solely online. The OfS has made it clear that HE providers must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and academic standards, which set out requirements to ensure that courses are high quality, that students are supported and achieve good outcomes and that standards are protected, regardless of whether a provider is delivering its courses through face-to-face teaching, remote online learning, or a combination of both.

The OfS has published information for providers providing guidance on how best to ensure students continue to receive a high quality academic experience in the light of the COVID-19 outbreak. This sets out that providers should make all reasonable efforts to provide alternative teaching and support for students that is at least broadly equivalent to the provider's usual arrangements. The OfS will keep this guidance under review to ensure it remains relevant to the developing circumstances of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The OfS is taking very seriously the potential impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on teaching and learning. The OfS is actively monitoring providers to ensure that they maintain the quality of their provision, that it is accessible for all, and that they have been clear in their communications with students about how arrangements for teaching and learning may change throughout the year. The OfS is also following up

directly with providers where they receive notifications from students, parents or others raising concerns about the quality of teaching on offer and requiring providers to report to them when they are not able to deliver a course or award a qualification. If the OfS has concerns, it will investigate further.

Students have rights under consumer law that they may be able to rely on if they are dissatisfied with their provider's response to COVID-19. In the first instance, students should speak to their provider to see if they can resolve their issue. We expect student complaints and appeals processes to be operated flexibly, accessibly and sympathetically by providers to resolve any concerns. If a student at a provider in England or Wales is not satisfied with their provider's final response, they should go to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, which has published guidance on this issue.

■ Video Games: Graduates

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[140957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students have graduated with a degree in video games in each year since 2010.

Michelle Donelan:

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects and publishes statistics on enrolments and qualifications obtained at UK Higher Education Institutions. Latest statistics refer to the academic year 2018/19.

The table below shows the numbers of first-degree qualifiers in computer games subjects for each year since the academic year 2012/13. Information on the number of qualifiers in these subjects has been available since the introduction of the third version of Joint Academic Coding System in 2012/13, hence figures cannot be provided for any year prior to that.

Full-person-equivalent ¹ First Degree qualifiers in computer games subjects

UK Higher Education Institutions

Academic years 2012/13 to 2018/19

ACADEMIC YEAR	NUMBER OF QUALIFIERS IN COMPUTER GAMES SUBJECTS ²
2012/13	595
2013/14	625
2014/15	690
2015/16	900
2016/17	1,290
2017/18	1,265

ACADEMIC YEAR	NUMBER OF QUALIFIERS IN COMPUTER GAMES SUBJECTS ²
2018/19	1,380

Source: DfE analysis of the HESA Student Record.

1. Counts are on the basis of full-person-equivalents. Where a student is studying more than one subject, they are apportioned between the subjects that make up their course. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5, in line with HESA rounding conventions:
<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions/students#rounding-and-suppression-strategy>.
2. Qualifiers in Games (principal category I6 of the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS)), which includes Games, Computer games programming, Computer game design and Computer games graphics. This code is only available since the introduction of the third version of JACS in 2012/13. More information on JACS codes can be found at the following link:
<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/jacs>.

■ Video Games: Overseas Students

Jonathan Gullis:

[143149]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Turing Scheme on people wishing to study for degrees in gaming in the UK.

Michelle Donelan:

The Turing scheme will be backed by at least £100 million, providing funding for around 35,000 students in universities, colleges, and schools to go on placements and exchanges overseas, starting in September 2021 and replaces funding previously available through the education mobility element of Erasmus+. The scheme will be global and not be limited to the EU.

The scheme will be available to students of all subjects including those studying degrees in gaming.

Further details of the scheme will be published shortly.

■ Vocational Education: Finance

Dan Jarvis:

[144681]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on increasing funding for vocational education.

Gillian Keegan:

The department has regular engagement with my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and HM Treasury in respect of technical and vocational education.

The government has made major investments in technical education and announced on 31 August 2019 that it would invest an extra £400 million in 16-19 education in 2020-21. This is the largest injection of money in a single year since 2010. As part of this, the base rate of 16-19 funding increased by 4.7% in academic year 2020/21, from £4,000 to £4,188. Extra funding has been made available for more expensive and high value subjects, boosting funding for vocational areas such as construction, engineering, manufacturing and ICT.

A further £291 million was made available in the 2020 Spending Review, enabling these higher rates and additional funding elements to be maintained in 2021/22 allocations.

New T Levels will transform technical education in this country, and we announced in 2017 that these new programme would be backed by an additional £500 million of investment every year when fully rolled out, supporting the extra hours of delivery and high quality industry placements that these programmes incorporate.

We are continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) (£1.34 billion in 2020/21).

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced £375 million for the National Skills Fund at the Spending Review in November 2020. This includes £95 million funding for a new level 3 adult offer and £43 million for Skills Bootcamps. Investment in skills through the National Skills Fund is vital, ensuring adults have the opportunity to progress into higher wage employment and to support those who need to, the opportunity to retrain at different points throughout their lives.

From April 2021, we will be supporting any adult aged 24 and over who wants to achieve their first full level 3 qualification – equivalent to two A levels, or a technical certificate or diploma – to access nearly 400 fully funded courses. Complementing the Level 3 adult offer, the Skills Bootcamps offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. Skills Bootcamps have the potential to transform the skills landscape for adults and employers.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Animal Experiments: Chemicals

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[144773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, will he make it his policy to set targets to reduce the use of animal testing in the chemicals industry.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK has been at the forefront of opposing animal tests where alternative approaches could be used. This is known as the "last-resort principle", which we will retain and enshrine in legislation through our landmark Environment Bill. We are determined that there should be no need for any additional animal testing for a

chemical that has already been registered, unless it is subject to further evaluation that shows the registration dossier is inadequate or there are still concerns about the hazards and risks of the chemical, especially to human health.

■ Animal Grooming: Coronavirus

Alexander Stafford: [140983]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what guidance has been issued to (a) dog trainers and (b) dog groomers to enable them to operate safely during the covid-19 national lockdown.

Victoria Prentis:

My Department continues to work closely with the Canine and Feline Sector Group who have issued advice for pet businesses, including dog trainers and dog groomers, on how to operate safely within the new restrictions; this includes a protocol for the handover of pets. The advice may be found online at

<https://www.cfsg.org.uk/repository/360/>.

Alexander Stafford: [140984]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether a veterinary referral is necessary for pet groomers to carry out grooming appointments for welfare reasons during the covid-19 national lockdown.

Victoria Prentis:

The Canine and Feline Sector Group have issued advice for pet businesses, including dog groomers, on how to operate safely within the new restrictions. The advice may be found online at <https://www.cfsg.org.uk/repository/360/>.

Dog owners are permitted to take their dog to be groomed by appointment where this is necessary for the animal's welfare and not simply for aesthetic reasons. Defra cannot advise on whether it is appropriate to take animals to be groomed in individual cases. Owners should carefully consider whether grooming is necessary for animal welfare reasons, in discussion with their vet if needed.

■ Animal Housing: Cats and Dogs

Alex Cunningham: [143754]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will reverse the reclassification of kennel and cattery businesses from animal welfare to non-essential.

Victoria Prentis:

There has been no change in the status of kennel and cattery businesses. Under the current restrictions veterinary services, animal rescue centres, and animal boarding facilities may stay open. Continued access to animal boarding facilities at this time is important for animal welfare purposes, including where required to enable critical workers to go to work or to allow owners to attend medical or vaccination appointments.

The Government has issued advice for pet owners and livestock keepers on looking after the welfare of animals during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This includes guidance on how to access animal boarding facilities safely and is clear that you should only access these facilities by appointment and recommends that you ask the facilities if they provide a collection and drop-off service. More information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-people-with-animals>

The Canine and Feline Sector Group has also issued advice for pet businesses, including animal boarding establishments, on how to operate safely within the new restrictions. This includes a protocol for the handover of pets and may be found online: <https://www.cfsg.org.uk/repository/360/>

■ Animal Products: Exports

Navendu Mishra:

[142071]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking in response to the rejection of veterinary inspection documentation for exports of animal by-products to the EU.

Victoria Prentis:

I can confirm that there are procedures and steps already in place to assist traders where their consignment has been rejected by a European Border Control Post. This includes providing assistance with trying to resolve any paperwork issues or permitting consignments to be returned to GB as easily as possible and we continue to support industry bodies with guidance. In particular, we have worked closely with the authorities in the Netherlands, France and Belgium to facilitate imports.

Navendu Mishra:

[142072]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to monitor the number of rejections of veterinary inspection documents for exports of animal by-products to the EU.

Victoria Prentis:

Traders can notify the Animal and Plant Health Agency by telephone if their consignments are rejected at a European Union (EU) Border Control Post (BCP). Having done so, they can discuss the possible steps that can be taken to enable the product to clear the BCP or be returned to Great Britain (GB).

We are holding regular engagement with the European Commission and EU Member States to learn why some GB consignments are delayed or rejected at EU BCPs. We are then communicating this back to GB traders and certifying officers.

■ Animal Welfare

Alex Davies-Jones:

[144877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what guidance his Department has developed to assist police officers to tackle crimes related to animal welfare; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

The police do not normally enforce animal welfare legislation except in relation to serious organised crimes, such as dog fighting. Consequently, the police are not usually issued with guidance on animal welfare crimes. Local authorities enforce certain animal welfare laws such as those relating to the licensing of particular animal-related activities. To assist them in this responsibility, we have provided them with the necessary guidance such as that which accompanies The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018. A copy of the associated guidance can be found on GOV.UK:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-activities-licensing-guidance-for-local-authorities.

■ Flood Control

Sir Greg Knight:

[144617]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of river dredging to remove silt and reduce the incidence of flooding; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

Dredging is an important part of the Environment Agency's (EA) annual river maintenance programme. The Environment Agency assesses each situation individually and will dredge when it is the right solution to reduce flood risk and provides long-term value for money.

The Environment Agency carried out a comprehensive series of trials in 2010 to review and update evidence on the benefits and effectiveness of dredging as one method for keeping rivers flowing freely. The trials showed that dredging can reduce flood risk, but its effectiveness and value-for-money varies significantly depending upon the location.

In many cases, dredging isn't the best long-term solution because rivers can quickly silt-up again and other measures such as building walls or storage upstream may be more effective. It can even increase flood risk and erosion and alter the ecosystem and wildlife. Dredging is unlikely to be effective in isolation but it can be part of a solution involving multiple interventions.

■ Flood Control: Grants

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[143684]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what grants are available to people to carry out work in their homes to protect them from flooding; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

Flooding has a devastating impact on communities, businesses and individuals, both in terms of physical damage and impacts on health, including mental health. The government closely monitors the impact on affected areas. With localised flooding incidents, local authorities are expected to have well established contingency arrangements in place and to be able to respond and support their local communities from within existing budgets.

Property measures that resist flood water, such as floor doors, which can reduce both the probability and damage from flooding, are eligible for Defra flood risk grant in aid. This eligibility is restricted to those properties that are at a very significant risk of flooding and that will move to a lower risk band as a result of the intervention. The Government has today published a Call for Evidence to explore potential changes for the future of the flood defence programme focusing on how we can strengthen our assessment of local circumstances. This includes looking at changes to how our flood defence investment programme can further benefit frequently flooded communities, and also exploring ways to increase the uptake of Property Flood Resilience measures

Local Councils also have discretionary powers to fund grants, loans or other payments for home improvements. This can include funding for Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures. When opportunities for renewal, replacement or refurbishment arise for a property at flood risk; owners should consider integrating PFR measures that increase the 'flood recoverability' of the building. Following severe weather with significant impacts across multiple local authorities, the Government is able to deploy the Flood Recovery Framework.

During the unprecedented flooding in November 2019 and the storms which followed in winter 2019/2020, government announced PFR repair grants of up to £5,000 to help eligible properties affected by floods (homes, charities and businesses) become more flood resilient. The repair grants apply to those affected in district or unitary authorities that have 25 or more severely flooded properties.

The PFR repair grants are administered by eligible local authorities, with Defra reimbursing local authorities for grants paid for eligible properties. The most recent figures show that 47 district or unitary councils with over 7000 properties are eligible in England for the November 2019 and February 2020 PFR repair schemes. This includes 235 in the county of Gloucestershire, with 156 of these in Tewkesbury.

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

■ Flood Control: Local Government

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[142092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions officials of his Department have had with representatives of local authorities in areas affected by Storm Christoph.

Rebecca Pow:

In response to Storm Christoph, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) activated the National Flood Response Centre (NFRC). This centre brings together government departments and agencies to ensure that central Government has a clear picture of the latest situation and facilitates swift decision making.

The NFRC ensured there was timely two-way flow of information between the national and local level. This was predominately through the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, who was in regular contact with local authorities and Local Resilience Forums, ensuring that (a) decisions made at the national level were based on accurate information from the regional and local level, and (b) that the local response had sufficient resources to support the response and recovery.

The Environment Agency, an arm's length body under Defra, operates in local areas and was represented at the NFRC and on the Local Resilience Forums, alongside emergency services and other flood resilience partners.

■ Flood Control: North Yorkshire

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[142091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support his Department is providing to areas adversely affected by Storm Christoph and its aftermath in West Yorkshire.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is closely monitoring the impact of Storm Christoph on affected communities and coordinating the cross-government response to flooding impacts.

Across West Yorkshire, Environment Agency flood defences have protected approximately 7100 properties from flooding. The EA's incident rooms have been open and operational teams have been out on the ground 24 hours a day. The EA also worked alongside Local Authorities and the emergency services as part of Strategic and Tactical Command Groups to manage the flood risk and keep people safe.

With localised flooding incidents, local authorities are expected to have well established contingency arrangements in place and to be able to respond and support their local communities from within existing budgets.

Following severe weather with significant impacts across multiple local authorities the Government is able to deploy the Flood Recovery Framework.

We will continue to monitor the situation and assess whether further support is needed in the event that flooding impacts increase.

■ Gun Sports: Coronavirus

Luke Pollard:

[142056]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what exemptions to the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown restrictions are in place for rough shooting.

Rebecca Pow:

There are no exemptions to the current lockdown restrictions in place for shooting.

You must only leave the home where you have a reasonable excuse. A reasonable excuse includes where reasonably necessary for exercise or for work.

As a private individual, you may leave your home to shoot where you are confident this counts towards your daily exercise and is compliant with social contact rules (see further detail on exercise [here](#) on gov.uk). Where it is reasonably necessary for work (whether acting in a professional capacity or as an employee), you may also leave home to engage in shooting, subject to [Covid-secure guidelines](#). You must also ensure that relevant regulatory and licensing requirements are met, and permission has been given by the landowner or manager.

Organised shooting is not permitted during the National Lockdown.

■ Horses: Animal Welfare

Saqib Bhatti:

[140962]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to increase support for equine rescue centres during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

Equine rescue centres do excellent work, often on a voluntary basis, to rescue and rehome unwanted and abandoned horses, and to ensure they are protected against cruelty. I am acutely aware that the coronavirus pandemic, and specifically the measures put in place to control the spread of the virus, continue to affect individuals, businesses and charities caring for animals. Equine welfare remains a priority for Defra throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

It has been encouraging to see the sector working collaboratively and successfully to support itself and to safeguard the welfare of equines in their care in the face of financial hardship and uncertainty. The sector continues to keep us informed of the status of the emergency grant schemes they have established to support numerous

smaller organisations. These schemes include the Covid-19 Equine Rescues Emergency Fund established by the Pet Plan Charitable Trust (PPCT) together with World Horse Welfare and the National Equine Welfare Council.

In addition to this, we have worked closely with sector groups to update guidance to animal rescue and rehoming organisations, and other animal charities and businesses. This has enabled them to undertake core operations as far as possible, whilst maintaining compliance with the social distancing rules and need for hygiene precautions to help prevent the spread of coronavirus. Throughout this period, we have ensured that rescue and rehoming organisations are permitted to stay open, that staff and volunteers can continue to work and tend to the animals in their care, and that rehoming, fostering and adoption services can continue in accordance with Covid-19 secure guidance.

We take the concerns of the sector very seriously and are keeping a close watch on in-take levels and trends in animal relinquishments. Defra remains committed to continued engagement with the sector to understand the longer-term impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, monitor the animal welfare implications of this and offer appropriate advice and support.

■ Hunting: Coronavirus

Luke Pollard:

[141610]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs, whether hunting is considered as exercise under the covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced in January 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

There are no exemptions to the lockdown restrictions in place for organised hunting or shooting. You must only leave the home where you have a reasonable excuse. A reasonable excuse includes where reasonably necessary for exercise. As a private individual, you may leave your home to shoot where you are confident this counts towards your daily exercise and is compliant with social contact rules (see further detail on exercise [here](#) on gov.uk).

You can exercise in a public outdoor place:

- by yourself
- with the people you live with
- with your support bubble (if you are legally permitted to form one)
- or, when on your own, with 1 person from another household, but should maintain social distancing under current Covid-19 guidelines and not share any equipment

When deciding how to exercise, you should consider if your chosen activity and location will enable you to minimise your time away from home and risk of interacting with others.

You must also ensure that relevant regulatory and licensing requirements are met, and permission has been given by the landowner or manager. Organised shooting or hunting is not permitted during the National Lockdown.

■ **Incinerators: Wales**

Stephen Doughty:

[\[144692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many tonnes of (a) residential and (b) commercial waste were transported to Wales, from England, for incineration in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Rebecca Pow:

This level of detailed information is not routinely collated and cannot be readily compiled from information held by Defra for residential or commercial waste originating in England. Waste is a devolved matter and the data on waste treated in Wales by incineration would be held by the Welsh Government.

■ **Lighting: Pollution Control**

Andrew Griffith:

[\[142093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September 2020 to Question 89904, when the Government plans to respond to the Independent Review of Landscapes; and what steps he is taking to achieve the recommendation of a night under the stars in a national landscape for every child as part of that response.

Rebecca Pow:

The independent Review of Protected Landscapes, led by Julian Glover, set out a compelling vision for more beautiful, more biodiverse and more accessible National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Government welcomes this ambition and is committed to increasing opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy the benefits of spending meaningful time in our national landscapes in England. We are carefully considering the recommendations and working with partner organisations to inform and develop our response to the review, which we will publish in due course.

The £80 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund, which launched in September 2020, will kickstart a programme of nature-based projects to restore nature, tackle climate change and connect people with the natural environment. Some of these projects will help deliver on Glover recommendations, such as the proposal to give every child a night under the stars in a national landscape.

■ **Organic Food: Northern Ireland**

Claire Hanna:

[\[143935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made in discussions with the EU on simplifying the administrative

processes for the movement of organic foodstuff between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Victoria Prentis:

The flow of goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland has been smooth overall and deliveries are reaching their intended destinations.

Authorised traders moving agri-food goods, including organic products, under the grace period do not require certification. For other traders we are continuing to consider any further support that may be required here ahead of the end of the official certification grace period on 1 April, including reviewing the operation of our existing Movement Assistance Scheme for agri-food traders.

In the meantime, we will also be discussing with the EU means to streamline and simplify requirements, including the use of e-seals.

■ **Pets: Sales**

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[141616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to promote the Petfished campaign to the general public.

Victoria Prentis:

Petfished was launched in March 2020 ahead of Lucy's Law coming into force. The campaign aims to encourage prospective owners to stop and question 'who's the person behind the pet?', and to research the seller before visiting the animal.

The campaign has been delivered in three phases. This included a launch in March 2020 followed by subsequent pushes around the traditional peak seasons for sales (summer and pre-Christmas). Alongside the media launch in March 2020 the campaign was promoted at Crufts where our campaign video "Hero" was played in the arena. In July 2020 the campaign was promoted by an open letter signed by pet-loving celebrities and charity and veterinary organisations, as well as in interviews given by the Chief Veterinary Officer with BBC Breakfast and Sky News to discuss campaign messaging. In November 2020 the Petfished campaign was promoted in the media through the '12 Days of Petfished' video which outlined the risks posed by deceitful sellers.

Defra has promoted Petfished through its social media channels, supported by key stakeholders including the charity and veterinary sectors. The campaign has also been supported by a number of commercial partners who have provided support through pro-bono activities such as social media support, blogs, email marketing and website advertising space. Petfished messages have been promoted on popular search engines and social media sites. All the communications led back to our Petfished website where prospective buyers can obtain further advice and resources.

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[141617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Petfished campaign.

Victoria Prentis:

Initial indications are that the Petfished campaign has successfully raised awareness of how to source a new pet in the right way. Overall our campaign has secured 106 pieces of coverage in the media, and content posted on social media by Defra and supportive stakeholders has received over 215,000 engagements. Campaign activity has led to over 270,000 visits to our campaign site.

Our latest YouGov polling of prospective pet owners reveals that Petfished has contributed to the doubling of awareness of low-welfare pet sellers and has generated an increase in confidence recognising the signs of a deceitful seller when looking to buy or adopt a cat, dog, puppy or kitten.

■ **Pigs****Daniel Zeichner:**[\[144698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold a roundtable with representatives from the British pig industry to discuss the current challenges facing the sector.

Victoria Prentis:

From our market monitoring over recent weeks, I am aware that the pig sector is currently facing a number of challenges. Ministers have received the request for a round table and I would be pleased to meet with representatives from the industry. I have asked my officials to set this up.

■ **Seafood: Exports****Angus Brendan MacNeil:**[\[144639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish the (a) eligibility criteria and (b) application process for the compensation scheme for seafood exporters and fishing boats affected by the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement; and how much funding will be available for each nation of the UK through that scheme.

Victoria Prentis:

We expect to publish the eligibility criteria and application process for the Seafood Disruption Support Scheme in the week beginning 8 February.

Funding will be delivered centrally at a UK level based on the qualifying applications. Therefore we are not able to identify in advance the funding split between the nations of the UK.

■ **UK Trade with EU: Meat****Ben Lake:**[\[143884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the operation of new trading arrangements for the export of Welsh red meat to the EU.

Victoria Prentis:

Officials in the devolved administrations were closely involved in preparations for the export of animals and products of animal origin to the EU from 1 January.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE■ **Africa: Coronavirus****Stephen Doughty:**[\[144689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the spread of the (a) B.1.351 and (b) 501Y.V2 variants of covid-19 across (i) southern Africa and (ii) the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa.

James Duddridge:

The emergence of new genetic variants of concern highlight the critical importance of a coordinated global response to COVID-19. We are aware that B.1.351 / 501Y.V2 variant has been identified in 31 countries, including many countries across southern Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. Variant B.1.351 may spread more easily than previous variants, making it harder to control. Investigations are ongoing into the potential of variant B.1.351 for re-infection and vaccine or therapeutics efficacy. Limited genetic sequencing capacity in many countries in Africa limits our ability to fully understand the epidemiology and changes in the virus within the region.

The UK will offer its world leading expertise in genomics to identify new variants of coronavirus to countries who do not have the resources to do so. Countries will be offered UK capacity to analyse new strains of the virus through the launch of the New Variant Assessment Platform which will be led by Public Health England working with NHS Test and Trace and academic partners as well as the World Health Organization's SARS-CoV-2 Global Laboratory Working Group.

■ **Africa: Overseas Aid****Stephen Doughty:**[\[144690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which Official Development Assistance programmes and funding streams have been paused or cancelled in (a) Malawi, (b) Ethiopia and (c) Nigeria since 1 November 2020.

James Duddridge:

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) National Statistics publication - 'Statistics on International Development' will provide a full breakdown of UK Official Development Assistance spend for the previous calendar year. The Statistics for International Development published in Autumn 2021 will provide a full breakdown of the UK's ODA spend for 2020.

■ Belarus: Human Rights

Layla Moran:

[\[144832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to help (a) establish an independent international body for the in-depth investigation of human rights violations in the context of the recent Belarusian presidential elections and (b) bring perpetrators of torture and inhuman treatment among the Belarusian security forces and their responsible superiors to justice.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is deeply concerned by the torture and mistreatment of hundreds of protestors and other members of civil society, following the fraudulent elections in Belarus. We were the driving force behind the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism in the OSCE, triggering an independent investigation by Professor Wolfgang Benedek in to the election and the brutal suppression that followed. We have welcomed the findings and recommendations in Professor Benedek's report, including his call for the establishment of an independent international body for the in-depth investigation of human rights violations.

We are working closely with international partners and NGOs to this end. In September, the UK also co-sponsored an Urgent Debate on Belarus at the UN Human Rights Council which mandated the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide a comprehensive report on human rights violations in Belarus. The report is due in March .

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper:

[\[143128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the Government has given to help provide (a) water, (b) hygiene supplies and (c) sanitation to the poorest countries in the world since the start of the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

Hand hygiene is critically important to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This is why the UK Government has partnered with Unilever to establish the Hygiene and Behaviour Change Coalition, with an investment of £50 million. Unilever has provided a matching contribution, which includes the supply of over 20 million hygiene products. The programme is on track to reach 1 billion people in 37 developing countries, with messaging that promotes hand and surface hygiene. Interventions target vulnerable people, for example, those living in urban slums or refugee centres, as well as many schools and health care facilities. Where needed, activities have also included the provision of hand washing stations, ensuring people have access to the water they need to wash their hands.

More broadly, in August 2020 we reported that we had helped 62.6 million people gain access to safe water and sanitation since 2016, exceeding our target of 60 million people.

■ Developing Countries: Females**Jim Shannon:**[\[142932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to work with the incoming US administration to help support women's (a) health and (b) rights throughout the world.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is a proud champion of sexual and reproductive health and rights. We look forward to working with the US government on this shared priority that saves lives and empowers women and girls around the world to claim their rights. This year the UK will use its G7 Presidency to spearhead international action on gender equality.

■ Ethiopia: Armed Conflict**Hilary Benn:**[\[144595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of whether Eritrean troops (a) are currently and (b) have been involved in the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

James Duddridge:

We are concerned by involvement of Eritrean forces in hostilities throughout the Tigray region of Ethiopia and the growing weight of credible evidence of their involvement in human rights violations. We have raised our concerns with Ministers in both governments, making clear the overriding need to protect civilians and adhere to international law and international human rights law. We continue to call for independent, international, investigations into allegations of human right abuses and violations, and that the perpetrators of those incidents that are proven are held to account, whoever they may be.

■ EU Countries: British Nationals Abroad**Patrick Grady:**[\[143813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussion he has had with his EU counterparts on preserving the right of UK citizens to retire to EU countries following the UK leaving the EU.

Wendy Morton:

The European Commission has confirmed that, from the 1 January 2021, UK nationals who move or travel to a country in the Schengen area will be treated as third country nationals under EU and Member State immigration rules. UK nationals who wish to move to an EU Member State, whatever their age, will have to meet the domestic immigration and residency rules of the relevant country.

However, under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the UK State Pension will continue to be uprated for UK nationals who retire to the EU. The Agreement also ensures that, where the UK or an EU Member State is responsible for an individual's healthcare, individuals will be entitled to reciprocal healthcare cover. This includes

healthcare cover for UK state pensioners who retire to the EU. No one, for example UK nationals living in EU Member States by the end of 2020, will lose their Withdrawal Agreement rights as a result of this new Agreement.

■ **European Union: Visas**

Chris Grayling:

[\[142807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has received on the potential merits of a 180 day limit for visa free travel in the EU; and what position the EU taken on that matter.

Wendy Morton:

The Government understands concerns about the impact of the 90 days in a rolling 180-day visa-free travel limit on British Citizens who travel to the EU for extended periods of time, as reflected in representations over recent months, including from British Citizens who own second homes in EU Member States and the yachting/sailing community.

The Government discussed arrangements with the EU for British Citizens travelling to the Schengen Area. Regrettably, the EU consistently maintained that British Citizens will be treated as Third Country Nationals under the Schengen Borders Code from 1 January 2021. This means that British Citizens will be able to travel visa-free for short stays for up to 90 days in a rolling 180-day period. This is the standard length of stay that the EU offers to nationals of eligible third countries that offer visa-free travel for EU citizens, in line with existing EU legislation.

■ **Iain Lindsay**

Layla Moran:

[\[143077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department was consulted on the appointment of former UK ambassador to Bahrain, Iain Lindsay, as an advisor to Bahrain's Economic Development Board.

James Cleverly:

I can confirm the appointment went through the departmental business appointment rules process, as is normal practice, and was approved. Standard procedure is that this will be published in the next quarterly transparency return.

■ **India: Farmers**

Afzal Khan:

[\[144841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the protests by farmers in India on 26 January 2021; and whether he has made representations to his Indian counterpart on the use of force by the police in response to those protests.

Nigel Adams:

The right to gather lawfully and demonstrate a point of view is common to all democracies. Governments also have the power to enforce law and order if a protest crosses the line into illegality. Officials in the British High Commission in Delhi and in Deputy High Commissions across India continue to monitor closely the protests over agricultural reforms. The Foreign Secretary previously discussed the protests with his Indian counterpart during his visit to India in December 2020, whilst making clear that the handling of protests is an internal matter for the Indian authorities.

■ **India: Religious Freedom****Afzal Khan:**[\[143894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the recent closure of Amnesty International's offices in India on human rights and religious freedoms in that country.

Nigel Adams:

The freedom of civil society organisations to operate underpins any functioning democracy - in the UK, in India, or anywhere else. We have underlined the importance of organisations like Amnesty International with our contacts in the Government of India. The Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, discussed Amnesty's case with the Indian High Commissioner in December. Officials remain in close contact with Amnesty on this matter. In respect of religious freedoms, our High Commission in New Delhi regularly meets minority representatives and runs projects promoting minority rights. Over the last three years, we have worked with local NGOs to bring together people of diverse faiths on social action projects that promote inter-faith tolerance.

■ **Johal, Jagtar Singh****Stephen Kinnock:**[\[144696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether it is his policy that the incarceration of British citizen Jagtar Singh Johal by the Indian authorities is an arbitrary detention.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: We regularly make representations on Mr Johal's case to the Government of India and take all allegations of human rights violations very seriously. The Foreign Secretary raised Mr Johal's case with the Indian Minister of External Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, on 15 December 2020. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, the Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, last raised Mr Johal's case with the Indian High Commissioner on 28 January 2021, and with the Indian Foreign Secretary, Harsh Vardhan Shringla, on 3 November 2020. Lord Ahmad has also met with Mr Johal's family on a number of occasions, most recently on 27 January 2021.

■ Malawi: Coronavirus

Stephen Doughty:

[\[144688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the Government has provided to the Government of Malawi on (a) testing, (b) surveillance, (c) medical supplies, (d) oxygen plant capacity, (e) vaccines and (f) other steps necessary to help it respond to the covid-19 pandemic.

James Duddridge:

The UK has provided £7.8 million to support the Government of Malawi's Covid-19 response. The UK's support commenced in March 2020, before Malawi's first reported Covid-19 case. This funding has been instrumental in supporting both preparedness and response. Early UK funding helped to establish initial testing capacity and has continued to supply essential resources to the central laboratory. Through UNICEF we have provided support to district teams for contact tracing, isolation monitoring and better data management. By training more than 5,000 health workers, this improved both testing and surveillance capacity. UK funding also helped increase treatment capacity through supporting the establishment of eight emergency treatment units as well as the procurement of medical and laboratory supplies. We helped establish a new oxygen plant at Malawi's national referral hospital in Lilongwe, with a capacity of 800 litres per minute, and we enabled the provision of 174 portable oxygen concentrators for distribution to more remote areas.

The Malawian Government applied to the COVAX facility (which is co-led by the World Health Organisation, The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and Gavi) in December for vaccines for up to 20% of the population, targeted towards health and social care workers, vulnerable people with comorbidities, and those over 60 years of age.

UK support has also extended beyond the health sector, including the provision of PPE to keep border staff safe and technical support to allow the fast-tracking of essential goods at Malawi's key border posts. Our support to public communications has helped to reach more than 10 million Malawians, increasing their awareness and understanding of Covid-19, and dispelling myths, rumours and stigma.

■ Overseas Aid

Layla Moran:

[\[144834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Written Statement of 26 January 2021, Official Report, HCWS735, what estimate he has made of the allocation of Official Development Assistance across Departments for (a) climate and biodiversity, (b) covid and global health security, (c) girls' education, (d) science and research, (e) defending open societies and resolving conflict, (f) humanitarian assistance and (g) promoting trade.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary has completed the cross-government review of how Official Development Assistance (ODA) will be allocated against the government's priorities

for 2021, which has ensured that UK ODA is focused on our strategic priorities, spent where it will have the maximum impact, has greater coherence and delivers most value for money. Officials are now working through the implications of these allocations. No decisions on individual sectoral budgets have been taken yet by Ministers.

■ Overseas Aid: Climate Change

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[144795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance will be spent on climate finance in 2021.

James Duddridge:

The UK is fulfilling our pledge to provide £5.8 billion in climate finance to developing countries between 2016 and 2020, to help them invest in clean growth and prepare for the impacts of climate change. Looking forward, we will double our International Climate Finance to £11.6 billion over the next five years.

■ Overseas Aid: World Bank

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[144796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance funding will be allocated to the World Bank in 2021.

James Cleverly:

The 2020 Spending Review confirmed funding for the UK to remain the largest donor to the World Bank's arm for the poorest countries, the International Development Association. We are currently assessing the budgetary implications of the Spending Review on all programme lines in 2021/22 to ensure strategic coherence of our aid budget, and until this process is complete we cannot confirm specific allocations.

■ Russia: Human Rights

Jim Shannon: [\[142933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support human rights defenders in Russia.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government continues to work for the protection and promotion of human rights in Russia, and to raise our concerns about the human rights situation with the Russian Government. We have made clear that Russia must fulfil its international commitments as a Member State of the Council of Europe and Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to freedom of expression. On 17 November 2020, I raised our concerns with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Titov. In addition, our Embassy in Moscow continues to raise our concerns, including at Ambassadorial level with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, most recently on 15 January 2021.

■ Tigray: Human Rights

Hilary Benn:

[\[144597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the human rights situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia; and what representations he has made to the Government of Ethiopia on that situation.

James Duddridge:

We are deeply concerned at the mounting evidence of human rights abuses and violations. All parties to the conflict must respect human rights and avoid civilian loss of life at all costs. We have raised our concerns with Ethiopian Ministers, making clear the overriding need to protect civilians and adhere to international law and international human rights law. We continue to call for independent, international, investigations into allegations of human right abuses and violations, and unfettered access to Tigray - points the Foreign Secretary discussed with Prime Minister Abiy in Addis Ababa on 22 January. We also continue to call for the perpetrators of those incidents that are proven to be held to account, whoever they may be. We will continue to make this point in upcoming conversations with the Government of Ethiopia.

■ Tigray: Humanitarian Situation

Hilary Benn:

[\[144596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the humanitarian situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia; and how much assistance the UK is providing to the 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.

■ USA: Genito-urinary Medicine**Taiwo Owatemi:**[\[143928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to work with the US administration improve support for (a) women's health and (b) the work of sexual reproductive rights organisations.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is a proud champion of sexual and reproductive health and rights. We look forward to working with the US government on this shared priority that saves lives and empowers women and girls around the world to claim their rights. This year the UK will use its G7 Presidency to spearhead international action on gender equality.

■ Visas: EU Countries**Sir Desmond Swayne:**[\[143673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether it is a Government priority to negotiate extensions to the 90 in 180 days visa-free visit limit by UK subjects to the EU by means of visa waiver agreements with individual EU states permitted within the Schengen acquis and the UK's Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU.

Wendy Morton:

The Government discussed arrangements with the EU for British Citizens travelling to the Schengen Area. Regrettably, the EU consistently maintained that British Citizens will be treated as Third Country Nationals under the Schengen Borders Code from 1 January 2021. This means that British Citizens will be able to travel visa-free for short stays for up to 90 days in a rolling 180-day period. This is the standard length of stay that the EU offers to nationals of eligible third countries that offer visa-free travel for EU citizens, in line with existing EU legislation. British Citizens planning to stay longer will need permission from the relevant Member State.

The UK's Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU confirms that both the UK and EU currently provide for visa-free travel for short-term visits for each other's nationals in accordance with their respective laws. The detail of those arrangements is set by domestic law. The Government does not typically enter into bilateral agreements on visa-free travel. However, the UK keeps its visa system under regular review, and the new points-based immigration system has been developed in the national interest.

■ Western Sahara: Armed Conflict**Grahame Morris:**[\[144664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the level of application of the Geneva Conventions to the conflict between Western Sahara and Morocco.

James Cleverly:

We continue to monitor closely the situation in Western Sahara and to urge the parties to avoid further escalation, return to the ceasefire agreement, and re-engage with the UN-led political process. The UK's position remains unchanged. We continue to regard the status of Western Sahara as undetermined and fully support the UN's efforts to secure a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the conflict that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**Breast Cancer****Caroline Lucas:**[\[142887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the merits of improving data collection on metastatic breast cancer patients.

Jo Churchill:

No recent assessment has been made.

Recording of secondary cancer, progression, recurrence and transformation, was introduced in version seven of the Cancer Outcomes and Services Dataset (COSD), for diagnoses from 2014. Version nine of the COSD will allow more detail to be recorded about whether a secondary cancer is a progression, recurrence or transformation. It is also designed to make recording more specific and hence improve completeness.

Breast Cancer: Health Services**Liz Twist:**[\[143865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to NICE Clinical Guideline (NG101) Early and Locally Advanced Breast Cancer: Diagnosis and Management (2018), what steps he is taking to ensure that all people who have had treatment for breast cancer have a written care plan including the signs and symptoms to look for of metastatic breast cancer.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS Long Term Plan sets a clear ambition that where appropriate every person diagnosed with cancer should have access to personalised care by 2021. This includes providing personalised care and support planning, and information to support health and wellbeing. The key signs and symptoms of cancer recurrence are included in an end of treatment summary.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are supporting staff to offer personalised care to people affected by cancer by promoting awareness and understanding of the personalised care interventions. This includes providing resources such as a handbook on personalised stratified follow up, a checklist on health and wellbeing

information and support, webinars, and a collaborative online workspace for staff. Cancer Alliances are leading programmes of work to embed personalised care within local providers.

The latest public data from December 2019 show that 94% of trusts offered personalised care and supporting planning for breast cancer patients.

Jane Hunt: [\[143938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to recommendation 46 of Achieving World-Class Cancer Outcomes: A Strategy for Cancer 2015-2020, what proportion of metastatic breast cancer patients have received a holistic needs assessment.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS Long Term Plan, set a clear ambition that where appropriate every person diagnosed with cancer, including those with secondary cancers, should have access to personalised care by 2021, which includes the holistic needs assessment.

The latest public data from December 2019 show that 94% of trusts offered personalised care and supporting planning for breast cancer patients.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Sir John Hayes: [\[138370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cancer patients have had to attend a test, a scan or treatment alone against their wishes since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The information requested is not collected.

Elliot Colburn: [\[143916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to (a) make an assessment of the effectiveness of the NHS Cancer Recovery Plan and (b) provide additional funding to improve capacity in cancer services to tackle the covid-19-outbreak-induced cancer treatment and diagnostic backlogs.

Elliot Colburn: [\[143917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions officials of his Department have had with officials of the Treasury on ensuring that the 2021 Spring Budget includes sufficient funding for cancer (a) diagnostic and (b) treatment services to help tackle the increasing backlogs in those areas that have accrued as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The Cancer Recovery Plan aims to restore urgent referrals at least to pre-pandemic levels, to reduce the number of people waiting over 62 days from urgent referral and ensure sufficient capacity to meet demand. The latest published data for November 2020 showed urgent referrals 2% above pre-pandemic levels, the number of people

waiting over 62 days 24% above pre-pandemic levels and the number of people starting a first cancer treatment within 31 days at 95% of pre-pandemic levels.

In August 2020, the National Health Service announced a £160 million initiative to extend access to 'COVID-friendly' cancer treatments, in October, issued £150 million in funding to expand diagnostic capacity. A further £325 million funding of diagnostics equipment was announced in November's Spending Review and cancer patients will continue to be prioritised within the NHS and will benefit from the additional £1 billion to begin tackling the elective backlog. Departmental officials regularly engage with their counterparts at HM Treasury regarding upcoming fiscal events.

■ Cancer: Screening

Chris Green:

[\[143795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans NHS England has to fund cancer molecular diagnostic tests centrally under the National Tariff Payment System in 2021-22.

Edward Argar:

The 2020/21 National Tariff:

"In addition, from 2020/21, all cancer genetic tests are now reimbursed outside of national prices. The existing funding arrangements will continue for diagnostic tests which have been excluded from tariff since 2015. These tests are: NRAS/KRAS testing, BRAF testing, KIT testing, ALK testing (1), ALK testing (2), Oncotype DX, PD-L1, Prosigna and EnoPredict."

To support this £77.8 million was removed from the tariff. This is from the amount for National Prices and that was supplied to NHS England's specialised commissioning.

These arrangements are proposed to continue and will be part of NHS England and NHS Improvement's consultation on the contents of the 2021/22 National Tariff. The consultation is due imminently.

■ Cervical Cancer: Screening

Derek Twigg:

[\[140746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to ensure that (b) cervical screening is not delayed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak and (b) women are called for their smear tests within the normal timescales.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The continuation of cervical screening services is a priority. National Health Service trusts have been instructed that invitations and appointments should be maintained and that as far as possible staff and facilities should not be redeployed. NHS England and NHS Improvement have issued guidance to support providers to continue to deliver services, including Infection Prevention and Control advice and innovations such as providing screening

appointments in a greater range of venues. Should there be any disruption to local screening services, NHS England and NHS Improvement have a process in place for regional public health commissioning teams to quickly escalate and put in place actions to rapidly address and resolve issues.

■ Children: Disability

Darren Jones:

[\[142044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will bring forward proposals to enable families with disabled children over the age of five to form support bubbles during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

People can form a support bubble if they fulfill the eligibility criteria, including if their household includes a child with a disability who requires continuous care and is under the age of five years old. The eligibility criteria are limited to ensure we strike the right balance between providing support to those most in need and controlling transmission risks.

Whilst a household with a disabled child over five years old may not be able to form a support bubble, there are exemptions from gathering and 'stay at home' restrictions for the purposes of providing care to a vulnerable person and respite care. The Government keeps support bubbles eligibility under continual review and will make changes if the data and science support it.

■ Coronavirus: Children

Mike Amesbury:

[\[142054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many positive cases of covid-19 have been identified in early years childcare settings in each week since 1 January 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

This information is not held in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Cornwall

Luke Pollard:

[\[143091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment SAGE has made of the potential effect on covid-19 transmission rates of the UK hosting the G7 summit in Cornwall in June 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies has made no such assessment.

The United Kingdom is pleased to host the G7 Leaders' Summit in Cornwall in June and to discuss a range of important global issues, including the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and tackling climate change. We intend to host our guests in a way that is safe and secure for all parties.

■ Coronavirus: Death

Naz Shah: [144707]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the weekly data is on deaths as a result of covid-19 from October 2020 to date.

Naz Shah: [144709]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the weekly data is on deaths as a result of covid-19 from October 2020 to date, by ethnicity.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) reports weekly numbers of deaths in England in people with a laboratory-confirmed positive COVID-19 test, who died within 28 days of the first positive specimen date. This data is reported in the weekly National Flu and COVID-19 Surveillance report, which is available at the following link:

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

PHE also reports the weekly proportion of these deaths by ethnic group. This is available in the weekly surveillance reports.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Layla Moran: [107735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many local authorities in England who applied to the National Silver and Gold Committees to move up a tier of the local covid alert levels had their applications (a) accepted and (b) rejected by the Gold Committee; and when those requests were made.

Layla Moran: [107736]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which local authorities in England have applied to the National Silver and Gold Committees to move up a tier of the local covid alert levels; which of those local authorities had their application (a) accepted and (b) rejected by the Gold Committee; and when each of those applications was made.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: There is no application process for local authorities to ask the 'Gold' or 'Silver' committees to change their tier their area is in.

Paul Blomfield: [143746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing two children under the age of 12 to meet outdoors with an adult present as part of the covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced in January 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

It is against the law for anyone, including children under 12 years old to meet socially with friends outdoors, including if an adult is present, unless they are part of their

household or support bubble. Under the current restrictions, individuals cannot leave home for recreational or leisure purposes.

The Government keeps its restrictions under continual review and will make changes if the data and science supports it.

■ Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups

Naz Shah: [144708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the weekly data is of covid-19 infection from October 2020 to date, by ethnicity.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England publishes the weekly incidence of COVID-19 cases by ethnicity in the weekly National Flu and COVID-19 Surveillance report, which is available at the following link:

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

■ Coronavirus: Hospitals

Helen Hayes: [139069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2021 to Question 134007, what engagement he has had with unions and staff associations representing NHS staff and outsourced staff working in hospitals on staff affected by (a) long covid and (b) other longer-term health complications arising from covid-19.

Helen Hayes: [139070]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2021 to Question 134007, what discussions he has had with NHS England, NHS trusts and foundation trusts and organisations providing outsourced services in hospitals on support for staff affected by (a) long covid and (b) other longer-term health complications arising from covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 January 2021]: The Department is currently working to clarify how National Health Service staff will be supported when their COVID-19 illness becomes long-term, and as part of this is consulting stakeholders.

COVID-19 is a new disease and therefore it is not clear what the medical, psychological and rehabilitation needs will be for those experiencing long-term effects of the virus.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have provided a £10 million investment package to support people with 'long' COVID-19. As part of the investment, 69 post COVID-19 assessment service centres are operational across England. A further 12 'long' COVID-19 assessment centres are expected to be available shortly.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[142787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of making the wearing of face masks compulsory in public spaces.

Jo Churchill:

The wearing of face coverings is already mandatory in most indoor, public settings in England. However, the legal requirement for wearing a face covering has not been extended to outdoor public spaces. The Regulations and guidance currently apply to indoor settings as there is stronger scientific evidence about the risk of transmission being greater in enclosed, indoor spaces where social distancing cannot necessarily be maintained. It is this risk that wearing a face covering will help reduce.

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[143034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of containers storing personal protective equipment (PPE) held at British ports; what assessment he has made of (a) the type and (b) the expiration dates of PPE held in those containers and (c) whether it is compliant with required safety standards.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: The Department has a storage network in place that lets us access and manage our personal protective equipment (PPE) supply to meet demand throughout the winter. We currently hold fewer than 400 shipping containers at British ports.

Clipper, our logistics partner, manages the PPE distribution centre in Daventry. They have a stock audit team who undertake a rolling audit of all the PPE in the warehouses. As part of the audit activity, expiry dates for PPE are captured in a stock management system, enabling us to ensure that the PPE we supply is in date and of the required standard.

We are closely monitoring storage capacity across the United Kingdom on a routine basis and the Department has identified several options to increase storage capacity if needed.

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[143683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to promote the use of clear face masks to improve communication; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

In the second half of 2020, the Department procured 250,000 transparent face masks from ClearMask. These masks were piloted in health and social care settings and feedback from users was assessed. Following this pilot, we will be running a broader assessment of products from a range of manufacturers to inform future procurement. We are clear that we want to deliver sufficient volumes of good quality, clinically

secure transparent masks to the relevant clinical and care specialisms that need them.

In non-clinical settings, transparent face coverings have been suggested by some stakeholders as a helpful way to enable communication for those who rely on lip reading. We are not currently promoting transparent face coverings due to a lack of scientific evidence of their effectiveness. The Government will be guided by the scientific evidence emerging in this area.

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine

Dan Jarvis:

[\[140085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the shielding advice for clinically extremely vulnerable people to all members of their household.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: Current advice is that people who live in a household with someone that is considered clinically extremely vulnerable do not have to shield themselves. Shielding advice is only for the individual considered clinically extremely vulnerable.

The guidance to clinically extremely vulnerable people and their households is regularly reviewed and the Government will not hesitate to make changes if necessary.

Sarah Olney:

[\[141574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the transmission of covid-19 of exempting arrivals to the UK who have received a covid-19 vaccine from quarantine restrictions.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: At this stage of vaccination, the Government cannot fully assess any impact that COVID-19 vaccines may have on transmission of the virus. Once more information regarding transmission is available, the Government will be able to assess the potential effects of quarantine for those who have already received a vaccine.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[132950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on prioritising unpaid carers for a covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at

a population level. For the first phase, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors.

Those who are in receipt of a carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill, should also be offered vaccination in priority group six. This includes unpaid carers.

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[133225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the letter sent to pharmacists by NHS England on 27 November 2020, when pharmacists will be given contracts to administer the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Following NHS England and NHS Improvement's letter on 27 November 2020 all pharmacies that had applied to become a designated vaccination site received letters regarding their application on 18 December 2020 as planned.

Matt Vickers:

[\[136095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure covid-19 vaccine targets will be met.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

- all residents in a care home for older adults and their carers;
- everyone over the age of 70 years old;
- all frontline health and social care workers; and
- those who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

As of 29 January, over 7 million of the most vulnerable people in the United Kingdom had received their first jab and there are now over 2,700 sites across the UK offering vaccines to those at risk by age and clinical priority. In England, 96% of the population is within 10 miles of a vaccine service and by the end of January, everyone will live within 10 miles of a vaccination service. In a small number of highly rural areas, the vaccination centre will be a mobile unit.

Robert Largin:

[\[136097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to provide covid-19 vaccinations for unpaid carers of disabled people.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

Priority group six, include all individuals aged 16 to 64 years old with certain underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality. In this priority group are those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill, should also be offered vaccination alongside those with underlying health conditions.

Neale Hanvey:

[136641]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the lengthened time between vaccine doses on clinically extremely vulnerable people who are immuno-compromised; and whether his Department plans to administer second doses sooner to those people.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations (JCVI) advises the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation. After studying all the available data, the JCVI concluded that the first dose of both vaccines currently deployed provides substantial protection within two to three weeks of vaccination from severe COVID-19 infection.

The second vaccine dose is important to sustain the protection and extend its duration. In the short term however, the additional impact of the second dose is likely to be modest and most of the initial protection from clinical disease is after the first dose of vaccine. The four UK Chief Medical Officers agreed with the JCVI that at this stage of the pandemic prioritising the first doses of vaccine for as many people as possible on the priority list would protect the greatest number of at-risk people in the shortest possible time.

Operationally this means that second doses of both vaccines will be administered towards the end of the recommended vaccine dosing schedule of 12 weeks. This will maximise the number of people getting the vaccine and receiving protection within the next 12 weeks.

The JCVI's statement on changing of the dose interval is available at the following link:

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

Sarah Olney:

[138001]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of classifying staff of school students with special needs as frontline health and care staff for the rollout of the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 19 January 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advises that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be to reduce COVID-19 mortality and protect the health and social

care staff and systems. As a result, they have based their prioritisation largely on age and those with clinical risk factors aged 16 years old and above.

The Department is continuing to work with its partners to understand what this means for teachers and staff working in special needs schools. The current advice states that if someone is regularly working with clinically extremely vulnerable individuals or those who have underlying health conditions, they should receive the vaccine in line with social care workers. The local authority Director of Adult Social Services should have ultimate responsibility for identifying eligible social care workers, underlined by the principle aim of achieving high rates of vaccination amongst frontline social care workers who work closely and regularly with those who are clinically vulnerable to COVID-19.

Daniel Zeichner:

[138458]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that students registered at a term-time GP practice and residing in that location during the covid-19 outbreak will not be encouraged to travel to a different part of the country to receive a covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

General practitioners (GPs) will invite their registered patients, including students, for vaccination at the appropriate moment, depending on which cohort the patient is part of. Students can register as a temporary resident at another GP practice, in cases where they intend to be in an area for more than 24 hours but less than three months.

If a student has not moved their GP practice registration to their place of study and has a national invitation letter sent to their home address, they will still be able to book a vaccination at a site local to their place of study. They can enter any postcode on the National Booking System to identify a vaccination centre or community pharmacy providing vaccinations locally.

Barry Gardiner:

[138846]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many individual doses of the (a) Pfizer Biontech vaccine and (b) Oxford Astra Zeneca vaccine (i) had been distributed to each of the seven NHS regions in England and (ii) were being held centrally by 5pm on 15 Friday January 2021.

Barry Gardiner:

[138847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the proportion of the individual doses of the (a) Pfizer Biontech vaccine and (b) Astra Zeneca vaccine that were distributed to each of the seven English NHS regions before 5pm on 15 January 2021 corresponded to the number of people aged 80 and over and recorded by NHS England as living in each region, as a proportion of the total number of people aged 80 and over in England as a whole.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 21 January 2021]: The number of individual doses of the Pfizer BioNTech and the Oxford/Astra Zeneca COVID-19 vaccines held centrally is not

available in the format requested as stock holdings are not static and are constantly changing.

Dawn Butler: [138892]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how covid-19 vaccination roll-outs are being prioritised by (a) region, (b) local authority area and (c) constituency area; and how many covid-19 vaccines have been successfully administered by (a) region, (b) local authority area and (c) constituency area.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 21 January 2021]: Targeted deliveries are being made to areas where there are more people left to vaccinate in the priority cohorts, proportionate to the at-risk population they have registered.

Since 24 December 2020, we have published weekly data on the total number of vaccinations in the over 80 year olds and under in England. From 11 January 2021, daily data for England has been published showing the total number vaccinated to date, including first and second doses. Since 14 January and on a weekly basis, NHS England and NHS Improvement has published more detailed data on vaccinations in England, including by region. The latest data is available at the following links:

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

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/>

Stephen Doughty: [139001]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what formula is being used for the allocation of covid-19 vaccine supplies to the devolved Administrations.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 21 January 2021]: To ensure vaccines are shared equitably across the United Kingdom, the Barnett formula is used to calculate vaccine supply allocations to the devolved Administrations.

Marsha De Cordova: [139128]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure an equitable distribution of the covid-19 vaccine across parliamentary constituencies.

Nadhim Zahawi:

All available vaccine doses are being delivered to vaccination sites regularly. Targeted deliveries are being made to areas where there are more people left to vaccinate in the priority cohorts, proportionate to the at-risk population they have registered. This should allow any existing disparities to be addressed. The opening of more Community pharmacies and additional vaccination centres across the country will ensure access for everyone.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[140034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to ensure that rural areas can effectively (a) store and (b) distribute covid-19 vaccinations.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The National Health Service, alongside its health and social care partners have developed three different delivery models which will operate concurrently to provide flexibility in our approach and ensure the entire population has access to the vaccine regardless of their location. This includes delivery through hospital hubs, local vaccination services and vaccination centres.

The COVID-19 vaccine programme has expanded rapidly in the last month, with over 2,700 vaccination sites currently in operation across the United Kingdom. For those in highly rural areas this will be achieved via local vaccination services providing mobile units to go directly to isolated rural communities.

Stephen McPartland:

[140064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 vaccinations per day are being undertaken by mass covid-19 vaccination centres.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: All vaccination services, including general practitioner and pharmacy local vaccination services, hospital hubs and vaccination centres, are delivering vaccinations in line with available supply. Across all services, over 8 million vaccinations have been delivered. We will continue to make more sites available to local communities.

Dan Carden:

[140247]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the Government's strategy for ensuring housebound people in high priority groups can receive a covid-19 vaccination.

Helen Hayes:

[141544]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure covid-19 vaccines reach people who are housebound and unable to attend a vaccination centre.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: The National Health Service, alongside its health and social care partners have developed three different delivery models which will operate concurrently to provide flexibility in our approach and ensure the entire population has access to the vaccine. This includes delivery through hospital hubs, local vaccination services and vaccination centres.

Local vaccination services are well placed to support the specific needs of our highest risk individuals, including those unable to leave their home. Working together in Primary Care Networks and community pharmacies, they are able to coordinate

and deliver vaccines to the homes of those who are housebound via mobile units as set out in the United Kingdom COVID-19 vaccines delivery plan.

Caroline Lucas:

[141418]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on the prioritisation of people for vaccination against covid-19 who care for and live with adult dependents with high needs; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. For the first phase, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors. Those who are in receipt of a carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill, should also be offered vaccination in priority group six.

Jo Gideon:

[141626]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of prioritising (a) teachers, (b) refuse collectors and (c) all key workers for the covid-19 vaccine after the existing priority groups have been vaccinated.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. For the first phase, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population over 50 years old, in order of age and including some younger people with particular clinical risk factors.

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

Afzal Khan:

[143084]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of prioritising people working with the homeless community for covid-19 vaccinations.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should

use and provide advice on prioritisation of a COVID-19 vaccine at a population level. For the first phase, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors which includes people who are clinically extremely vulnerable and/or have underlying health conditions.

The JCVI set out, that priority be given to frontline staff at high risk of acquiring infection, and at risk of transmitting infection to multiple vulnerable persons or other staff in a healthcare environment. Homelessness workers may fall under frontline healthcare workers or frontline social care workers.

Afzal Khan:

[143085]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of prioritising homeless people for covid-19 vaccinations.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

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

Marco Longhi:

[143137]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the contraindication to receiving a covid-19 vaccine applied to people having previously experienced anaphylaxis has been removed for those patients if they receive the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine; and whether those people can be recommended to receive that vaccine in lieu of the Pfizer vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: Neither the Pfizer nor Oxford University/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines should be given to those who have had a previous systemic allergic reaction, including immediate-onset anaphylaxis, to a previous dose of the same COVID-19 vaccine or any component of the vaccine.

The Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 mRNA Vaccine BNT162b2 contains polyethylene glycol (PEG). PEGs are a group of known allergens commonly found in medicines, many household products and cosmetics. Known allergy to PEG is very rare but would contraindicate receipt of this vaccine. The AstraZeneca vaccine does not

contain PEG and may be used as an alternative. Whether PEG is the cause of reactions in patients with systemic allergic symptoms after the first dose of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is unclear. Such patients may be considered for a second dose using the AstraZeneca vaccine and should be observed for 30 minutes following vaccination.

Kim Johnson:

[143153]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will include people with mild to moderate learning difficulties in the covid-19 vaccination priority list.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation of a COVID-19 vaccine at a population level. For the first phase, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors which includes people who are clinically extremely vulnerable and/or have underlying health conditions.

Adults with severe or profound learning difficulties are considered to be 'at risk' and adults with Down's Syndrome are included as priorities the first phase. Prioritisation decisions for next phase delivery are subject to of the surveillance and monitoring data and information from phase one, as well as further input from independent scientific experts such as the JCVI.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[143732]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all individuals in the most vulnerable groups receive their covid-19 vaccination before the mid-February target deadline.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Almost 9 million people have now received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and nearly 500,000 have now received their second dose. By 15 of February, we aim to have offered a first vaccine dose to everyone in the top four priority groups identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

In England, by the end of January, our capacity to vaccinate several hundred thousand a day and at least two million people per week will be achieved by establishing 206 active hospital hub sites, around 1,200 local vaccination service sites and 50 vaccination centres.

Hilary Benn:

[144598]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who do not have an NHS number are able to receive the covid-19 vaccine in the UK.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Whilst a National Health Service number might be used for administration purposes, having an NHS number is not a pre-requisite to be offered the vaccine. The provision

of the COVID-19 vaccine is a primary medical service and will be offered to all individuals living in the United Kingdom.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[144634]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the efficacy of the Pfizer-BioNTech covid-19 vaccine after twelve weeks.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee for Vaccinations and Immunisations (JCVI) advises a two-dose vaccine schedule for the Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca vaccines. The JCVI advises a maximum interval between the first and second doses of 12 weeks. The JCVI has considered published data on the effectiveness of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, where follow up extended to around thirteen weeks after the second dose.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Ministerial Powers

Jonathan Ashworth:

[145024]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) subject, (b) date and (c) reason was for each Ministerial Direction he has issued since 1 February 2020.

Edward Argar:

Ministerial Directions are published on GOV.UK. A Ministerial Direction was published on 30 March 2020 which authorised spend on urgent COVID-19 issues by the Department and its arms' length bodies. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-ministerial-direction-on-spend>

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Kate Hollern:

[143770]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to respond to Questions 135958 and 136535, tabled by the hon. Member for Blackburn.

Edward Argar:

We take parliamentary scrutiny incredibly seriously and it is fundamentally important that hon. Members are provided with accurate and timely information to enable them to hold the Government to account. We are working rapidly to provide all Members with accurate answers to their questions, as well as supporting the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

■ Disease Control and Public Health: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[140196]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to continue funding infection prevention and control support to public health teams.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: Through listening to our local government counterparts, the Contain Outbreak Management Fund was expanded from the initial £400 million made available in May and to date, the Fund has committed over £975 million. Progressing into 2021, we will deliver further funding to support local authorities, to continue the development and delivery of their COVID-19 response. This further funding, potentially worth over £225 million per month, recognises the ongoing activities undertaken by public health teams and the outbreak management costs to local authorities of tackling COVID-19. This may include activities such as targeted testing for hard-to-reach groups; additional contact tracing; enhanced communication and marketing; or additional support for compliance and enforcement.

■ **Earwax: Medical Treatments****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[117198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what advice his Department has provided to (a) patients and (b) health professionals on the most appropriate alternative forms of treatment and support available in CCG areas where a decision has been made not to provide wax removal services on the NHS.

Edward Argar:

Provision of ear syringing is an example of an enhanced service. Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) make decisions about which enhanced services to offer based on the needs of the local population or value for money.

If build-up of earwax is linked with hearing loss, then general practitioners (GPs) can consider referring the patient into audiology services.

In areas where CCGs don't provide wax removal services on the National Health Service, GPs are increasingly recommending self-care methods in the first instance as this avoids the risks associated with syringing, for example trauma to the ear drum/infection.

■ **Epilepsy: Diagnosis****Valerie Vaz:**[\[137919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the costs to the NHS of epilepsy misdiagnosis in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 19 January 2021]: No such estimate has been made.

■ **Epilepsy: Pregnancy****Valerie Vaz:**[\[138944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that healthcare professionals are aware of the findings of the safety review of

epilepsy medicines in pregnancy, published by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency on 7 January 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 January 2021]: The conclusions of the Commission on Human Medicines' safety review were communicated to healthcare professional via the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's (MHRA) Drug Safety Update bulletin and an accompanying public assessment report. A news release and social media accompanied the publication alongside email alerts that targeted relevant healthcare professionals, prescribing publications and professional organisations. The MHRA is also working with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Association of British Neurologists to update relevant clinical guidance to reflect the findings of the review. The impact of this review and the uptake of communications will be monitored and consideration be given to the need for further communications to healthcare professionals.

Valerie Vaz:

[138945]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 2.99 of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review, what progress has been made on the establishment of a registry for all women prescribed antiepileptic drugs who become pregnant.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 January 2021]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is working with NHS Digital to develop a registry to monitor the use of valproate and compliance with the current regulatory position, and to monitor any children born to women on valproate. A report detailing the findings from the first stage of the registry, which linked data to provide information on all women currently prescribed valproate in England and any exposed pregnancies, is planned shortly. This will then be extended, including to women in the devolved regions, and further developed to include all women prescribed an antiepileptic drug.

Valerie Vaz:

[141434]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that clinicians are discussing with women and girls the risks of taking sodium valproate and other anti-epileptic drugs (AEDs) during pregnancy.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) ensures that documents forming the basis of the valproate Pregnancy Prevention Programme are available electronically and distributed regularly as hard copies to prescribers and pharmacists to support discussions of the risks of taking sodium valproate during pregnancy with women and girls who require this medicine. Healthcare professionals have been reminded of their responsibility to inform women and girls taking valproate of the risks, through letters from the United Kingdom's Chief Medical Officers and Chief Pharmaceutical Officers

and by articles in the MHRA's electronic bulletin Drug Safety Update. The conclusions of a safety review by the Commission of Human Medicines of the risks of other epilepsy medicines in pregnancy have recently been published to aid discussions about the most suitable treatment options.

The MHRA is working with the wider healthcare network to explore additional ways of improving the reach of regulatory communications through platforms in the healthcare and patient setting. The MHRA is working to establish a registry to monitor the use of valproate in women and girls and clinician and patient compliance with the current regulatory position.

■ Eyesight: Digital Technology

Rosie Cooper: [\[141947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on eyesight of increased screen time during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

We have made no such assessment.

■ General Practitioners: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[140238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) GP phone reception capacity and (b) the ability of patients to book appointments in (a) Slough and (b) England.

Jo Churchill:

The data requested on general practitioner (GP) phone reception capacity is not collected or held centrally.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working through its seven regions, including Slough, to ensure patients can access appointments in general practice.

A £150 million General Practice Covid Capacity Expansion Fund has been made available to support expanding GP capacity up to the end of March 2021. Priorities include increasing GP numbers and capacity, identifying and supporting patients with 'long' COVID-19 and continuing to support clinically extremely vulnerable patients.

■ Health Services: Artificial Intelligence

Stephen Metcalfe: [\[138952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to promote the use of (a) the quality and outcomes framework and (b) other incentive models to ensure the adequate uptake of proven AI health technologies at a local level.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The National Health Service Artificial Intelligence (AI) Laboratory was set up in 2019 to support the safe and ethical development and deployment of AI across health and

care. The AI in Health and Care Awards will channel £140 million of funding to AI innovation.

The NHS AI Laboratory, is also developing the evidence base for technologies and providing guidance on best practice.

■ Health Services: Standards

Sir John Hayes:

[138371]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the premature loss of life that will result from missed diagnosis and treatment of non-Covid-related conditions over the next 50 years.

Edward Argar:

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies published a paper 'Direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 on excess deaths and morbidity' in July 2020. The paper was updated in September 2020 and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsconsgadho-direct-and-indirect-impacts-of-covid-19-on-excess-deaths-and-morbidity-15-july-2020>

■ Health: Disadvantaged

Jonathan Ashworth:

[141459]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of existing health inequalities on the spread of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: On 22 October the Minister for Equalities, (Kemi Badenoch MP) published the first quarterly report to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on progress to tackle COVID-19 disparities experienced by individuals from an ethnic minority background, making 13 recommendations. This includes reviewing the effectiveness and impact of current actions being undertaken by Government departments as well as taking action to modify existing policy and policy in development, to address these disparities. All of which the Prime Minister has accepted.

■ HIV Infection: Drugs

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[143117]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Black African communities are (a) aware of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and (b) able to access PrEP.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: In March 2020, we announced that pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) will be routinely available across England in 2020/21 as part of the Government's aim to end HIV transmission by 2030. This year we provided £11

million to local authorities for routine commissioning of PrEP and this is already in place in the majority of areas.

HIV Prevention England is the national HIV prevention campaign funded by Public Health England (PHE) and delivered by Terrence Higgins Trust. It aims to promote evidence-based safer-sex and HIV prevention interventions such as PrEP to black African communities, men who have sex with men and other groups in which there is a higher or emerging burden of infection. HIV Prevention England's campaign in October 2020 focussed on raising awareness of HIV PrEP in black African Communities.

PHE also runs the Innovation Fund which supports volunteer organisations spearheading new approaches to HIV prevention, including PrEP and focuses on engaging at-risk or under-served communities.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[143118]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to provide funding to public health teams in London boroughs to raise awareness of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) with (a) targeted and (b) culturally appropriate messages for Black communities.

Jo Churchill:

In March 2020, we announced that pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) will be routinely available across England in 2020/21 as part of the Government's aim to end HIV transmission by 2030. This year we provided £11 million to local authorities for routine commissioning of PrEP and this is already in place in the majority of areas.

The Department and Public Health England continue to work closely with local authorities across England, including in London, as well as with other stakeholders to support the roll-out of routine commissioning of PrEP. This includes a package of information and resources shared with local authorities in July. Funding for health promotion activities in specific areas, including for PrEP is the responsibility of local authorities in those areas.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[143119]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of (a) the level of access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for groups at highest risk for HIV infection and (b) whether the funding allocated to the PrEP roll-out in 2020-21 is sufficient to meet demand.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: The Government provided £11 million ring-fenced funding to local authorities for routine commissioning of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in 2020/21, which has been assessed as meeting PrEP need this year. Routine commissioning of PrEP will benefit tens of thousands of people at highest risk of HIV infection and, along with other measures, will take us closer to our ambition of zero HIV transmissions by 2030.

Public Health England, in collaboration with stakeholders, is currently developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the routine commissioning of PrEP. This will use established surveillance systems and include measures of PrEP need and use among key population groups to inform equitable delivery and access. These data will be published in routine sexually transmitted infection and human immunodeficiency virus surveillance outputs in 2021.

■ HIV Infection: Ethnic Groups

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[143120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent late diagnosis of HIV among (a) Black Africans, (b) Black Caribbeans and (c) other members of Black communities.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: Local authorities are responsible for providing services which help to prevent late diagnosis of HIV in their communities. Public Health England (PHE) provides local authorities with data on late HIV diagnosis rates to support commissioning to improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities.

HIV Prevention England, the national HIV prevention campaign funded by PHE and delivered by the Terrence Higgins Trust, aims to promote HIV testing to reduce undiagnosed and late HIV diagnoses in black African communities, men who have sex with men and other groups in which there is a higher or emerging burden of infection.

PHE's Innovation Fund has supported a range of projects between 2017 and 2020 that tested and evaluated new approaches to reducing late diagnoses and increasing testing among the most affected populations.

■ Hospitals: Admissions

Afzal Khan:

[\[143896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of issuing guidance to allow people admitted to hospital who are (a) vulnerable, (b) suffering mental health deterioration and (c) unable to speak English to be accompanied by a member of their family.

Edward Argar:

The current guidance, published on 13 October 2020, recommends that patients may be accompanied where appropriate and necessary to assist their health and/or communication needs, providing essential support to patients in a COVID-19 secure way.

Hospitals: Coronavirus**Sir Mark Hendrick:**[\[142789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what emergency plans are in place in the event that there are shortfalls in hospital oxygen supplies during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

In England the supply chain has significant capacity to meet large surges in demand and delivery of oxygen to hospital tanks is not a limiting factor. There is no national shortage of oxygen.

National Health Service hospitals are carefully managing their oxygen flow and infrastructure to manage the current need and have deployed a number of contingency measures such as improved monitoring and maintenance of their oxygen systems to ensure they are operating at maximum efficiency. Before the winter, over 30 upgrade projects were completed to improve the long term oxygen and medical supply infrastructure within hospitals. The NHS has invested £15 million to date and further improvements continue to be carried out.

Hospitals: Digital Technology**Navendu Mishra:**[\[140298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support digital infrastructure investment in hospitals.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHSX is continuing to work with providers to improve integrated care systems through the Digital Aspirant programme, to digitise capabilities and ensure that services transform to maximise the opportunities that technology offers. In 2020/21 the Digital Aspirant programme is supporting 23 trusts to continue their digital journey and we are planning to support further trusts over the next few years.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Medical Treatments**Rosie Cooper:**[\[142842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps NHS RightCare has taken to tackle variations in the treatment of inflammatory bowel disease.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have advised that the NHS RightCare team are currently working on an inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) scenario. A working draft of the IBD scenario is with Crohn's and Colitis UK for review, prior to sharing with stakeholders for comment.

■ Influenza

Sir David Amess:

[\[144581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many confirmed hospital admissions for influenza there have been in each year since January 2019.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not held in the format requested.

Public Health England records cases of severe influenza with data from a sentinel network of National Health Service trusts which report voluntarily on a weekly basis on hospitalisation to all levels of care for laboratory confirmed influenza. However, as this data comes from a sentinel network of trusts, a stable network of trusts that participate every season and commit to providing weekly data, it is therefore not designed to capture all hospitalisations of influenza in England.

■ Mental Health Services

Philip Davies:

[\[140015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of trends in the rate of referrals to mental health services in 2020 for (a) adults and (b) children compared to previous years.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The information in the attached table shows that adult and child referrals to secondary mental health, learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorder services increased during the first and second month of 2020 compared with 2019. Referrals then decreased from March and increased again from June onwards. Data for November and December 2020 have not yet been published. We have provided the last two years of data, to data quality.

Attachments:

1. Adult and child secondary mental health referrals [TABLE FOR PQ140015 .docx]

■ Mental Health Services: Mothers

Sarah Olney:

[\[142039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the £19 million spent in capital in 2020 on central programmes to support mental health services was spent on schemes to deliver Perinatal Mental Health Mother and Baby Units.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 27 January 2021]: Between 2017/18-2018/19, £14.8 million central capital funding was provided to four trusts as part of our programme for perinatal mental health mother and baby units. The units provide in-patient support for women and their babies with the most complex and severe needs that require hospital care, who are experiencing severe mental health crisis including very serious conditions like post-partum psychosis.

Capital spending figures for 2019/20 will be included in the Department's Annual Report and Accounts, to be published shortly on GOV.UK.

■ **Mental Health Services: Napier Barracks**

Apsana Begum:

[139187]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what mental health support is in place for detainees at Napier Barracks in Folkstone; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the conditions at Napier Barracks on detainees' mental health.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 January 2021]: Overall responsibility for the site sits with the Home Office who provide the services available on site.

Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is the delegated CCG which has responsibility for healthcare for the vulnerable group of residents. All residents are registered with one general practitioner (GP) practice and there is an agency nurse on site. The residents can access mental health services through the GP practice. The nurse provides an outreach primary care service on site. Translation services are provided to make sure residents can access the care they need, if they cannot speak English.

■ **Mental Health Services: West Midlands**

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[140751]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve mental health support to reduce levels of suicide in (a) Sutton Coldfield and (b) the West Midlands.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In January 2019, we published the first Cross-Government Suicide Prevention Workplan. It will see every local authority, mental health trust and prison in the country implementing suicide prevention policies. Every local authority now has a multi-agency suicide prevention plan in place and we are working with local government to assure the effectiveness of those plans.

Coventry and Warwickshire sustainability and transformation partnership (STP), which includes Sutton Coldfield, has received £352,000 in 2018/19, £352,000 in 2019/20 and £185,304 in 2020/21 for suicide prevention.

In 2020/21, Birmingham and Solihull STP received £252,595 for suicide prevention, Black Country and West Birmingham STP received £280,078, Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent STP received £300,000 and Herefordshire and Worcestershire STP received £152,187.

■ Mental Health: Children

Chi Onwurah:

[\[142924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what research he is undertaking to assess the effect on children's mental health of their social contact moving online as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The Department, through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), has funded or supported various studies into the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people's mental health. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the NIHR jointly launched the Rapid Response Rolling Call to fund research that aimed to understand, prevent, or manage COVID-19. Four studies were funded into the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people's mental health.

■ NHS: Protective Clothing

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[144774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that all frontline NHS workers have access to FFP3 masks.

Jo Churchill:

For workers in the National Health Service, infection prevention and control guidance, which is published on GOV.UK and updated most recently on 21 January 2021, sets out the occasions when an FFP3 mask should be used.

By December 2020, we had built a four-month stockpile of COVID-19 critical personal protective equipment, including FFP3 masks. We are confident we have a secure supply for frontline workers in the NHS.

■ Nivolumab

Chris Bryant:

[\[132783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure the continuation of Cancer Drugs Fund funding for patients needing adjuvant nivolumab in high risk resected malignant melanoma groups.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Cancer Drugs Fund (CDF) is now linked to the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) technology appraisal programme.

In the case of nivolumab for adjuvant treatment of completely resected melanoma with lymph node involvement or metastatic disease, this drug has been available to eligible National Health Service patients through the CDF in accordance with NICE's recommendation in January 2019.

NICE is now reviewing this decision and published its draft recommendation in November 2020. NICE was unable to recommend nivolumab for routine funding in its

draft guidance. However, this is not final guidance and a consultation on the draft recommendations closed on 25 November. NICE will now consider the responses to the draft recommendation at the committee meeting on 5 January 2021 and expects to publish its final guidance in March 2021.

■ **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder: Children and Young People**

Helen Hayes:

[134011]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2021 to Question 126928, what routine monitoring his Department undertakes of obsessive compulsive disorder Tier 4 services for children and young people; and how his Department assesses performance of those services in terms of (a) waiting times and (b) outcomes for patients.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The national obsessive compulsive disorder service submits monthly and quarterly performance reports through the routine contract monitoring process. NHS England and NHS Improvement have reported that there is no identified unmet demand or waiting list for children and young people admissions to tier 4 services currently. Clinical and patient outcomes for the service are monitored by NHS England and NHS Improvement through the national specialised services quality dashboard for obsessive compulsive disorders.

Helen Hayes:

[136019]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2021 to Question 126931 on Obsessive Compulsive Disorder: Children and Young People, what monitoring his Department undertakes on the length of stays in institutions contracted to provide national obsessive compulsive disorder Tier 4 services for children and young people; and for what reasons the average length of such stays in such institutions is not monitored.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: National obsessive compulsive disorder tier 4 services are commissioned by NHS England and NHS Improvement and delivered by three mental health providers. Information on length of stays is not collected at national level and we understand that individual providers monitor the length of stay of patients as part of the national service.

Helen Hayes:

[136020]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2021 to Question 126930 on Obsessive Compulsive Disorder: Children and Young People, what recent assessment his Department has made of the availability of beds for national obsessive compulsive disorder Tier 4 services for children and young people; and what recent discussions he has had with the institutions listed in that Answer on the current capacity for such Tier 4 services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement routinely engage with the national obsessive compulsive disorder service providers through the contract monitoring process and has reported that there is no identified unmet demand or waiting list for children and young people admissions to tier 4 services currently.

Referrals to this level of service are only considered when the six steps in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's clinical guideline on obsessive-compulsive disorder and body dysmorphic disorder: treatment (CG31) have been exhausted for the patient. Onward referral for tier 4 admission is consequently submitted to the national service for consideration.

Helen Hayes:**[136021]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2021 to Question 126929 on Obsessive Compulsive Disorder: Children and Young People, if he will make an assessment of the level of risk of suicide and self harm for children and young people waiting to access national obsessive compulsive disorder Tier 4 services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: The small number of children and young people who require access to the Tier 4 national services are under the care of community teams commissioned by their local clinical commissioning group who have overall responsibility of monitoring patient risks such as suicide and self-harm. NHS England and NHS Improvement have reported that there is no identified unmet demand or waiting list for children and young people admissions to Tier 4 services currently.

■ Oxygen: Blood Tests**Chi Onwurah:****[141981]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of oxygen blood level tests such as pulse oximeters in patients with darker skins.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 27 January 2021]: Pulse oximeters are regulated as medical devices and fall within the remit of the United Kingdom's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

The MHRA is aware of the potential impact of skin colour on pulse oximeter readings, although no reports of incorrect results due to this factor have been received. Clinicians do not depend entirely upon these readings, instead using them in combination with other diagnostic indicators.

The MHRA will continue to monitor the safety and performance of pulse oximeters. If concerning evidence arises over results interpreted in a clinical setting for patients

with darker skin pigments, the MHRA will undertake any necessary investigation, reviewing compliance in line with regulations and international standards.

■ Podiatry

Neil Coyle:

[\[140115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the answer of 25 November 2020 to Question 117281, what assessment his Department been made of the long term sustainability of podiatry.

Jo Churchill:

As part of the NHS Long Term Plan, allied health professionals (AHPs), including podiatrists, were highlighted as being able to significantly support areas of increasing demand for treatment due to diseases such as diabetes.

Podiatry is acknowledged as a profession in shortage due to a small amount of training providers, with the NHS workforce decreasing over recent years. To tackle these issues, the Government has introduced the new, non-repayable, training grant of at least £5,000 per academic year in September 2020, for all eligible new and continuing pre-registration nursing, midwifery and most allied health profession students, including podiatrists, studying at English universities.

■ Prescription Drugs

Cat Smith:

[\[137238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many prescriptions were issued for each drug categorised under the drug groups (a) benzodiazepines including clonazepam, (b) z-drugs, (c) antidepressants and (d) opioids in the (i) last 12 months for which figures are available and (ii) most recent comparative 12 month period prior to the last 12 months period for which those figures are available.

Jo Churchill:

The following table shows the number of items that were prescribed in England for benzodiazepines including clonazepam, z-drugs, antidepressants and opioids in the latest two full years of available data.

TIME PERIOD (12 MONTHS AGGREGATED)	BENZODIAZEPINES INCLUDING CLONAZEPAM		OPIOID ANALGESICS	
		Z-DRUGS	ANTIDEPRESSANTS	
November 2018 to 9,184,594 October 2019		5,840,375	74,211,675	23,398,430
November 2019 to 8,925,206 October 2020		5,694,737	77,973,765	23,255,294

Source:

NHS Business Service Authority Information Services ePACT2 system.

■ Secure Psychiatric Units

Derek Twigg:

[\[141921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 January to Question 136451 on Secure Psychiatric Units, how many assaults there were on (a) staff and (b) patients in each local authority area from 2018 to 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 27 January 2021]: The Mental Health Services Data Set does not record information on incidents of assault on staff.

■ Telemedicine

Stephen Metcalfe:

[\[138953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has in place to strengthen outpatient care online to ensure that appropriate patients and clinicians have access to remote diagnostics alongside remote consultation.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The first four phases of the Artificial Intelligence in Health and Care award included innovations in remote diagnostics, including the Neuronostics Limited smartphone-based app which can receive EEG recordings from wireless headsets to assist with assessing epilepsy treatment; Senti Tech Limited's project enabling remote chest examination for respiratory patients through sensors embedded into a jacket; and Healthy.io (UK) Limited's smartphone albuminuria self-test, which uses a home test kit and a mobile app to allow patients to self-test at home with clinical grade results.

HOME OFFICE

■ Airguns: Crime

Karin Smyth:

[\[143827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with ONS on the publication of data on types of offences involving air weapons and whether an offence resulted in injury, for each year since 2015-16.

Kit Malthouse:

There have been no ministerial discussions with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) around the publication of data on types of offences involving air weapons.

Home Office statisticians have regular discussions with ONS colleagues about the content of crime statistics and will raise this issue with ONS.

■ Airguns: Scotland

Karin Smyth: [\[143826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the effect of licensing air weapons in Scotland on the number of offences involving air weapons in that country from 2015-16 and 2017-18.

Karin Smyth: [\[143828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the evidence gathered for the Air Weapons Review on the safety of air weapons in Scotland and Northern Ireland, where air weapons are subject to a licensing regime.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government has looked at the arrangements that apply to the controls on air weapons in Scotland and Northern Ireland in the context of the review of air weapons regulation in England and Wales. The outcomes of that review are reflected in the current public consultation on firearms safety, which was published on 24 November 2020. The consultation sets out proposals for new measures in relation to air weapons.

The firearms safety consultation will close on 16 February, after which the Government will publish its response, including in relation to air weapons controls.

■ Animal Welfare

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[144878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, to publish her Department's committed spend on front-line police training on animal welfare crimes for each year since 2010 in (a) England and (b) Wales.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not hold the requested information.

We have announced a provisional police funding settlement of up to £15.8 billion for 2021/22. This is a total increase of up to £636 million for the policing system which will enable police to cut crime and tackle offences including relating to animal welfare crimes.

■ Asylum

Stuart C McDonald: [\[142959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims have been made in the UK since 1 January 2021; and how many of those claims have been found inadmissible under the terms of the immigration rules introduced by the Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules, HC 1043, published on 10 December 2020.

Stuart C McDonald: [\[142960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims made prior to 1 January 2021 have been found inadmissible under the terms of the immigration

rules introduced by the Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules, HC 1043, published on 10 December 2020.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'. Data on the number of asylum applications are published in Table Asy_D01 and data on the number and type of asylum initial decisions are published in table Asy_D02 of the Asylum and Resettlement datasets.

Figures on the number of asylum application decisions made in the first quarter of 2021 are due to be published on 27 May 2021. Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'. We are working to bring inadmissibility decisions in line with current reporting and hope to publish that information in the same timeframe.

We are reviewing the cases of those who claimed asylum before 1 January and their suitability for decision-making under the new rules. If it is appropriate for any claimants to receive decisions under the new provisions, they will be informed of that, in line with the Home Office published policy guidance.

The Home Office current published guidance is clear that we will serve an inadmissibility decision only when an individual's return is agreed by a third country. The Home Office continues to work closely with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development to secure agreements to enable returns to be made. Any case where return is not possible within 6 months from the date of claim will be admitted to the asylum process and will have their asylum claim substantively considered in the UK.

Information on the Home Office inadmissibility rules can be found on gov.uk under '[Inadmissibility: third country cases](#)'.

■ **Asylum: Children**

Afzal Khan:

[141606]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to enable remote asylum interviews for unaccompanied children where a responsible adult must be present.

Kevin Foster:

Following the suspension of asylum interviews at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020 the Home Office worked on implementing plans to restart asylum interviews as soon as it was safe to do so.

Adult interviews restarted in July 2020 and interviews involving unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and young people restarted in September 2020 (where a responsible adult must be present).

The Home Office has continued to develop use of remote digital interviewing to complement existing face to face interviews. The Home Office has successfully completed a remote interviewing proof of concept with Kent County Council. The Home Office is already engaged in working with all UK Local Authorities to roll out

remote interviewing of UASC and young people nationally, where there is agreement to help expand capacity and capability.

Additionally, children who claim asylum are asked to complete a Statement of Evidence Form (SEF). The information contained in SEF will be used alongside all of the other evidence already held about the claim to help determine whether or not it is appropriate to omit an asylum interview.

The criteria for when a substantive asylum interview can be omitted are contained in Paragraph 339NA of the Immigration Rules and include cases where we are able to take a positive decision on the basis of evidence available, or if the claimant is unfit or unable to be interviewed owing to enduring circumstances beyond their control. It would be inappropriate to adopt a blanket approach to certain nationalities or groups because of the differing circumstances of each claim.

Afzal Khan:

[141607]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many children have been waiting nine months or longer for a decision on their asylum application in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not publish data on how many children has been waiting nine months or longer for a decision on their asylum application.

However, the Home Office do publish data on the number of Asylum applications awaiting a decision, by duration, as part of the published Immigration Statistics, year ending September 2020, at asy_04:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2020/list-of-tables#asylum-and-resettlement>

Thangam Debbonaire:

[142011]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 19 January 2021 to Question 137959, how many and what proportion of school age children living in initial asylum hotel accommodation have lived in hotel accommodation for over three months; and how many of those children are enrolled in local schools.

Chris Philp:

We do not publish data on length of time spent in Initial Accommodation.

We do not hold information about children enrolled in local schools.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[142012]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that all children of school age and who live in initial asylum accommodation are receiving access to education during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Chris Philp:

Initial accommodation is short term accommodation and previously children would not be enrolled in school until they have been dispersed, however, during the pandemic

families have been in initial accommodation for longer than usual. To ensure children are able to have access to education our provider staff are signposting parents to how to obtain a school place with the local authority.

We are prioritising families with children for dispersal from Initial Accommodation to longer term dispersed accommodation.

Tim Farron:

[144652]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many unaccompanied child asylum seekers were granted refugee status or humanitarian protection in (a) 2019 and (b) 2020.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of asylum applications and initial decisions on applications are published in table Asy_D01 and Asy_D02 of the [asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#), which include a breakdown on unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and year of application or initial decision.

Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relate up to September 2020. Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in the '[summary tables](#)'. The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement.

Immigration Statistics will be updated on February 25th 2021 which will include data up to December 2020.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

■ Asylum: Croydon

Steve Reed:

[143766]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of outstanding applications of asylum from applicants living in the (a) London Borough of Croydon and (b) Croydon North constituency have exceeded a 12 month wait.

Steve Reed:

[143767]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many outstanding applications for asylum there are from people living in the (a) London Borough of Croydon and (b) Croydon North constituency.

Chris Philp:

Whilst we hold data on the current addresses of asylum claimants, data on how many and what proportion of outstanding applications of asylum have exceeded a 12 month wait and how many applications are outstanding, from applicants living in the (a) London Borough of Croydon and (b) Croydon North constituency could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

The Home Office does publish data on the total number of asylum applications awaiting a decision broken down by duration of more or less than 6 months. This can be found in the published Immigration Statistics, Asy_04 as at end of September 2020:

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

■ Asylum: Homelessness

Jess Phillips: [141484]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has consulted public health directors on the potential effect on public health of the cessation of people's refugee status in areas where those people are due to receive eviction letters from asylum accommodation.

Jess Phillips: [141485]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what safeguards are in place to ensure that people who have been refused asylum will not become homeless after 21 days of receiving their cessation letter.

Kevin Foster:

Failed asylum seekers who have exhausted their appeal rights are eligible to receive accommodation and other support provided they take reasonable steps to leave the UK or there is a legal or practical obstacle to their departure. The Home Office Voluntary Returns Scheme pays for the flight to the home country and provides reintegration assistance.

Only failed asylum seekers who are able to take steps to leave the UK, but choose not to, are therefore issued with notices that their support will be discontinued.

The process of issuing discontinuation notices is kept under regular review, taking consideration of public health guidance.

These decisions currently remain paused pending consideration of the impact of the current coronavirus restrictions.

We have been working closely with National and Local health Colleagues throughout the pandemic to inform our approach and will continue to do so.

Before taking any decision to resume negative cessations we will continue to work with and share our approach with Public Health authorities and will work within public health guidelines and legal advice.

■ Asylum: Penally

Wendy Chamberlain: [143912]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 136619, what the timescale is for the decommissioning of Penally Camp as temporary accommodation for asylum seekers.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[143913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 136619, what steps she has taken to ensure that the suitable dispersed accommodation (a) is adequately heated, hygienic, and covid compliant and (b) will meet the medical and psychological needs of vulnerable male asylum seekers.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[143914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that the facilities at Penally Camp are (a) adequately heated, (b) hygienic and (c) covid-19 compliant.

Chris Philp:

In recent months we have faced additional challenges which have required us in some instances to temporarily use hotels and other contingency accommodation, to fulfil our statutory obligations towards asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute whilst their claims are considered.

MOD has given permission to use Penally Training Camp for 12 months, but the use of this facility is temporary, and we will discontinue it as soon as we are able.

■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation

Jack Lopresti:

[\[142901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that asylum seekers are housed in temporary accommodation that is local to their point of entry.

Chris Philp:

In order for the Home Office to fulfil their statutory obligation to accommodate asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute, asylum accommodation is provided on a no choice basis and accommodation may not be provided near to the point of entry.

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[143789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to provide access to temporary alternative asylum accommodation sites including military barracks for (a) legal representatives, (b) NGOs and (c) health professionals.

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[143790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many visits have been made to each temporary asylum accommodation site since 1 October 2020 by (a) legal representatives, (b) NGOs and (c) health professionals.

Chris Philp:

Our accommodation providers will accommodate visits from legal representatives, NGOs and health professions wherever possible and appropriate provided they have prior notice (except for in the event of an emergency) and social distance guidelines are followed.

We do not hold information on the number of visits made to alternative accommodation.

Stuart C McDonald: [143791]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been moved out of temporary alternative asylum accommodation; and to what locations those people have been moved.

Chris Philp:

Asylum seekers who have made an application for support and accommodation are accommodated in temporary "initial" accommodation while they are waiting for their support application to be considered. The current pandemic is resulting in people being accommodated in initial accommodation for longer than usual before being dispersed.

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>

Stuart C McDonald: [143792]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been (a) detained or (b) accommodated in temporary alternative asylum accommodation for (i) longer than 28 days and (ii) longer than 3 months.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not detain anyone in temporary asylum accommodation. Our accommodation providers do not have enforcement powers and those we are accommodating are free to come and go as they please.

We do not publish data on the length of time spent in initial or temporary accommodation.

Stuart C McDonald: [144703]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what arrangements exist to allow people (a) accommodated at temporary alternative asylum accommodation sites and (b) working at those sites, to leave from and return to the premises freely.

Stuart C McDonald: [144704]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what length of lease she has for each temporary alternative asylum accommodation site; and what options she has to extend each of those leases.

Stuart C McDonald: [144705]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to end the use of temporary asylum accommodation sites.

Chris Philp:

Asylum seekers accommodated are not detained and so are free to come and go, but are required to follow Covid-19 regulations (including observing a period of self-isolation where required in line with regulations). Movements in and out of sites are monitored and managed, for safety reasons. Asylum seekers are expected to stay in accommodation overnight, and a welfare call is made to anyone not on site by 10pm.

Those working at the sites are also free to come and go freely, again in line with Covid-19 regulations.

The Ministry of Defence has given permission to use the sites for 12 months. The use of contingency initial accommodation is temporary, and we will discontinue it as soon as we are able.

■ Catalytic Converters: Theft**Catherine West:**[\[144780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November 2020 to Question 120050, what steps she has taken to tackle catalytic converter theft since the National Police Chiefs' problem solving workshop.

Kit Malthouse:

We welcome the work which the National Police Chiefs' Council did to host a problem-solving workshop in November to bring together representatives from the motor industry, policing and Government to discuss what can be done to tackle the theft of catalytic converters.

We are committed to providing funding to set up the National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership, ensuring national co-ordination of policing and law enforcement partners to tackle metal theft. Through this, the partnership has already started sharing intelligence and providing training to police forces, and the partnership will also enable intelligence sharing between police and industry partners such as transport, power, and telecommunications, to target offenders and implement crime prevention measures.

■ Counter-terrorism**Conor McGinn:**[\[144721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the status is of her Department's public consultation on Protect Duty, announced on 24 February 2020; and what the timescale is for that consultation.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office remains committed to developing a Protect Duty to further improve security at publicly accessible locations. We will launch a public consultation for the duty by the end of February.

This launch had been paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on many of the organisations we would hope to respond.

We know public venues and spaces vary; across sectors, size, geographies and nature of their operations. Whilst circumstances vary between different sectors and organisations, we know many have been dealing with an increased workload during COVID-19.

We will progress with an 18-week consultation period (instead of the usual 12) to take us into the summer, when we hope that the impacts of COVID-19 will lessen and businesses should be in a better position to engage with the consultation.

■ Detention Centres

Stuart C McDonald:

[144706]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the current (a) capacity and (b) occupancy rate is of each immigration removal centre.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office publishes statistics on people in detention on the last day of each quarter in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release\(opens in a new tab\)](#)'. Data on people in detention under immigration powers, are published in Table Det_03a of the '[Detention summary tables\(opens in a new tab\)](#)'

The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on detention.

Figures on people in detention at the end of December 2020 will be published on 25 February 2021.

The table below sets out the operational capacity for each immigration removal centre (if all rooms and beds are in use) and the current occupancy rate as of 28 January 2021.

IRC	TOTAL OPERATING CAPACITY 2021	CURRENT OCCUPANCY RATE AS OF 28 JANUARY 2021
Brook House	448	11
Colnbrook	330	30
Dungavel House	125	21
Harmondsworth	635	108
Morton Hall	352	90
Tinsley House	162	0
Yarl's Wood	410	30
Total	2462	290

In order to meet operational needs and demands, we will continue to operate the immigration removal estate, in a flexible manner.

■ Gambling: Crime

Paul Blomfield:

[141969]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many crimes were recorded in 2020 where (a) problem gambling, or (b) circumstances relating to problem gambling were determined as a relevant factor.

Kit Malthouse:

While the Home Office collects data on crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales, information on whether or not the crime was related to problem gambling behaviour or related circumstances are not collected.

■ Health Services and Social Services: Migrant Workers

Drew Hendry:

[144726]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of extending visas for health and social care workers for the duration of the covid-19 pandemic.

Kevin Foster:

The UK Government recognises the vital contribution overseas NHS, health and social care workers have and continue to make in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier in the year we offered free visa extensions for key, frontline health professionals whose visas were due to expire between 31 March 2020 and 1 October 2020.

On 20 November, we announced we will renew this offer for those eligible health professionals and their family dependants whose visas expire between 1 October 2020 until 31 March 2021.

More details of this announcement can be found at:

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

We will keep the free extension offer under review to ensure we continue supporting the health and care sector in tackling this pandemic.

■ Human Trafficking: British Nationality

Louise Haigh:

[143840]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) longest and (b) average time is for victims of human trafficking to receive naturalisation as British citizens.

Kevin Foster:

There is no separate application route to citizenship for victims of human trafficking and so they are considered alongside all other citizenship applications.

This means we cannot separate out data for this cohort through normal reporting mechanisms. Transparency data with information on service standards for citizenship applications can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visas-and-citizenship-data-november-2020>

■ Immigrants: Detainees

Stuart C McDonald:

[143793]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has made for (a) when and (b) how the covid-19 vaccine is planned to be offered to people held in immigration detention.

Chris Philp:

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

All immigration removal centres (IRCs) have communicable disease contingency plans, based on PHE advice, and dedicated health facilities run by doctors and nurses which are managed by the NHS or appropriate providers. Detained individuals arriving at IRCs are medically assessed by a nurse within two hours of their arrival, are offered an appointment with a doctor within 24 hours and have access to medical assistance throughout their detention. Additionally, all admissions to Heathrow, Gatwick, Yarl's Wood and Dungavel IRCs are offered a Covid-19 test on arrival at the IRC.

COVID-19 vaccinations are at the centre of the Government's plan to ensure life can return to normal as soon as possible. Detailed planning is underway between the Home Office, NHS and Public Health Authorities to prepare for the delivery of vaccinations in IRCs when they become available. Vaccinations in IRCs will be administered by the NHS, or other commissioned healthcare service provider.

The decision about who will be eligible for the vaccine in Health and Justice settings, which includes IRCs, is being decided by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) in line with JCVI priorities 1 – 9, with NHS plans in place to have offered a first vaccine dose to all those in priority groups 1-4 by mid- February.

■ Immigration: Health Insurance

Navendu Mishra:

[142079]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether women who have gaps in their Comprehensive Sickness Insurance (CSI) as a result of maternity leave or childcare responsibilities will still qualify for citizenship if those gaps result in an applicant that has been resident in the UK for 10 years not fulfilling the CSI requirement.

Navendu Mishra:[\[142080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether citizenship applications where the applicant has gaps in Comprehensive Sickness Insurance (CSI) due to maternity leave or childcare responsibilities have been successful in instances where the gaps in CSI mean the applicant has not fulfilled the CSI requirement.

Kevin Foster:

No woman who had gaps in comprehensive sickness insurance as a result of maternity leave or childcare responsibilities has had their application for citizenship refused on such a basis.

Regulations set out the requirements which EEA nationals needed to follow if they wished to reside here lawfully on the basis of free movement. In the case of students or the self-sufficient – but not those who were working here – the possession of comprehensive sickness insurance has always been a requirement.

The British Nationality Act allows us to exercise discretion over this requirement in the special circumstances of any particular case. UKVI will consider cases sensitively, taking into account the nature and reasons for any period of unlawful residence alongside other information relevant to the individual.

■ Immigration: Yemen**Louise Haigh:**[\[143839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her policy is on reuniting children under the age of five in Yemen with family members who are currently in Britain.

Chris Philp:

The Government provides the following safe and legal routes under the Immigration Rules for children, regardless of where they are in the world, to join family in the UK:

- part 8, paragraph 297 provides for a child to join a British or settled parent or relative in the UK;
- part 8, paragraph 319X provides for a child to join a relative with limited leave to remain as a refugee or beneficiary of humanitarian protection in the United Kingdom;
- part 11, paragraphs 325D and 352FG provide for a child to join a parent with refugee status or humanitarian protection in the UK.

■ Members: Correspondence**John Spellar:**[\[143685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter of 19 November 2020 from the hon. Member for Warley regarding Mr Karimian.

Chris Philp:

The Minister for Immigration and the Courts responded on 28 January 2021

■ Police**Alex Davies-Jones:** [144879]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, to publish the average current rate of police officers per 100,000 people across (a) England and (b) Wales.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office publishes data on the number of officers per 100,00 people, for England and Wales annually in Table H4 of the accompanying tables of the "Police workforce, England and Wales" statistical bulletin, which is available here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2020>

■ Police: Training**Sajid Javid:** [141959]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the training of new police recruits can safely continue during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office has worked closely with policing partners to ensure the training of new police recruits can safely continue during the Covid-19 pandemic. This has included working with the College of Policing which is responsible for setting standards in policing, including those for officer training.

In response to Covid-19, in April 2020 the College of Policing issued emergency guidance to all forces on the safe deployment of newly recruited officers into accompanied frontline roles as quickly as possible to support operational resilience. These measures are currently in place until March 2021 when the College will review the ongoing Covid-19 situation.

In addition, on 7 January the Department for Education issued its latest guidance on Higher Education Institutes (HEI) and Covid. This confirms policing courses, that include an HEI component, are included in a list of courses that can continue to be delivered face to face, minimising disruption to initial training.

■ UK Border Force: Coronavirus**Tonia Antoniazzi:** [143878]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Border Force employees have died of covid-19 to date.

Tonia Antoniazzi: [143879]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Border Force employees tested positive for covid-19 between 1 March 2020 and 26 January 2021.

Chris Philp:

Tragically a very small number of Border Force colleagues have passed away from suspected COVID-19 causes. They were valued colleagues and Border Force would like to pay tribute to their service. Border Force is not prepared to provide additional details given the very small number of colleagues involved and the risk of identification of individuals and their grieving families.

Border Force do not hold records of the number of staff who have tested positive for COVID-19.

■ Veterans: Commonwealth**Carol Monaghan:****[143823]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to make the process of applying for indefinite leave to remain more (a) straightforward and (b) affordable for Commonwealth veterans.

Kevin Foster:

The UK Government hugely values every member of our outstanding Armed Forces and we are humbled when non-UK nationals choose to serve our country. It is for these reasons we explicitly provide for non-UK veterans discharged from HM Forces to obtain settlement in the UK via the online form SET(AF):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-to-settle-in-uk-as-former-member-of-hm-forces-setaf>

The Home Office is engaging with MPs, campaigners and members of the public to assess whether those who have served in the Armed Forces should continue to pay settlement fees.

The Home Secretary recently met the Defence Secretary to consider how we can offer greater flexibility and support for such people, and their families, in future. Subject to collective agreement, the Ministry of Defence will be launching a public consultation on this issue in due course.

■ Visas: Families**Patrick Grady:****[143811]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of amending income requirements for family visas to account for temporary reductions in income during the covid-19 pandemic.

Kevin Foster:

We have already made several adjustments to support those affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, including those seeking to renew spousal visas.

These adjustments are among a range of measures put in place by the Home Office to support those affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. These are set out for customers on GOV.UK and are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents>.

These are unprecedented times. We continue to monitor the situation closely and may make further adjustments to requirements where necessary and appropriate.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Buildings: Insulation

Thangam Debbonaire:

[144714]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 910680 on Buildings: Insulation, what progress his Department has made with its data collection exercise on buildings in England that have combustible non-ACM cladding; and when he plans to publish that data.

Christopher Pincher:

Local authorities and housing associations are conducting a data collection exercise as part of a programme to build a more complete picture of high-rise residential buildings and the variety of external wall systems in use.

Some data from the collection is already published. Data estimating the proportion of high-rise residential buildings in England with little or no cladding can be found in this release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-programme-estimates-of-ews1-requirements-on-residential-buildings-in-england/building-safety-programme-estimates-of-ews1-requirements-on-residential-buildings-in-england>

We are currently undertaking checks on the remaining data to ensure accuracy before publication. We will publish appropriate summary information from the data collection when ready.

Florence Eshalomi:

[144891]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with developers, investors and building owners on their covering the remediation costs for removing and replacing dangerous cladding without passing those costs on to leaseholders.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department has ongoing engagement with developers and building owners of private sector high-rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding. This has led to the remediation of over half of high-rise residential buildings with unsafe Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding being funded by the developer, freeholder or through warranty claims, without passing the costs onto leaseholders. Furthermore, the Private Sector ACM Remediation Fund and the Building Safety Fund for the remediation of buildings with unsafe non-ACM cladding both require applicants to demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to recover the costs of

replacing the unsafe cladding from those responsible through insurance claims, warranties or legal action.

■ **Construction: West Midlands**

Stuart Anderson:

[143109]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to (a) support the recovery of the construction sector and (b) build new houses in the West Midlands.

Christopher Pincher:

The recovery of the construction sector following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic is primarily a matter for BEIS. However, in respect of the housebuilding sector specifically, my department has:

- made it clear that the housebuilding sector, in line with the wider construction sector, should continue to operate where it is able to do so safely;
- together with the Home Builders Federation, developed the Charter on Safe Working Practice on housebuilding sites (endorsed by six of the nine regional mayors and combined authorities), which is critical to public safety;
- published detailed guidance on how to work while minimising the risk of transmission; and
- provided for builders to seek more flexible construction site working hours with their local council, such as staggering builders' arrival and finish times.

In addition, the Housing Secretary, Executive Chairman of the Home Builders Federation and Chief Executive of the Federation of Master Builders have written to the housing industry to make clear that house building – and the supply chains that support it – should continue working securely.

The Government is committed to supporting the supply of new homes, delivering around 244,000 last year; the highest in over 30 years. We are bringing forward an ambitious near £20 billion investment, including our new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme which could deliver up to 180,000 new homes for affordable homeownership and rent if economic conditions allow, and over £7 billion over the next four years through our National Home Building Fund, to unlock up to 860,000 homes through the provision of infrastructure and diversifying the market.

This Government is committed to building the homes we need and prioritising brownfield development, particularly for the regeneration of our towns and cities like those across the West Midlands.

In 2018, the Government granted the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) up to £100 million from the Land Fund, backing the Mayor's commitment to deliver 215,000 homes across the region. The Land Fund supports WMCA to acquire and de-risk land around priority sites, delivering c.8k homes.

We have also awarded WMCA £108 million from the Brownfield Fund, empowering and supporting the Mayor to bring forward the redevelopment of brownfield sites across the region – including Longbridge in Birmingham.

■ **Homelessness: Coronavirus**

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[143855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support the continuation of the Everyone In scheme.

Eddie Hughes:

We have taken huge steps working with local authorities and their partners 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.

Given the new variant of COVID-19, and the new national lockdown, we are redoubling our efforts to ensure that people who sleep rough are kept as safe as possible and that we do everything we can to protect the NHS. This is backed by £10 million to protect rough sleepers and ensure their wider health needs are addressed.

We have written to all local authorities, to ensure that even more rough sleepers are safely accommodated, and to ask that this opportunity is actively used to make sure that all rough sleepers are registered with a GP where they are not already and are factored into local area vaccination plans, in line with JCVI prioritisation for COVID-19 vaccinations.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[144715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance and support he has provided to local authorities to support the vaccination of people who are (a) rough sleepers and (b) living in temporary accommodation.

Eddie Hughes:

We know that many people experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping struggle to access the health care and support they need. On 8 January, we asked all local authorities to redouble their efforts to ensure that people sleeping rough are safely accommodated, backed by £10 million.

We asked that this opportunity is used to make sure that all people who have been sleeping rough are registered with a GP and factored into local area vaccination plans, in line with JCVI prioritisation for COVID-19 vaccinations. This will help ensure that the wider health needs of people who sleep rough are addressed, supporting them now and for the future.

We are encouraging local authorities, working in partnership with local health partners, to consider alternative delivery models for vaccination where mainstream provision is unsuitable.

MHCLG is working closely with DHSC, Public Health England, and NHS England to ensure the health and care needs of vulnerable people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping can be met during the COVID-19 pandemic – including access to COVID-19 vaccination.

■ Housing: Construction

Rachael Maskell:

[143834]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many (a) affordable homes, (b) social housing units and (c) council housing units have been commissioned in each of the last five years.

Christopher Pincher:

The number of new starts-on-site per year and local authority for social rent, affordable rent and London affordable rent homes can be found in live tables 1006S, 1006aS and 1006bS respectively through the following link <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply>. In the last five years the number of new affordable homes starts-on-site by local authorities was as follows: 3,093 in 2015-16; 5,910 in 2016-17 5,706 in 2017-18 5,834 in 2018-19 7,458 in 2019-20

Please note that this figure includes all tenures, including those for affordable homes for sale, such as shared ownership. These totals can be derived from the open source data also found in the link above. Information for 2015-16 is not directly comparable with subsequent years as it only includes information on units funded by Homes England or the Greater London Authority.

Rachael Maskell:

[143835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many (a) affordable homes, (b) social housing units and (c) council housing units have been completed in each of the last five years.

Christopher Pincher:

The number of new completions per year and local authority for social rent, affordable rent and London affordable rent homes can be found in live tables 1006C, 1006aC and 1006bC respectively through the following link <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply> These figures include acquisitions of existing stock for affordable housing. In the last five years the number of new affordable homes completed by local authorities, including acquisitions, was as follows: 4,759 in 2015-16; 5,499 in 2016-17; 5,463 in 2017-18; 6,470 in 2018-19 and 6,531 in 2019-20. Please note that this figure includes all tenures, including those for affordable homes for sale, such as shared ownership. These totals can be derived from the open source data also found in the link above.

It is possible that the 2019-20 figures may have been affected by COVID-19, as the period of national restrictions was introduced just before the cut off period of 31 March 2020. Additionally, some of the data collected directly from local authorities

underlying these figures had a lower response rate than in previous years. There will be a scheduled revision for these data in June/July 2021.

■ **Housing: York**

Rachael Maskell:

[143836]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many (a) affordable homes, (b) social housing units and (c) council housing units have been completed in (a) York and (b) York Central constituency in each of the last five years.

Christopher Pincher:

The number of new completions per year and local authority for social rent, affordable rent and London affordable rent homes can be found in live tables 1006C, 1006aC and 1006bC respectively through the following link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply> These figures include acquisitions of existing stock for affordable housing. In the last five years the number of new affordable homes completions e by City of York Council, including acquisitions, was as follows: 22 in 2015-16; 6 in 2016-17; 38 in 2017-18; 8 in 2018-19 and 24 in 2019-20. Please note that this figure includes all tenures, including those for affordable homes for sale, such as shared ownership. These totals can be derived from the open source data also found via the link above. The department does not collect these data by parliamentary constituency.

Rachael Maskell:

[143837]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many (a) affordable homes, (b) social housing units and (c) council housing units have been commissioned in (a) York and (b) York Central constituency in each of the last five years.

Christopher Pincher:

The number of new starts-on-site per year and local authority for social rent, affordable rent and London affordable rent homes can be found in live tables 1006S, 1006aS and 1006bS respectively through the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply>

In the last five years the number of new affordable homes starts-on-site by City of York Council was as follows: 19 starts on site in 2016-17; 59 in 2017-18; 46 in 2018-19 and 74 in 2019-20. There were no starts on site in 2015-16. However, information for 2015-16 is not directly comparable with subsequent years as it only includes information on units funded by Homes England or the Greater London Authority. Please note that these figures include all tenures, including those for affordable homes for sale, such as shared ownership. These totals can be derived from the open source data also found in the link above.

The department does not collect these data by parliamentary constituency.

■ Landlords: Registration

Navendu Mishra:

[\[142081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make landlord registration schemes mandatory for all local authorities in England to improve protections for tenants from rogue landlords.

Christopher Pincher:

Local authorities have a range of powers and tools to protect tenants and support enforcement activities. This includes civil penalties of up to £30,000, banning orders for the worst offenders and powers to tackle illegal evictions.

In April 2018, using powers under the Housing and Planning Act 2016, we introduced a national database of rogue landlords and property agents alongside banning orders for the worst landlords.

We will consider further measures, such as expanding the scope of the database, as part of preparation for the Renters Reform Bill.

■ Local Government Finance: Coronavirus

Navendu Mishra:

[\[142089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an estimate of the (a) additional expenditure incurred by and (b) amount of revenue lost by local authorities during the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

I refer the Hon Member to my answer to Question UIN 143147 on 28 January 2021.

■ Local Government: Meetings

Alex Cunningham:

[\[144677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will extend the provisions of the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 to allow local authorities to conduct meetings remotely beyond May 2021.

Luke Hall:

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

There is no option to extend the current regulations under the Coronavirus Act 2020 as section 78 (2) contains the sunset date of 7 May 2021.

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

■ Regional Planning and Development

Mark Pawsey:

[142907]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's 4 August 2020 press release, £1.3 billion investment to deliver homes, infrastructure and jobs, which of the 300 shovel-ready projects have commenced construction in England; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Hall:

We continually work with places through our Area and Central teams to understand and monitor progress of funding programmes. The Getting Building Fund projects are expected to deliver up to 84,000 jobs, (including additional construction jobs), 1,500,000 sqm of commercial floor space, unlocking 45,000 homes, 1,000,000 sqm of public realm or green space improved or created, 50,000 new learners assisted, and 65 million kgs of CO2 emissions saved.

Justin Madders:

[143799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the Government's official definition is of levelling up.

Luke Hall:

As reaffirmed at the Spending Review, the Government is levelling up opportunity across the UK so that people feel that they can succeed in their local area. The Spending Review established a set of provisional priority outcomes and metrics across all departments and policy areas which have been published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents>.

■ Social Rented Housing: Construction

Rachael Maskell:

[143833]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to encourage housing developers to build more council and other forms of social housing.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing and is investing over £12 billion in affordable housing over 5 years - the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade. This includes the new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, which will provide up to 180,000 new homes across the country, should economic conditions allow. The new Affordable Homes Programme will deliver more than double the number of homes for social rent than the current programme, with around 32,000 social rent homes due to be delivered. We are reforming the planning system and have set out our ambition that the new Infrastructure Levy will raise more than the existing system of developer contributions, and deliver at least as much onsite affordable housing. We propose that local authorities should be able to specify the forms and tenures of onsite provision, working with a nominated affordable housing provider.

We have given councils a comprehensive range of tools to deliver a new generation of council housing. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing cap was abolished on 29 October 2018, and a longer term rent deal for 5 years from April 2020, enabling them to charge rents of up to CPI +1 per cent pa, is providing a stable investment environment to deliver new homes.

Since 2010, we have delivered over 517,100 new affordable homes including over 365,800 affordable homes for rent, of which 148,000 homes for social rent. Between 2010-2020 councils have built 29,993 affordable homes, up from 2,994 over the previous 13 years.

■ Supported Housing

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[142867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if his Department will undertake a further review of supported accommodation to update the findings of the research report number 927 published on the 21 November 2016.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to ensuring a sustainable supported housing sector that can provide better outcomes for individuals. Overall responsibility for planning to meet local need and the commissioning of supported housing sits at the local level. My Department works closely with cross government partners, the supported housing sector and stakeholders to refine our understanding of supported housing provision, building on the existing evidence base.

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[142873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 131215 on Supported Housing, whether his Department plans to collect that data centrally.

Eddie Hughes:

There are no current plans for the Government to routinely collect centralised data. We continue to empower local authorities to plan for how to best meet the needs of local citizens without burdening them with extensive data and reporting requirements.

We are funding five local authorities to test approaches to developing strategic assessments of need and supply locally, which will improve oversight of local supported housing markets. We are working closely with the local authorities to design these plans and to capture best practice that can be shared more widely and inform future supported housing policy decision making.

■ Supported Housing: Inspections

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[142874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 130681 on Supported Housing:

Inspections, which local authorities are in receipt of the £3.1 million funding; and what the budget headings are for that funding.

Eddie Hughes:

My Department is funding five local authorities to test approaches to improving quality and value for money in supported housing. The five are Birmingham, Bristol, Blackpool, Blackburn and Hull.

All five areas are receiving funding to undertake three core activities: enforcement action through multi-disciplinary teams to improve accommodation standards; enhanced scrutiny of Housing Benefit claims and making improvements to support provision; and data collection to underpin a strategic local need and supply assessment.

Each area is also undertaking additional activities to drive up quality in their area, developed to meet their specific needs. For example, Birmingham City Council has been developing a set of Quality Standards for supported housing and a Charter of Rights for residents that will be launched shortly. We will use data and information from these to inform our future thinking about national approaches.

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[142875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 130681 on Supported Housing: Inspections, what performance criteria are in place to assess the £3.1 million of funding provided to local authorities.

Eddie Hughes:

My Department is working closely with local authorities to deliver the pilots including regularly reviewing the strategic objectives of improving local accommodation standards, value for money and support provided to tenants.

We are collecting regular data to monitor progress and the results of activity. This includes the number of property inspections completed, the number of tenant support reviews conducted, the number of local authority actions taken to improve accommodation standards, and action taken to improve support, and data on Housing Benefit claims and spend.

We are also committed to a full, rigorous, independent evaluation of the pilots, and of the impact of the £3.1 million we have awarded to local authorities. The evaluation will ensure that we can measure the impact of the interventions tested in the pilots and capture best practice from local authorities.

■ **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

Seema Malhotra:

[\[144685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress his Department has made on contributing to the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK. The Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government and the Department of Work and Pensions have been working closely on the development of UK Shared Prosperity Fund, in collaboration with other government departments.

The November 2020 Spending Review sets out the main strategic elements of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The UK Government will publish a UK-wide investment framework in spring 2021 and confirm multiyear funding profiles at the next Spending Review.

Seema Malhotra:[\[144686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what consultation the Minister for Employment has conducted on the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund with (a) representatives of the employment support sector and (b) more widely.

Luke Hall:

The Government has been engaging with key stakeholders on the design and priorities of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund since 2016, including holding a series of engagement events. Over 500 stakeholders attended these events across a variety of sectors, including businesses, public bodies (such as Local Enterprise Partnerships, Mayoral Combined Authorities, local governments), higher education institutions, voluntary and charity sector and rural partnership groups.

Our engagement events have taken place across the UK including in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. We will continue to work closely with interested parties as we develop the fund.

■ Urban Areas: Regeneration**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[R\] \[142975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support the regeneration of town centres that are affected by the closure of Debenhams stores.

Luke Hall:

This Government is fully committed to supporting the businesses and communities that make our high streets and town centres successful as the nation responds to the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak.

High streets and town centre regeneration policy is a devolved matter. Government officials have worked and will continue to work closely with their counterparts in the devolved administrations on the response to COVID-19 and in the future.

We are providing support to local leadership in England with a High Streets Task Force, giving them expert advice to support their high streets and town centres to adapt and thrive. Up to 2024 this is providing hands-on support to local areas to develop data-driven innovative strategies and connect local areas to relevant experts.

To support our town centres and high streets, we have introduced reforms to the use classes to enable more flexible use of existing buildings. These reforms create a new 'commercial, business and service' use class which encompasses a wide range of uses which will attract people to high streets and town centres. This includes offices and other business uses, shops, cafes, gyms and any other uses which are suitable in a town centre. The new class also allows for mixed uses to reflect changing retail and business models.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Coronavirus: TRIPS Agreement

Rachael Maskell:

[\[143002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the Government's position is on the proposed WTO Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights waiver in response to the covid-19 pandemic and allowing countries to use it in their domestic context.

Greg Hands:

I refer the Hon. Member for York Central to the answer I gave to the Hon. Member for North East Fife on 25 November 2020, UIN: [115822](#).

■ Department for International Trade: Trade Promotion

Gareth Thomas:

[\[142762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many trade advisors her Department employs; and how many of those advisors provide advice on trade with the EU.

Graham Stuart:

The Department's International Trade Adviser (ITA) service, delivered through nine English regional contracts, is made up of c. 300 trade advisors. It does not cover the Devolved Administrations, who provide their own services. The ITA network advises businesses on trading with both EU and non-EU markets and provides support to companies to trade internationally and make the most of opportunities around the world.

■ Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees

Anna McMorris:

[\[144824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2020 to Question 118559 on Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees, what the locations are of the (a) two upstream projects, (b) one midstream project, (c) two downstream projects and (d) two power projects.

Graham Stuart:

The projects referred to in the response to PQ118559 are in the following locations:

- a) The upstream projects are both located in Brazil.
- b) The midstream project is in Turkmenistan.
- c) One downstream project is in Malaysia, and the other is in Turkey
- d) The previous Answer referred to one power project, which is located in Iraq.

■ Overseas Trade

Preet Kaur Gill:

[144800]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to her oral contribution of 11 January 2021, Official Report column 72, when she plans to publish details on the emerging markets trade scheme.

Greg Hands:

The Secretary of State referred to an emerging market trade scheme that will improve upon the existing Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) to create new opportunities for trade around the world. HM Government will make an announcement about these improvements to the scheme later this year, following consultation.

■ Shipping: Exports

Emma Hardy:

[143072]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what support her Department is providing to the maritime industry to help increase exports of maritime (a) products and (b) services.

Graham Stuart:

The maritime sector contributes approximately £17bn GVA to the UK's economy and is responsible for £12bn in exports. The sector directly supports over 220,000 jobs and transports 95% of the UK's imports and exports in goods.

To support the maritime industry, the Department for International Trade (DIT) is delivering the [Maritime Trade and Investment 5-year Plan](#) which focuses on the key themes and drivers of growth identified in the Government's Maritime 2050 Strategy. The plan has been developed in partnership with key industry bodies to increase the UK exports of maritime goods and services.

■ Trade and Agriculture Commission: Ethics

Bill Esterson:

[143747]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, for what reason the interim report of the Trade and Agriculture Commission round table on ethics does not include the contributions made by the trade union representatives who were in attendance.

Greg Hands:

The Trade and Agriculture Commission's interim progress update was written and published prior to the ethical trading roundtable, which took place on 6 November.

JUSTICE**■ Coroners: Gambling****Paul Blomfield:**[\[141970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of gambling being recorded as a relevant factor, where appropriate, in Coroner's proceedings.

Alex Chalk:

As set out in the response to the report by the House of Lords Select Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry, *Gambling Harm—Time for Action*, the Government recognises that quality information on the circumstances leading to self-harm and suicide, including gambling issues, can support better interventions.

However, as the Committee observes, whilst a coroner may be made aware of information about the motivation or contributory factors in a suicide, it is generally beyond the coroner's jurisdiction to determine why someone died, with the aim of the inquest being to determine who died, and how, when and where they died. This is for a number of reasons, including the fact that a coroner's investigation is a fact-finding exercise and coroners are not permitted by statute to appear to determine any question of civil or criminal liability against another person.

■ Gambling: Crime**Paul Blomfield:**[\[141971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people are serving (a) custodial and (b) suspended sentences where gambling has been identified as a relevant motivational factor in the offence.

Chris Philp:

Centrally held sentencing data does not identify where gambling, or any other factor, has been identified as a relevant motivational factor in the offence. The information may be held on court records but to be able to identify such cases would require accessing individual court records which would be of disproportionate cost.

■ Maternity Leave: Redundancy**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[140902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the oral evidence of the Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets to the Women and Equalities Committee on Unequal impact? Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact on 4 November 2020, Q177, HC 385, how many women made an employment tribunal claim in respect of a redundancy in breach of Regulation 10 of the Maternity and Parental Leave etc. Regulations 1999 in each year since 2000.

Chris Philp:

HM Courts and Tribunals Service does not hold the information requested.

■ **Offences against Children**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[143915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress he is making on reviewing legislative provisions on positions of trust as set out in the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Alex Chalk:

I recognise the concerns about the risk to young people of those in a position of trust, abusing their position. This is an incredibly complex area and it is important that we ensure that the law is working effectively to ensure that young people are protected. Any consideration for reform in this area must achieve the sensitive balance between the protection of young people and ensuring we do not infringe upon the sexual rights and freedoms of those over the age of 16 granted to them by Parliament.

We have taken into account the findings of the review carried out on the legislative provisions on positions of trust as set out in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and are considering next steps with both pace and care. I hope to be in a position to update the house on this work shortly.

■ **Prison Officers: Coronavirus**

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[143674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to provide (a) personal protective equipment, (b) covid-19 tests and (c) covid-19 vaccinations to prison officers.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government is very clear that our prison staff are vital key workers, and many are going above and beyond the call of duty to keep the public, their colleagues, and prisoners safe.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) staff are maintaining social distancing of two metres wherever possible. However, we are following the public health advice on the use of medical face masks alongside other items of personal protective equipment (PPE) where close contact is sustained, essential and unavoidable. We have worked closely with suppliers to ensure adequate supply of soap, cleaning materials, and PPE for staff. HMPPS also issued a face mask strategy for staff and prisoners which sets out when face coverings must be worn.

A comprehensive regular testing regime of both staff and prisoners is in place across the estate and is key in helping to prevent the spread of the virus.

Vaccines are at the centre of the Government's plan to ensure life can return to as normal as soon as possible. As we have done since the beginning of the pandemic, we are working very closely with public health bodies and the NHS to plan collaboratively for future vaccine delivery. During the first phase of vaccine delivery, priorities have been decided by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and

Immunisation and those priorities apply equally to prison staff who fall within the groups identified. We are currently in discussion with the Department of Health and Social Care about how and when priorities for vaccinations in future phases of delivery will be administered to prisoners and prison staff

■ Prison Officers: Pay

Dan Carden:

[143890]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effect on prison officer (a) recruitment, (b) retention and (c) morale of his Department's decision to reject the Prison Service Pay Review Body's Recommendation 3.

Lucy Frazer:

In July 2020, the Government accepted in full six out of seven recommendations made by the Prison Service Pay Review Body. This delivered an increase of at least 2.5% with some staff receiving up to 7% with progression. This delivered an above inflation increase and was the third year in a row that prison staff have benefitted from a pay award of at least 2%.

The Government committed to consider recommendation 3 in more detail due to the affordability challenges a £3,000 uplift posed, and the concern that such a significant increase in pay was out of step with the awards given to other public sector workforces. After careful consideration, the recommendation was ultimately rejected, and this was announced on 10 December 2020.

As part of this decision making, recruitment, retention and staff morale were carefully considered alongside affordability and value for money for the taxpayer. However, recruitment and retention and staff morale levels are all driven by a range of factors and an increase of pay alone cannot be assumed to be a fix for these issues.

It is not possible at this time, particularly during the unique and complex challenges presented by the pandemic, to isolate and quantify the impact of the decision to reject the PSPRB's 'recommendation 3'.

I highly value the work of prison staff and the decision to reject 'recommendation 3' should in no way suggest otherwise. I remain immensely grateful to the hardworking public servants who are critical to the safe and secure running of our prisons.

■ Probate

Sir Christopher Chope:

[144593]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what avenues are available to applicants for Probate whose applications have not been actioned for at least four months and who are informed by the recorded message at the Probate Office that no information will be provided on the progress of existing applications.

Alex Chalk:

As of March 2020, all calls are now answered by the Courts & Tribunals Service Centres, which are equipped with modern technology to monitor performance levels and make improvements to the service being offered.

The service can be contacted Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm, moving to 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 2pm on a Saturday from the 1st February via:

- webchat available at <https://www.gov.uk/applying-for-probate/apply-for-probate> (opens in a new tab)
- telephone on 0300 303 0648
- email at contactprobate@justice.gov.uk

The Courts and Tribunals Service Centre is currently focusing on providing progress updates via telephone on cases over eight weeks of age due to high levels of demand.

For professional users, real time information about the progress of digital cases can be obtained via the online Probate service without the need to contact HMCTS.

■ Prosecutions**Alex Cunningham:****[143756]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people, by offence, were prosecuted under the single justice procedure in each month of 2020; and what the plea rates were for offences charged under the single justice procedure in each month of 2020.

Chris Philp:

Data showing the number of defendants dealt with via single justice procedures (SJP) notices at the magistrates' courts by plea and offence in England and Wales from January – September 2020 (latest available) can be found in the attached table.

The data supplied is a subset of published information relating to the timeliness of defendants dealt with by SJP notice which is available in Table 1 of the Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly, latest to September 2020.

Attachments:

1. Table [Copy of PQ 143756.xlsx]

■ Remand in Custody**Alex Cunningham:****[143752]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of unconvicted people being held in prison on remand awaiting trial.

Chris Philp:

We are aware of the need to mitigate the impact of delays on those who are unconvicted and held in prison. Judges are prioritising the most urgent cases, and we are providing an extra £57m to support services. As one of the first among other

comparable jurisdictions globally to resume jury trials, our Crown Courts currently list thousands of cases each week.

We anticipate that providing the courts with timely information relating to the defendant and services will help to reduce unnecessary remands and increase the appropriate use of bail and bail conditions. In September 2020, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) began a trial of a dedicated and proactive Bail Information Service (BIS) in several courts and prisons in the North West of England and in Wales. In conjunction with this trial, HMPPS are rolling out a Covid-19 response BIS in all public sector remand prisons. Both trials aim to inform the design, resourcing and delivery of a future dedicated and proactive national BIS.

The majority of bail cases that had their first hearing in November 2020 were listed for trial prior to December 2021, and where the defendant is in custody, most cases were listed for trial prior to July 2021. There are rare exceptions where a trial is listed into 2023 and these are judicial decisions.

■ Remand in Custody: Ethnic Groups

Alex Cunningham:

[143753]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what comparative assessment he has made of the effect of remand custody on (a) Black, Asian and minority ethnic people and (b) white people.

Lucy Frazer:

The decision to remand an individual in custody or to grant bail is solely a matter for the courts acting in accordance with the Bail Act 1976 and the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012, which provides a framework of remand in custody and creates a presumption in favour of bail for all defendants involved in criminal proceedings.

A comparative assessment of the effect of remand on different ethnic groups has not been conducted. The Ministry of Justice holds information for remand outcomes broken down by ethnicity in the Magistrates' and Crown Court at the following links: · Crown Court

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888657/remands-crown-court-tool-2019.xlsx · Magistrates Court
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888658/remands-magistrates-court-tool-2019.xlsx

Research by the Youth Justice Board on Ethnic disproportionality in remand and sentencing in the youth justice system was published on 21 January 2021 and can be accessed via the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952483/Ethnic disproportionality in rem and sentencing in the youth justice system.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952483/Ethnic_disproportionality_in_rem_and_sentencing_in_the_youth_justice_system.pdf) Routine Youth Justice Statistics 2019/2020 were released on 28th January also show remand broken down by ethnicity:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2019-to-2020>

■ Television Licences: Non-payment

Alex Cunningham:

[\[143755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2020 to Question 138439 on Television Licences: Non-payment, what assessment his Department has made of the reasons for the high proportion of cases in which the defendant does not enter a plea.

Chris Philp:

Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service has not carried out an assessment of the reasons why defendants in TV Licensing cases fail to enter a plea. However, Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service has undertaken a review of the Single Justice Procedure Notice, to encourage greater engagement. The new Single Justice Procedure Notice will be adopted by TV Licencing as well as other relevant prosecutors later this year.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Loyalist Communities Council: Meetings

Stephen Farry:

[\[143171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will publish a list of the participants from the so-called Loyalist Community Council who met with officials of his Department in a recent Zoom meeting.

Stephen Farry:

[\[143172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what protocols his Department has on holding meetings with people reported to be associated with proscribed organisations.

Mr Robin Walker:

The names of the participants that attended this meeting from the Loyalist Communities Council is in the public domain.

The Northern Ireland Office will continue to engage widely to ensure that the UK Government is able to meet its objectives in Northern Ireland.

■ Northern Ireland Government: Publications

Louise Haigh:

[\[144734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what the timetable is for the publication of the annual report on the implementation of the New Decade, New Approach Agreement.

Mr Robin Walker:

Ahead of the next Implementation Review Meeting, the UK Government will work with the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government to publish an update on the implementation of the New Decade, New Approach agreement.

■ UK Trade with EU: Advertising**Louise Haigh:**[\[144737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, for what reason the changes to trading arrangements in Northern Ireland do not feature as part of the Brexit preparations advertisements running on television and radio.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government's priority has always been to ensure that businesses understand the new trading arrangements introduced across the UK this year.

The Government has run an extensive UK-wide public information campaign aimed at the UK business community, which has directed business owners to the Brexit checker tool and the latest advice on GOV.UK. This included specific Northern Ireland-related guidance.

We also ran bespoke advertisements in Northern Ireland since August 2020 to highlight that some trading rules were changing, including those governing the movement of goods. This information was targeted at the broadest possible audience by using a blend of TV, video on demand, radio, print and digital channels.

TRANSPORT**■ Aircraft: Oxygen****Dr Julian Lewis:**[\[144583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to encourage airlines with unused supplies of oxygen to make those supplies available to the NHS to help meet reported shortfalls in NHS resources of oxygen to treat patients with covid-19.

Robert Courts:

The Department for Transport has not been approached by the Department of Health and Social Care regarding the use of any unused oxygen in the aviation sector.

DfT Ministers and officials maintain regular contact with their counterparts in DHSC, and with stakeholders in the aviation sector, and were any such approach be made, we would act upon it swiftly.

■ Biofuels**Greg Smith:**[\[143920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the Government response to the consultation on Introducing E10 Petrol, which closed on 3 May 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

We plan to publish the Government response to our consultation on the introduction of E10 as soon as possible.

■ Bus Services: Finance

Jim Shannon:

[\[143758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing financial support for bus services directly to local transport authorities rather than bus operators.

Rachel Maclean:

Local transport authorities do receive some Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) funding for tendered services. However, to ensure consistency with Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG), the majority of CBSSG funding is paid directly to operators. The Government needs to be confident that the public transport system can restart swiftly as required. We do not believe that now is the right time to change our funding models.

We are also keen to avoid a situation where different funding models are operating in different parts of the country, which would cause additional challenges for cross-border services or operators whose businesses span multiple urban areas.

The allocation of CBSSG funding reflects the structure of the bus market and ensures that both Local Transport Authorities and operators have the funding they need to support up to 100% of pre-pandemic service levels, where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Local transport funding decisions are devolved in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

■ Cars

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[143039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is planning to take to reduce dependency on private cars.

Rachel Maclean:

Accelerating the shift to public and active transport was one of the six strategic priorities identified for the development of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan. The Plan is due for publication in Spring 2021 and will set out a holistic and cross-modal approach to decarbonising the entire transport system.

Last year, the Prime Minister also launched ambitious plans to boost cycling and walking in England, so that half of all journeys in towns and cities are cycled or walked by 2030. This includes a £2 billion package of funding for active travel over the next 5 years. Additionally, in England, our long-term National Bus Strategy, to be published in the coming months, will provide the right, accessible services for people and communities in ways that meet their needs and provide positive encouragement to use the bus instead of the car.

Transport policy in Wales is a devolved matter and the responsibility of the Welsh Government.

■ **Delivery Services: Exhaust Emissions**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[142779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the engagement of businesses which specialise in delivery on minimising their fleet's contribution to roadside air pollution across the UK.

Rachel Maclean:

We work closely with Ministers in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and right across Government to drive forward our ambitious plans to improve air quality. The Clean Air Strategy sets out an ambitious programme of action to reduce air pollution from a wide range of sources including road transport. Alongside this, Government has put in place a £3.8 billion plan to specifically tackle roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations.

■ **Driving Licences: EU Countries**

Sarah Olney:

[\[144784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure recognition of UK driving licences with EU countries.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to establishing arrangements with EU countries that facilitate private motoring with the minimum of bureaucracy. In 2020, all EU countries, as well as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein have confirmed recognition of UK driving licences which means that International Driving Permits will not be required by UK visitors with photocard driving licences from 1 January 2021.

■ **Driving Tests: Coronavirus**

Drew Hendry:

[\[144725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of funding new driver theory tests for learner drivers whose tests expired while awaiting new practical driving test dates following cancellations caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

Approximately 12,000 -14,000 candidates let their certificates lapse per month in normal circumstances. Further, a candidate whose theory test certificate expires will have received the service for which they paid the fee.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) pays its contractor, Pearson, per theory test delivered. If candidates were exempted from having to pay for a retake, then the DVSA and in turn the fee payer would incur these costs. In addition,

applications for a re-test would need to be validated and systems amended to remove the requirement for payment in these cases. The DVSA's focus should rightly be on developing solutions to address the backlog of practical driving tests that has arisen as a result of the pandemic.

■ Driving: Licensing

Marco Longhi:

[143136]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will extend foreign driving licences beyond the one year cut-off point due to the fact that foreign nationals are unable to take a driving test during the covid-19 lockdown period.

Rachel Maclean:

There are no plans to extend the 12-month period for which holders of foreign driving licences can drive in Great Britain using that licence. To continue driving after the 12-month period the driver must either exchange their licence, if it was issued by a country which has been [designated for licence exchange purposes](#), or apply for a provisional driving licence and pass both a theory and practical driving test.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is looking at a range of measures to increase testing capacity once current restrictions are eased. Immediately, it is responding to requests for driving tests from organisations on behalf of frontline mobile emergency workers, who require a driving licence to carry out duties in their employment role. This is a limited service but extends to foreign licence holders where they meet the criteria and are nominated by eligible organisations.

■ High Speed Two: Wales

Ben Lake:

[144820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the total value is of contracts awarded under the High Speed Two project to suppliers based in Wales.

Andrew Stephenson:

Across Wales, 26 suppliers have already worked on HS2, a figure which continues to grow and can be seen on HS2 Ltd's supply chain map ([click here](#)) and the total value of the contracts awarded to suppliers based in Wales so far is £12,524,479.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Kent

Hilary Benn:

[144600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Kent Access Permits have been issued to date.

Rachel Maclean:

The total number of Kent Access Permits that have been issued to date is 106,201.

■ Liverpool Port: Roads**Bill Esterson:****[143748]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the minutes of meetings on the A5036 Port of Liverpool Access scheme between Highways England and (a) Jigsaw Homes, (b) Bellway North West, (c) Nuffield College, (d) P&O Ferries / Ferrymasters, (e) Stagecoach Merseyside, (f) Santander UK, (g) Aintree NHS Trust, (h) the Health & Safety Executive, (i) Canal & River Trust, (j) the Forestry Commission, (k) Groundwork and (l) Hugh Baird College.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department does not routinely attend, or hold minutes of, meetings between Highways England and its stakeholders.

We would not expect Highways England to publish these.

■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions**Mr Barry Sheerman:****[142780]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Highways England on tackling roadside air pollution.

Rachel Maclean:

Highways England has undertaken a programme of work to improve air quality on the Strategic Road Network (SRN), in the first Road Investment Strategy (RIS1) and RIS2, and has published its own air quality strategy at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/634933/N160081_Air_Quality_Strategy_Final_V18.pdf.

This programme has included monitoring the effectiveness of tall barriers and running an open competition to gather ideas from a wide range of organisations.

To support the mitigation of air quality issues, Highways England has invested £12.5 million of its Air Quality Designated Funding with authorities in Leeds, Coventry, Kent, Nottingham, Sheffield and Bristol to implement an electric van scheme to support the uptake of zero emissions vans. Schemes in Leeds, Coventry, Kent and Nottingham are now operating and will be followed by Sheffield and Bristol.

■ Motor Vehicles: Safety**Hywel Williams:****[144619]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of blacklisting sellers of unroadworthy vehicles with improperly issued MOT certificates.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport has not made a recent assessment in this regard.

However it is already an offence to sell a vehicle that is in an unroadworthy condition under section 75 of the Road Traffic Act 1988.

Hywel Williams:

[\[144620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the number of vehicles not fit for the roads that have been improperly issued a MOT certificate in each of the last five years.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport does not make an annual assessment on this basis. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) takes action against garages if they are found to be issuing certificates to unroadworthy vehicles, including stopping them from testing altogether. In 2020 the DVSA stopped 443 garages and testers from testing.

Hywel Williams:

[\[144621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department made of the potential merits of extending the current appeal periods for improperly issued MOT certificates of (a) three months for corrosion-related problems or (b) 28 days for other defects for buyers of unworthy road vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport has not made a recent assessment of extending the appeals periods for improperly issued MOT certificates. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) consider that 28 days for mechanical defects and 3 months for corrosion are still fit for purpose.

■ **Railway Stations: Access**

Jim McMahon:

[\[144782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of UK railway stations have steps but no lift access.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We estimate that around fifth of our 2,500 stations have step free access that meets current accessibility standards. The Rail Delivery Group remain responsible for ensuring the accessibility data on the National Rail Enquiries website remains accurate and up to date. More than 75% of journeys are through step free stations compared with less than 50% in 2005. Train Operators must have policies in place to help those who need an accessible station get to their nearest one.

■ **Railways: Cheshire**

Fiona Bruce:

[\[143735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps his Department has taken to progress consideration of reopening of the Mid Cheshire rail line and Middlewich railway station.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Having provided detailed feedback on a draft of the document in April, officials received an updated version of the Mid-Cheshire and Middlewich Station Strategic

Outline Business Case from the Cheshire and Warrington LEP in October 2020, along with a request for feedback on their consultant's suggestions for further work on it. The goal is to strengthen the case for the scheme's potential inclusion within the Department's Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP).

Due to funding constraints, the LEP wish to progress this work in the next financial year, supported by co-funding from the Department. My officials plan to discuss with the LEP how this can best be considered and progressed. The third round of the Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund is also currently accepting applications.

■ Shipping: Exhaust Emissions

Andrew Griffith:

[142094]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help the maritime industry to decarbonise.

Robert Courts:

As part of the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, Government has committed £20 million to support the development of clean maritime technologies. This programme builds on the vision set out in the Clean Maritime Plan, published in 2019, and underlines our commitment to addressing emissions from this sector while supporting green growth.

In addition, the Government has made good progress on delivering its commitments in the Clean Maritime Plan, including by: launching a round of grants and a clean maritime call of £1.5m to support innovation in clean maritime; undertaking research considering the role of maritime clusters in delivering clean growth; and, exploring the inclusion of maritime elements in the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) for public consultation later this year.

Further plans on the decarbonisation of the maritime sector will be included in the forthcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan. This will set out a credible and ambitious pathway to delivering transport's contribution to carbon budgets and meet Net Zero by 2050.

■ Transport: Coronavirus

Jim Shannon:

[143757]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with (a) the Urban Transport Group and (b) city region transport authorities on funding support during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

Government officials and Ministers are in regular conversation with members of the Urban Transport Group and local transport authorities to understand the challenges faced by city region transport authorities in England in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. This engagement informs a range of Departmental policies, including the development and administration of Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) funding and Light Rail support funding. Local transport funding decisions are devolved in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Jim Shannon:

[143759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to (a) provide long term funding support to and (b) extend the powers of city region transport authorities after the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has committed up to £27.3 million per week to support the bus sector in England, through the Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) Restart scheme. This funding - some of which is allocated to Local Transport Authorities, for tendered services - has no pre-agreed end date. The Government will work with bus operators and local authorities to review when it is appropriate to end the funding. We are also providing up to £67.8 million of funding for light rail services in Manchester, Tyne and Wear, Sheffield, West Midlands, Nottingham and Blackpool for the period from 27 October to the end of the 20/21 financial year.

The Government is also investing in city regions for the longer term. As announced at Budget and confirmed in the Spending Review, the Government is investing £4.2 billion in the transport networks of eight city regions across England from 22/23. This funding will be delivered through multi-year, consolidated transport settlements agreed with central government and based on plans put forward by city regions. The Government is currently engaging with the eligible city regions to understand their ambitions for this fund.

The Government wants to devolve and decentralise to give more power to local communities, providing an opportunity for all places to level up. That is why we intend to bring forward the Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper in due course. This will cover how the UK Government will partner with places across the UK to build a

sustainable economic recovery and set out our plans for future devolution arrangements.

TREASURY

■ Amusement Arcades: VAT

Scott Benton:

[\[142067\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the VAT reduction to 5 per cent to amusement arcades.

Kemi Badenoch:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors, and will run until 31 March 2021. While we keep all taxes under review, this relief comes at a significant cost to the Exchequer, and there are currently no plans to extend the scope of the reduced rate.

The Government has announced a significant support package to help businesses through the winter months, which includes an extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, an extension of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant, and an extension of the application window for the government-backed loan schemes.

■ Bank Cards: Fees and Charges

Rachel Reeves:

[\[144668\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Mastercard's decision to increase transaction fees for UK shoppers using debit or credit cards to make purchases in the EU, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the implementation of a cap on such transaction fees.

John Glen:

The Government has legislated to ensure that interchange fees remain capped for UK domestic card transactions, where both the card issuer and acquirer are located in the UK, through secondary legislation made under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.

Any changes in cross-border interchange fees between the UK and EU, as between the UK and other third countries, are a result of commercial decisions by card schemes.

■ Bank Services and Small Businesses: Carbon Emissions

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[143841\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the net zero target on (a) the banking industry and (b) SMEs.

Kemi Badenoch:

Our analysis of the impacts of net zero is ongoing and applies across the whole economy. In the coming year, HM Treasury will publish the Final Report of its Net Zero Review, which will set out the costs and opportunities of the transition to net zero. An interim report was published in December 2020 that set out the analysis undertaken so far. The final report will take this analysis further, focusing on innovation and growth, competitiveness, household impacts, and embedding the findings.

The government has also committed to publishing its comprehensive Net Zero Strategy this year, including further plans for reducing emissions across all the UK's major economic sectors.

■ Business: Coronavirus**Anne Marie Morris:**[\[143764\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what targeted support the Government plans to offer to businesses that will lose revenue as a result of cancelled events in the spring and summer.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on sectors like events.

During this difficult time the Treasury is working intensively with employers, delivery partners, industry groups, and other government departments to understand the long-term effects of Covid-19 across all key areas of the economy.

We have already announced considerable and unprecedented support for businesses and individuals.

Businesses forced to close can claim grants of up to £3,000 per month (worth over £1 billion per month) through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed). Any business in England forced to close due to national or local restrictions can claim grants, via their local authority, of up to £3,000 per month, per business premises, depending on rateable value.

In addition, on 5th January, the Government announced an extra £4.6 billion to protect jobs and support affected businesses as restrictions get tougher. Businesses forced to close can claim a one-off grant of up to £9,000. This is in addition to the monthly closed grant amounts above. Local authorities (in England) will also be given an additional £500 million discretionary funding to support their local businesses. This builds on the £1.1 billion discretionary funding (worth £20 per head of population) which local authorities in England have already received to support their local economies and help businesses impacted

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has been extended until the end of April. This provides a substantial grant for employers to cover 80% of the wages of their employees.

Eligible events and businesses may have also benefit from business rates relief, a moratorium on commercial tenant evictions and the £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund supporting thousands of cultural organisations including theatres, music venues, comedy clubs and festivals.

Looking forward, we will continue to monitor the impact of government support on public services, businesses, individuals and sectors, including the events sector, as we respond to this pandemic. The Budget in March will be an opportunity to take stock of our wider support and set out the next stage of our economic response to the pandemic. But we must recognise that it will not be possible to preserve every job or business indefinitely, nor stand in the way of the economy adapting and people finding new jobs or starting new businesses.

■ **Business: UK Trade with EU**

Rachel Reeves:

[\[144671\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the number of (a) UK and (b) EU businesses unable to send goods across the border due to changes to tax and VAT since 1 January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided extensive guidance for the VAT treatment of cross-border goods following the end of the transition period and is committed to supporting businesses to enable them to continue to trade.

As with all tax measures, where new changes have been introduced, the Government includes its assessment of the impacts of the changes in Tax Information and Impact Notes. Notes for measures recently legislated for in the Taxation (Post-transition Period) Act were published alongside that legislation.

■ **Child Benefit: Age**

Justin Madders:

[\[143800\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average age in weeks was of the child when the first related child benefit payment was made in each of the last 12 months.

Jesse Norman:

Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

■ **Construction: VAT**

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[143798\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on companies of introducing a reverse VAT charge for the building and construction services sector with effect from 1 March 2021 in the context of the ongoing covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The Government remains committed to introducing the VAT reverse charge for building and construction on 1 March 2021. VAT fraud in this sector still presents a significant risk to the Exchequer.

There are several UK anti-fraud reverse charge measures already in operation and their impact on business and supply chains is well understood and explained in the Impact Assessment for this measure. The Government provided a very long lead-in time for this measure ahead of the original implementation date of 1 October 2019 and has listened carefully to industry concerns, especially those in relation to cashflow and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector. The Government has subsequently delayed the introduction of the reverse charge on two occasions to give businesses even more time to prepare.

HMRC continue to work closely with the construction industry, providing support and communications to ensure that businesses are fully aware and can prepare for cashflow challenges ahead of implementation on 1 March 2021.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**Drew Hendry:**[\[143831\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions officials of his Department have had with the Financial Conduct Authority on the effect of Government support provided in response to the covid-19 outbreak on business interruption insurance settlements.

John Glen:

The Financial Conduct Authority has advised that all deductions from business interruption insurance settlements should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, as insurance policies differ significantly. The individual policy wording generally sets out the basis on which the sum due to the policyholder following an insured event will be calculated.

The FCA may intervene and take further actions where firms do not appear to be meeting their expectations and treating their customers fairly on these points, and customers have recourse to the Financial Ombudsman Service if they are not satisfied.

All UK insurers have now made a commitment to not make deductions from business interruption insurance settlements to account for Covid-19 business grants.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: NatWest**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[144695\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his Department is taking to support small business owners who have had their NatWest bank accounts suspended or closed after applying for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

John Glen:

The Government launched the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) to support businesses' access to finance during the pandemic. As of 24 January, the scheme has supported more than 87,000 businesses access more than £20bn of finance.

Decisions about what products are offered to individual businesses, including business bank accounts, remain commercial decisions for banks and building societies, it would therefore be inappropriate for the Government to intervene in these individual decisions.

There is no requirement in the scheme rules for an applicant to have a business bank account with the lender they apply with. The Government believes any dispute arising between banks and their customers is best resolved by the parties involved. Should individuals be unsatisfied with their bank's response to their complaint, they may wish to consider an approach to the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) who provide a free, independent dispute resolution service for bank customers, including eligible small businesses.

Currently there are over 100 accredited lenders offering CBILS, and individuals may wish to consider approaching one of these various lenders to access support.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**Anneliese Dodds:**[\[144836\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the data published by HMRC on employers who have claimed through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, how many employers (a) have made a successful application to have their details withheld, (b) have a pending application to have their details withheld and (c) paid back the whole grant before the list was produced.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC published a list of some 743,000 employers that claimed through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in respect of December claim periods on 26 January 2021. Employers can ask for their details to be withheld if they can show that publication would lead to the threat of violence or intimidation toward the employer or other specified associated persons.

Before this date HMRC received 55 applications from employers to have their names withheld.

17 of these applications were accepted and will not be published. Two applications were rejected and 36 were pending. These employers were removed from the list before publication pending resolution of their applications.

To date no employer that has applied to have their details removed from the list has subsequently chosen to pay back their claim.

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[144839\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on employer uptake of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme of requirements to disclose receipt of CJRS in businesses' applications to sell goods or services to the public or private sectors as a gauge of business health.

Jesse Norman:

The CJRS supports businesses to preserve employer-employee matches by providing a mechanism to pay the wages of furloughed employees.

The Government continues to monitor CJRS take-up, with HMRC's latest official statistics producing analysis of claims split by characteristics including employer size, sector of the economy, geography, age and gender.

The latest HMRC official statistics for November and December show the number of employments furloughed increased to 3.7 million on 1 November (when the CJRS extension launched), reaching 4.1 million on 11 November, and reduced to 3.8 million on 31 December* (*provisional figure).

■ **Customs: ICT**

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[144840\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average response time is to businesses submitting queries to HMRC via the Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) system.

Jesse Norman:

CHIEF has been scaled to 360 million declarations per year as part of HMRC's preparations for the end of the Transition Period, which equates to 111 declarations per second. The CHIEF system message response time is 5 seconds, which is within the Service Level Agreement for all transactions and is currently performing well.

■ **Employment: Coronavirus**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[144729\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will ensure that people who are unable to participate in work as a result of (a) home schooling and (b) other Government covid-19 guidance have equitable access to financial support schemes.

Kemi Badenoch:

Since their introduction, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme have been available to those unable to go to work because of caring responsibilities arising from COVID-19, such as caring for a home-schooling child, or caring for a vulnerable individual.

People who are unable to work from home and have been told to shield have also been eligible for these support schemes, as well as Statutory Sick Pay and Employment Support Allowance. In addition to this, the government has increased the generosity of the welfare system by £7.4 billion in 2020-21, including a temporary

£20 uplift to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit element, an increase in Local Housing Allowance rates and relaxation of the UC minimum income floor for self-employed claimants.

Local authorities have also received additional funding to provide support to people who have been advised to shield.

■ Financial Services: UK Relations with EU

Anneliese Dodds: [\[144838\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what meetings have taken place with the EU on the memorandum of understanding on financial services since 1 January 2021.

John Glen:

Officials have had initial conversations with the Commission about the MoU and we are on track to agree it by March. We will not, however, be providing a running commentary on the status or content of the talks.

■ Further Education: Sheffield

Dan Jarvis: [\[R\] \[144684\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to include the (a) Local Enterprise Partnership and (b) Mayoral Combined Authority in the Sheffield City Region in fiscal decision making in their local economy through the Further Education Reform White Paper.

Steve Barclay:

Local Skills Improvement Plans will build on the work that Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships have done through their establishment of Skills Advisory Panels.

Mayoral Combined Authorities play a vital role across their local skills system and most already have responsibility for delivering certain adult education functions and will continue to do so. Mayoral Combined Authorities will be consulted by the Department for Education in the development of these plans.

■ Gaming Machines: Excise Duties

Scott Benton: [\[142066\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing Machine Games Duty for high street arcades to mitigate the financial effects of covid-19 restrictions.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has no current plans to reduce Machine Games Duty. High street arcade operators will have been able to benefit from the package of measures introduced to mitigate the financial impact of Covid-19 worth over £280 billion, including the Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended until April, the

Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the bounce back loan and payment deferral schemes.

HM Treasury keeps all taxes, including Machine Games Duty, under active review.

■ Infrastructure: Finance

Dan Jarvis:

[R] [\[143760\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish a list of the projects funded under the National Infrastructure Strategy; what the timescale is for the (a) disbursement and (b) implementation of each of those projects; and how much funding has not yet been allocated to specific infrastructure projects.

Jesse Norman:

The National Infrastructure Strategy set out the Government's plan to transform the UK's infrastructure to help level up the country and put the UK on the path to net zero emissions by 2050.

The Strategy announced record levels of public investment in strategic roads, digital infrastructure and flood defences, alongside measures to encourage and increase private investment, such as the creation of a new infrastructure bank for the UK.

The Strategy includes different kinds of funding commitments, from individual projects like HS2, to overarching programmes, such as £5bn for the rollout of gigabit capable broadband. A number of programmes will be administered by delivery agencies like the Environment Agency and Highways England who will allocate funding to individual projects.

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority will publish the next iteration of its annual National Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline in 2021, as stated in the NIS, and this will list future planned investments and procurements across infrastructure and construction.

The National Infrastructure Strategy also included a timeline of forthcoming Government publications which indicated where future action can be expected.

■ London Capital and Finance: Insolvency

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[143751\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Dame Elizabeth Gloster's report entitled, Independent Investigation into the Financial Conduct Authority's Regulation of London Capital & Finance plc, published on 23 November 2020, what steps he has taken to implement the recommendations of that report and re-compensate bondholders.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[143761\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Written Statement of 17 December 2020, Financial Services Update, HCWS678, what progress has been made in compensating the bondholder victims of London Capital & Finance plc.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that this has been a very difficult time for LCF bondholders. That is why on 23 May 2019, following a request from Charles Randell, Chair of the FCA, we formally directed the FCA to launch an independent investigation into the events at LCF, and approved the FCA's appointment of Dame Elizabeth Gloster to lead it.

Dame Elizabeth's independent investigation considered the events and circumstances surrounding the failure of LCF and whether, in its supervision of LCF, the FCA discharged its functions in a manner which enabled it to effectively fulfil its statutory objectives. Dame Elizabeth delivered her report to the FCA on 23 November 2020, and the report alongside the FCA's response was published on 17 December 2020. A Written Ministerial Statement was made on the same day setting out the Government's response. These documents are available online at gov.uk.

Dame Elizabeth makes nine recommendations for the FCA. The Government welcomes the FCA's apology to LCF bondholders and their commitment to implement Dame Elizabeth's recommendations.

HM Treasury has also accepted the four recommendations that Dame Elizabeth Gloster made for the government regarding the regulatory regime. The Written Statement set out the steps that the Government will be taking to implement them.

As set out in the Written Statement, there are three main channels through which London Capital & Finance plc (LCF) bondholders can seek compensation. These are the administration process, the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS), and the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) Complaints Scheme.

The Written Statement also set out that, taking into consideration the specific and complex set of circumstances surrounding the collapse of LCF, the Treasury will set up a compensation scheme which will assess whether there is justification for further one-off compensation payments in certain circumstances for some LCF bondholders. The Government will announce further details in due course.

■ Mortgages**Dan Jarvis:****[143763]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of mortgage prisoners.

John Glen:

The government is committed to helping mortgage prisoners where they will see genuine benefit. This has included work with the Financial conduct Authority to implement rule changes to its mortgage lending rules, removing the regulatory barrier that prevented some customers, who otherwise may have been able to switch, from accessing new products. The new rules should allow customers to switch to an active lender as long as they meet the lenders' risk appetite and meet certain criteria, such as not looking to borrow more and be up to date with payments. Inactive lenders have now started contacting borrowers who have been struggling to switch, setting

out new options that may be available for them on the active market. A number of lenders have also come forward with products specifically for these borrowers.

In addition, the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) launched online information and a dedicated phone service (accessible via MaPS' main contact number) as a key source of information and advice for borrowers with inactive lenders, including signposting to specific brokers that will be able to help them look for a deal with an active lender.

■ **Mortgages: Interest Rates**

Dan Jarvis:

[\[143762\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on the economy of introducing a cap to the Standard Variable Rates charged to closed book mortgage prisoners.

John Glen:

The Financial Conduct Authority's 2019 Mortgage Market Review found that direct price intervention was not required at this time as the current market is working well for the vast majority of borrowers. FCA data released in July 2020 stated that customers with inactive lenders pay on average just 0.4% more than borrowers with the same lending characteristics with active lenders. In addition, the recent London School of Economics report on mortgage prisoners noted "capping SVRs at a level close to the best rate for new loans could create harm in other parts of the market, and we do not recommend it".

■ **Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Hardship Fund: Wholesale Trade**

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[143672\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness of the Scottish Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Hardship Fund in safeguarding food and drink wholesale businesses from collapse and (b) potential merits of a scheme based on that model in other parts of the UK.

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[144582\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness of the Scottish Wholesale Food and Drink Resilience Fund in safeguarding food and drink wholesale businesses from collapse and (b) potential merits of a scheme based on that model in other parts of the UK.

Kemi Badenoch:

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, the Government has protected people's jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK. Food and drink wholesalers have been eligible for a number of economic support schemes, including:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended until the end of April 2021 for all parts of the UK;

- The opportunity to defer VAT payments due between 20 March and 30 June 2020; and
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme for small businesses to borrow between £2,000 and £50,000, with no interest payments or fees for the first 12 months.

Wholesalers in England may also receive further support with their fixed costs from local authorities through the £1.6 billion in funding made available for discretionary Additional Restrictions Grants to support local businesses.

Businesses may also be eligible for other elements of the Government's support package including government-backed loans, tax deferrals, Business Rate reliefs, and general and sector-specific grants. The Government urges businesses to visit the online Coronavirus Business Support Finder Tool for tailored information on how to access support available to them.

To give the Scottish Government the certainty to plan and deliver their Covid-19 response, we have provided them with an upfront guarantee that they will receive at least £8.6bn in additional funding this year on top of their Spring Budget funding. It is for the Scottish Government to determine how to use this funding.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Tulip Siddiq:

[143853]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, under what circumstances staff who work in early years settings are eligible to be furloughed during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

Staff who work in early years settings are eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme if the employer making the claim and the relevant employee meet the eligibility criteria.

Furloughed employees must have been employed on 30 October and HMRC must have received an RTI submission between 20 March and 30 October notifying payment in respect of that employee.

It is for the employer to decide whether to offer to furlough an employee.

If an employer has staff costs that are publicly funded, even if they are not in the public sector, they should use that money to continue paying staff, and not furlough them. Organisations can use the scheme if they are not fully funded by public grants, and they should contact their sponsor department or respective administration for further guidance.

Full eligibility criteria for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is communicated through GOV.UK guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-you-could-be-covered-by-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>.

■ Public Libraries: Finance

Ben Lake:

[\[143881\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department undertook to inform the comparability factor for Central Libraries funding in the 2020 Statement of Funding.

Kemi Badenoch:

The comparability factors are included in the Statement of Funding Policy, which was published alongside the Spending Review 2020.

The majority of funding for 'The British Library funding' is UK wide. Given that Central Libraries predominantly comprise 'The British Library', the Department for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport concluded that the average territorial extent of Central Libraries was UK wide.

As outlined in the Statement of Funding Policy, where the UK government has responsibility for providing services across the UK, the comparability factor will be 0%.

Ben Lake:

[\[143882\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what definition of Central Libraries his Department used in the 2020 Statement of Funding: Funding the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive.

Kemi Badenoch:

In the Statement of Funding Policy, the Department for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS) concluded that 'Central Libraries' refer to 'The British Library' and public library spend that is not already captured as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement. DCMS allocate a small amount of programme spend that relates to supporting public libraries in England outside of this settlement, therefore the majority of spend relates to 'The British Library' which benefits the entire United Kingdom.

'The British Library' was established through the British Library Act 1972 which effected, for the United Kingdom, a national library. It is absolutely clear that the legal extent of the British Library is the United Kingdom.

As outlined in the Statement of Funding Policy, where the UK government has responsibility for providing services across the UK, the comparability factor will be 0%.

■ Retail Trade: UK Trade with EU

Rachel Reeves:

[\[144672\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to protect UK consumers from (a) hidden or unclear customs and (b) VAT charges when buying goods from EU retailers.

Jesse Norman:

Where goods are subject to both import VAT and customs charges, these are due at the border and will be collected from the UK recipient. Guidance on this can be found at GOV.UK.

The Government recognises the importance of transparent prices for goods purchased from abroad. That is why, from 1 January, the Government introduced new rules for most goods in consignments not exceeding £135. Overseas businesses involved in these sales are now required to show a price which includes VAT at the point of purchase.

■ Revenue and Customs: Contracts**Navendu Mishra:**[\[142075\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how often a supplier termination event takes place at HM Revenue and Customs.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested could only be made available at disproportionate cost. Due to the high number of contracts awarded by HMRC, it would take a significant amount of HMRC staff resource to obtain the information requested. HMRC records are not held in such a way as to identify contracts that have ended due to a supplier termination event.

Navendu Mishra:[\[142076\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how often a supplier termination event takes place at HM Revenue and Customs relating to the prohibition of the use of arrangements involving the use of offshore entities, whereby the main purpose is to achieve a reduction in UK tax of any description.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested could only be made available at disproportionate cost. Due to the high number of contracts awarded by HMRC, it would take a significant amount of HMRC staff resource to obtain the information requested. HMRC records are not held in such a way as to identify contracts that have ended due to a supplier termination event and the reason behind this.

HMRC incorporate standard tax compliance clauses into all of their commercial contracts, requiring the supplier to ensure that it and its subcontractors do not put in place arrangements involving offshore companies designed to achieve a reduction in United Kingdom tax which would otherwise be payable.

■ Revenue and Customs: Correspondence**Afzal Khan:**[\[143904\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of correspondence received by HMRC from hon. Members in the last 12 months received a substantive response within the 15-day service standard.

Jesse Norman:

HM Revenue and Customs have had a central role in the Government response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including supporting businesses and individuals.

Between April and December 2020, HMRC handled more than 10,000 cases from Honourable Members, a 92% increase from the same period in 2019. As well as providing bespoke responses to Honourable Members, they have continued to reply to correspondence from members of the public.

HMRC correspondence performance over the last 5 years in responding to Members of the House of Commons within 15 days is detailed in the table below.

YEAR	DEADLINES MET
2016	83%
2017	87%
2018	84%
2019	79%
2020	58%

■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services**Anneliese Dodds:**[\[144837\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of queries to HMRC's Tariff Classification Service are (a) answered within five working days and (b) remain unanswered after five working days in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Jesse Norman:

97.5% of queries are answered within 5 days, with 2.5% of queries being answered after 5 days. The volumes of queries to HMRC's Tariff Classification Service have nearly doubled in the last six months, and many of these are not classification-related.

The statistics for pre-July 2020 show over 99% of queries were responded to within 5 days.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**[\[143830\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish immediately when the next self-employment income support scheme grant (a) can be claimed and (b) will be paid.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is committed to supporting self-employed people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

The fourth grant will cover February to April 2021. The Government will set out further details in due course.

Furthermore, the SEISS continues to be just one element of a substantial package of support for the self-employed which includes Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

■ Social Enterprises: Tax Allowances**Mr Steve Baker:**[\[143750\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the (a) potential effect on community benefit societies of the Social Investment Tax Relief ending in April 2021 and (b) potential merits of extending that tax relief.

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.

Stephen Timms:[\[144588\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a reformed Social Investment Tax Relief to support the Government's policy of levelling up; and if he will make a statement.

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.

■ Supply Teachers: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Paul Blomfield:

[\[143745\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of making it mandatory for agencies to sign supply teachers up to the Flexible Furlough Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

I refer the hon Member to my answer of 28 January 2021 to PQ UIN : 142918.

Kate Green:

[\[144675\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on supply teaching staff of the requirement for employers to meet the cost of (a) national insurance and (b) pension contributions for furloughed staff.

Jesse Norman:

Agency workers, including supply teachers, are eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) in the same way as other employees, and can continue to be claimed for during periods of school closure provided that the usual eligibility criteria are met.

Employers will only be asked to cover National Insurance and employer pension contributions for hours not worked. For an average claim, this accounts for just five per cent of total employment costs or £70 per employee per month. This is a fair way to ask employers to contribute because it protects lower paid workers, by limiting the cost of them to employers.

Since March, the Government has provided support for people, businesses and public services totalling an estimated £280 billion. In particular, 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.

■ Tax Yields

Esther McVey:

[\[141978\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the (a) expected amount of tax to be accrued to the Exchequer in the year to 31 January 2021 and (b) amount of tax accrued in the year to 31 January 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The independent Office for Budget Responsibility produced a monthly profile consistent with their November 2020 forecast showing Central Government Current Receipts (CGCR) from April 1st 2020 to 31st January 2021 are forecast to be £578.6bn.

In comparison, in the Public Sector Finances (jointly produced by the Office for National Statistics and HM Treasury) CGCR for the same period in the previous year was £626.9bn.

■ Taxation: Self-assessment

Kevin Brennan:

[\[144622\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations he has received on extending the self-assessment tax deadline for people who have been ineligible for financial support during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

In recent weeks the Government has received representations on extending the Self-Assessment deadline date. These have come from professional bodies representing tax agents. They have focused on the general Self-Assessment population and tax agents rather than those ineligible for financial support during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Government is aware that many taxpayers may struggle to meet their Self-Assessment obligations this year due to the impacts of COVID-19. While taxpayers were encouraged to file their tax return by 31 January 2021 if possible, anyone who could not file their return by the 31 January deadline will not receive a late filing penalty if they file online by 28 February 2021.

Taxpayers' other Self-Assessment obligations are unchanged, including the obligation to pay their bill by 31 January 2021.

Anyone having difficulty paying their tax bill, whether they have received financial support from the Government or not, can use HMRC's Time to Pay (TTP) service once they have filed their return.

Kevin Brennan:

[\[144623\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations he has received on the potential merits of waiving the January 2021 self-assessment tax bill for those who have been ineligible for financial support during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is aware that many taxpayers, including those who may have been ineligible for financial support during the COVID-19 outbreak, may have difficulty in meeting the Self-Assessment payment deadline this year due to the impacts of COVID-19.

The Government has no plans to waive tax bills for taxpayers. However, HMRC are committed to helping all taxpayers pay their tax liabilities. Anyone having difficulty paying their tax bill by 31 January 2021, whether they have received financial support from the Government or not, can use HMRC's automated self-serve Time to Pay (TTP) online service once they have filed their return.

For liabilities up to £30,000, taxpayers can set up an instalment arrangement online without having to contact HMRC beforehand. TTP is still available for taxpayers with

liabilities exceeding £30,000, but they must contact HMRC to make the necessary arrangements.

■ UK Trade with EU: Customs

Rachel Reeves:

[\[143744\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when the Government plans to retire its Chief customs system and transition to the Customs Declaration Service for GB-EU trade.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC are currently dual running both CHIEF and the Customs Declaration Service. HMRC will continue to work with key delivery partners and declarants on their readiness for CDS and any change to a single customs platform will be considered as part of HMRC's continued joint working.

■ VAT: Registration

Rachel Reeves:

[\[144670\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to support businesses to register for VAT in multiple jurisdictions in response to the UK no longer being part of the single EU VAT area.

Jesse Norman:

UK businesses exporting goods into the EU will be subject to EU rules relating to import VAT. Many businesses will already be registered in Member States that they export into as a result of existing distance selling rules. The Government is committed to supporting business to understand and carry out the requirements necessary to continue trading.

■ Working Hours

Neil Gray:

[\[144697\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a four-day working week.

Kemi Badenoch:

Enforcing a four-day working week would likely increase business costs at a time where we should be supporting businesses. We need to help businesses by creating and protecting jobs, not adding to their costs. This is why the Government has extended a number of Covid support schemes, such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, through the winter.

The UK's flexible labour market allows employers to independently agree working arrangements with their workers. Enforcing a four-day working week would take that choice away from both workers and employers.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Employment: Disability****Marion Fellows:**[\[143820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to close the disability employment gap since April 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

A range of DWP initiatives are supporting disabled people to stay in and enter work. These include the Work and Health Programme, the Intensive Personalised Employment Support programme, Access to Work, Disability Confident and support in partnership with the health system, including Employment Advice in NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapy services.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, we have provided specialist employment support remotely and made programmes easier to access.

The Department is bringing forward a Green Paper on health and disability support. The Green Paper will consider how we improve our current service so it's better and easier to use, explore how we provide extra support to navigate the system, and understand how we improve our employment support offer. Additionally, the Government plans to publish a National Strategy for Disabled People this year to ensure that all disabled people can play a full role in society. The strategy will take into account the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on disabled people with focus on the issues that affect them the most.

■ Employment: Health**Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[144850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to publish the Government response to the consultation entitled, Health is everyone's business: proposals to reduce ill health-related job loss, which closed on 7 October 2019.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is committed to reducing the disability employment gap and supporting disabled people and those with health conditions to thrive at work. We received a good response from a range of stakeholders. The Government is considering the timing of the response in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We anticipate that a response will be available shortly.

■ Food Banks: Research**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[144693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2020 to Question 84269 on Food Banks, what the timescale is for the publication of her Department's update of the literature review of the factors driving the use of food banks.

Will Quince:

The Department reallocated resources to prioritise work to help the COVID-19 effort. As such, we will update on the literature review on the factors driving the use of food banks in due course.

■ Food Supply: Surveys**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[143769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department plans to publish the results of the responses to the 10 new food security questions introduced to the Family Resources Survey in 2019.

Will Quince:

The Family Resources Survey has collected data on food security since April 2019.

The results for the 2019-20 survey year will be released in March 2021. The exact date of publication will be announced at least 4 weeks in advance, in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

The inclusion of results from the food security questions is subject to the usual quality assurance processes which accompany all DWP statistical publications.

■ Industrial Injuries Advisory Council**Stephanie Peacock:**[\[143861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average taken by her Department to implement recommendations from the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council is.

Stephanie Peacock:[\[143862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many recommendations from the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council are awaiting implementation by her Department.

Stephanie Peacock:[\[143863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what criteria her Department uses to select which recommendations from the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council to select.

Stephanie Peacock:[\[143864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to publish its responses to recommendations made by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC) is a non-Departmental public body of independent experts, representatives of employers and employees, whose primary role is to make recommendations about which diseases should be included in the list of diseases covered by Industrial Injuries Scheme. On matters relating to Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB), the Secretary of State is advised by IIAC to consider any recommendations to improve the scheme and any changes to

prescription and guidance. We carefully consider each of the recommendations made by the Council, taking into account the feasibility of implementation and the estimated cost and timing of delivery. If legislative change is required, we must also draft and lay regulations in Parliament. We do not hold information on the average time taken to implement recommendations from the IIAC.

However, we are aware of two outstanding recommendations which IIAC has made. The first of which is a recommendation that guidance to medical assessors and decision makers be changed where a case exists for recognising prescribed disease D11 in a coalminer with primary lung cancer. More recently, IIAC recommended that malignant melanoma in pilots and cabin crew be added to the list of prescribed diseases for which benefit is payable. Due to considerable constraints on departmental resources, the Department has not yet been able to take these recommendations forward. My officials are aware of the outstanding recommendations and are carefully considering the recommendations made by the Council and will continue to progress them forward as soon as possible.

More details and updates from IIAC, including their recommendations to the Department of Work and Pensions can be found on the GOV.UK site:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/industrial-injuries-advisory-council>

■ **Jobseeker's Allowance**

Darren Jones: [142042]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will bring forward proposals to extend jobseeker's allowance eligibility beyond 182 days for unemployed people who are ineligible to receive universal credit or other covid-19-specific benefits.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to the answer given to PQ [119284](#).

■ **Poverty: Kingston upon Hull**

Dame Diana Johnson: [144631]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what comparative estimate she has made of the number of children living in poverty in Kingston upon Hull at the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak and in January 2021.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

■ **Self-employed: Retirement**

Robert Largan: [143170]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to help people who are self-employed save for their retirement.

Guy Opperman:

The Government remains committed to increase retirement saving among the self-employed, and many already do save into a pension. The incomes, assets and self-employment experiences vary widely among this population, with considerable differences in resilience for retirement. Given this diversity, finding effective durable solutions is a long term challenge; there is no straightforward single mechanism, supported by evidence, to bring self-employed people into pension saving, but we continue to urge individuals to avail themselves of the opportunities that do already exist for pension saving.

We commenced a trialling research programme in 2019/20 to test a range of approaches and interventions. This programme includes the role of behavioural messages and savings mechanisms using financial digital platforms and uses relevant behavioural insights from automatic enrolment. This will build the evidence base to find ways to make retirement saving easier for self-employed individuals.

In addition, we have completed a short research project to evaluate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the savings and financial wellbeing and resilience of self-employed businesses. We aim to commence [more widespread] technology trials, testing behaviorally-based savings mechanisms, from this summer. This will build on findings from the first stage of trialing, which were published [16 September](#) and on [14 December](#) last year. In addition to this the sidecar savings project is a potential blueprint for much greater financial resilience in the self-employed world of pensions.

■ Social Security Benefits: Australia

Carol Monaghan: [\[143821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with her Australian counterpart on the potential merits of a reciprocal social security agreement with the UK covering the uprating of pensions.

Guy Opperman:

The Secretary of State has not had any recent discussions on this issue with the Government of Australia.

■ Social Security Benefits: Canada

Carol Monaghan: [\[143822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of the Canadian Government's request for a reciprocal social security agreement with the UK covering the uprating of pensions.

Guy Opperman:

The Department for Work and Pensions plans to respond shortly on this issue.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Karin Smyth:

[142993]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her policies of the Disability Benefits Consortium report on the benefit losses that disabled people experienced during the benefit freeze.

Justin Tomlinson:

The benefit freeze was in place for 4 tax years from 2016/17 and ended in April 2020. During the freeze we excluded benefits and payments relating to the additional costs of disability and for carers. In April 2020 these rates were increased by 1.7% in line with inflation.

The Department is bringing forward the Health and Disability Support Green Paper which will explore how the welfare system can better meet the needs of disabled people and people with health conditions now and in the future. We will be considering the range of feedback we have had from stakeholders and disabled people through our engagement events whilst developing the Green Paper.

Karin Smyth:

[142994]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the adequacy of benefit rates during the covid-19 outbreak for disabled people on legacy benefits.

Justin Tomlinson:

Department for Work and Pension Ministers and officials are in regular contact with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Treasury officials. We will spend over £55 billion this year (2020/21) on benefits to support people with health conditions and disabilities. This will increase by £1.6 billion to £57 billion in 2021/22.

■ Social Security Benefits: Kingston upon Hull

Dame Diana Johnson:

[144633]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what comparative assessment her Department has made of the reasons for the change in the number of people claiming benefits in (a) Kingston upon Hull and (b) the UK in the latest period for which figures are available.

Will Quince:

The Department regularly publishes statistics on the number of people claiming various benefits in Great Britain, and these are available by local authority here:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Social Security Benefits: Mortgages and Rented Housing

Karin Smyth:

[143825]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what comparative assessment she has made of the adequacy of social security support for (a) mortgage costs and (b) renters during the covid-19 outbreak.

Guy Opperman:

No comparative assessment has been made of the adequacy of social security support for mortgage costs and renters during Covid-19.

Support for mortgage costs during the covid-19 outbreak is as follows:

- Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) provides support for homeowners who qualify for an income related benefit.
- SMI helps people maintain their existing, reasonable mortgage commitments so they can remain in their homes.
- New claimants to Universal Credit who are not in work are entitled to claim help with their mortgage payments once they have served the nine-month qualifying period.
- Homeowners experiencing financial difficulties meeting mortgage repayments because of Covid-19 should contact their lender as soon as possible to discuss what support might be available.

Support for renters during the covid-19 outbreak is as follows:

- In response to Covid-19 Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates were increased in April 2020 for renters in the private sector. This provides around 1.5 million claimants who receive either the housing element of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit with around £600 more housing support per year than they would otherwise have received.
- We are maintaining LHA rates at their increased levels for 2021/22 ensuring claimants renting in the private rented sector will continue to benefit from the significant increase in the rates applied this year, providing claimants with stability during this period.
- For those living in the Social Rented Sector, maximum housing costs support is based on actual rent and eligible service charges less any deductions for under-occupation.
- For those who require additional support with housing costs Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are available from local authorities.

■ Supported Housing

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[142868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to undertake a review for categories of specified accommodation by (a) country, (b) region and (c) local authority area.

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

■ Unemployment: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[143777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to tackle unemployment in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

The department is committed to increasing unemployment support for people in all areas of the country, including Coventry North East and Coventry, through A Plan for Jobs. Doubling the number of work coaches in Job Centres is well underway and the Kickstart scheme, Job Entry Targeted Support and the Job Finding Support Service have now been launched. Later in 2021, the Restart programme will begin providing support to over 1 million long-term unemployed people.

■ Universal Credit

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[144615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what her Department's target timescale for processing applications for Alternative Payment Arrangements; and what percentage of claims are processed within this target.

Will Quince:

There is no target timescale for processing applications for Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs). APAs are available at any point during Universal Credit claims where there is risk of financial harm to a claimant and/or their family.

APAs can help claimants who need additional support with:

- paying housing costs of Universal Credit as a Managed Payment direct to the landlord;
- more frequent than monthly payments; or;
- split payment of an award between partners.

Universal Credit payment timeliness statistics are published in the Households on Universal Credit section on Stat-Xplore. These figures can be broken down by those with APAs and can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>.

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Universal Credit: Automation**Stephen Timms:****[143680]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of implementing the automated process under the Universal Credit (Earned Income) Amendment Regulations 2020.

Stephen Timms:**[143681]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when the automated process to deliver the Universal Credit (Earned Income) Amendment Regulations 2020 will be in place.

Will Quince:

No such estimate has been made.

We expect to automate identification of affected claimants early in 2021. This will allow us to proactively correct awards before they are paid, without the need for the claimant to raise the issue.

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus**Esther McVey:****[141979]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of the potential cost to the public purse of the 2.9 million people excluded from covid-19 financial support claiming universal credit in the event of becoming unemployed during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

At each fiscal event the department works closely with the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) to estimate welfare spend based on latest unemployment projections. The OBR's latest projections are available here:

http://cdn.obr.uk/CCS1020397650-001_OBR-November2020-EFO-v2-Web-accessible.pdf

The latest Universal Credit forecasts, for number of households, estimated each year are published in the Benefit Expenditure and Caseload Tables, which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-expenditure-and-caseload-tables-2020>

■ Universal Credit: Digital Technology**Navendu Mishra:****[142085]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of claimants for universal credit who have been affected by digital exclusion including the closure of libraries, day centres and other public sources of digital support during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost. Universal Credit is designed to be a 'digital-first' service, ensuring we make best use of technology to deliver a modern and effective working-age welfare system, allowing our staff to concentrate on those people who require additional support.

Although the Department offers comprehensive support for claimants to use our digital service, there will be occasions when people are unable to make their claim online, so telephone applications can be accepted. In these instances, information normally available through a claimant's online account will be communicated in an alternative format, which is best suited to an individual's circumstances. Throughout the pandemic, Jobcentre Plus offices have remained open to support the most vulnerable claimants.

Help to Claim, delivered through Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland, was already a multi-channel offer prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, capable of supporting people through the entire Universal Credit claim process by telephone and web chat, up to receiving their first full correct payment on time.

■ Universal Credit: ICT**Neil Gray:****[143772]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January 2021 to Question 137948, what the exceptions are to providing an individual with an explanation of amendments to their universal credit journal.

Will Quince:

In response to Questions 137946, 137947 and 137948, where a journal entry is modified or removed, an explanation should also be supplied through the journal. As claimant circumstances can be varied and complex, Work Coaches and Case Managers, using their knowledge of an individual claimant's needs, are also able to use their discretion to communicate through an alternative channel, such as telephone or SMS, where this better suits the needs of the claimant, or where actions on the journal need additional clarification.

■ Universal Credit: Maladministration**Neil Gray:****[143771]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2021 to Question 134451, what redress claimants are given in addition to an explanation, in circumstances where they are unable to identify an incorrect decision or payment as a result of her Department's staff having retrospectively amended their universal credit journal.

Will Quince:

Universal Credit payment information is provided through an online statement which provides a breakdown of entitlement following the end of each monthly assessment period. Work Coaches and Case Managers are unable to alter these statements as they are automatically generated based on individual claimant circumstances, including any decisions made by the Department that effect the award amount. If a claimant cannot resolve an issue through their journal or via the freephone Universal Credit helpline, formal complaints can be raised by following the Department's complaints procedure which is published on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

■ Universal Credit: Rents**Sir Greg Knight:****[144616]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of claims for managed payments to landlords were rejected in each of the last 12 months.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate costs.

■ Work Capability Assessment: Coronavirus**Vicky Foxcroft:****[141532]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the number of claims for (a) personal independence payment, (b) employment support allowance and (c) disablement pension which are pending due to a face-to-face health and disability assessment in (i) Lewisham Deptford, (ii) London and (iii) the UK which cannot be completed under covid-19 restrictions.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[141533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average waiting time from submission to payment of claims was in each of the last 12 months for (a) personal independence payment, (b) employment support allowance and (c) disablement pension in (i) Lewisham Deptford, (ii) London and (iii) the UK where a face-to-face health and disability assessment is required.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [141531](#).

The Department publishes Personal Independence Payment assessment data online which can be accessed here: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/personal-independence-payment-statistics?_sm_byp=iVVWb5570W4jkbMj#content

The PIP clearance times are available to October 2020 and can be focused down to region level. Any further geographical breakdowns are not available and to provide them would incur disproportionate cost.

The Department publishes Employment Support Allowance (ESA) Work Capability Assessment (WCA) data online which can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/esa-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessments-including-mandatory-reconsiderations-and-appeals-january-2021>.

The ESA clearance times are available to June 2020 at a national level only. The clearance times are only currently available to March 2020, but can be focused down to region and local authority level. Any further geographical breakdowns are not available and to provide them would incur disproportionate cost.

The question enquires into 'disablement pension', we have understood that to refer to the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) which this Department administers. The Department publishes quarterly statistics on claims and assessments under IIDB scheme in Great Britain here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/industrial-injuries-disablement-benefit-quarterly-statistics>

The latest claims information is to March 2020, with the lowest geographical level available of Region. Statistics to June 2020 will be published on 23 February 2021

Further geographical breakdowns and average clearance times are not readily available and to provide them would incur disproportionate cost.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ 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.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 29 January 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Guy Opperman **Will Quince:**

There is no option for fortnightly payments in Universal Credit (UC).

Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA) are available to support claimants who cannot manage their single monthly payment where there is a risk of financial harm to the claimant and/or their family. These include more frequent payments. UC staff will always consider an APA where a need has been identified either by a work coach, case manager, or triggered by information received from the claimant, their representative or their landlord.

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.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Update on Zimbabwe

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Dominic Raab): [\[HCWS749\]](#)

On 1 February 2021, I imposed asset freezes and travel bans on four individuals under the Zimbabwe (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.

The four individuals designated were involved in brutal crackdowns by the Government of Zimbabwe on public protests. This includes events that led to the deaths of six demonstrators in August 2018 and of 17 demonstrators in January 2019, and resulted from the Zimbabwean security forces' use of excessive and disproportionate force. As a result, the designations focus on some of the most egregious human rights violations since President Mnangagwa took power.

This is the first set of designations of individuals under the UK's autonomous Zimbabwe sanctions regime since the regulations came fully into force on 31 December 2020. These sanctions are not targeted at the wider economy or the people of Zimbabwe. The UK is on the side of the Zimbabwean people and we will continue to work to reduce poverty and help Zimbabweans secure their constitutional freedoms. This sanctions regime seeks to press the Government of Zimbabwe to: respect democratic principles and institutions and the rule of law in Zimbabwe; refrain from actions, policies or activities which repress civil society in Zimbabwe; and comply with international human rights law and respect human rights.

These sanctions sit alongside the asset freeze on Zimbabwe Defence Industries, which was transferred from the EU Zimbabwe sanctions regime to the UK's autonomous Zimbabwe sanctions regime at the end of the Transition Period on 31 December.

The full list of designations is below:

1. Owen Ncube – Minister of State for National Security
1. Anselem Nhamo Sanyatwe - Formerly Brigadier General, Commander of the Presidential Guard and Tactical Commander of the National Reaction Force
1. Godwin Matanga - Commissioner General of the Zimbabwe Republic Police
1. Isaac Moyo - Director General, Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO)

HOME OFFICE**■ Launch of the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) route****The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):****[[HCWS751](#)]**

I am pleased to confirm that the Government has launched the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) route on 31 January 2021.

The introduction of the Hong Kong BN(O) route follows the imposition of the National Security Law on Hong Kong by the Chinese Government in June 2020, which restricted the rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong and breached the Joint Declaration.

The basis for this route was established through changes to the Immigration Rules made on 22 October 2020, creating a route to settlement for BN(O) status holders from Hong Kong.

Eligible BN(O) status holders, and their family members, will be able to come to the UK to live, study and work. After five years in the UK, they will also be able to apply for settlement, followed by citizenship after a further 12 months.

As I have said throughout the development of this route, this is absolutely the right thing to do, in recognition of the historic commitment of the UK to the people of Hong Kong, and specifically to those who elected to retain their ties to the UK through obtaining BN(O) status.

I am also pleased to announce that from 23 February 2021, applications to the route can be made through a fully digital process, using the new technology developed for the UK's points-based immigration system.

This means that if an eligible applicant holds a BN(O), Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), or EEA biometric passport, they will be able follow a quicker and easier process by submitting their biometrics to validate their identity through a smartphone app, rather than visiting a Visa Application Centre. Successful applicants will receive a digital status, which they will be able to check and prove online.

BN(O) status holders and their dependents are the second group after EEA nationals to have access to this new digital process, which further upholds our commitment to them.

In addition to the new route for BN(O) status holders, individuals from Hong Kong will also be able to apply to come to the UK under the terms of the new points-based immigration system, which will enable them to come to the UK in a wider range of professions and at a lower general salary threshold than in the past. They are also able to use student routes and have access to the Youth Mobility Scheme.

Further detail about the route, including detailed applicant guidance, can be found at www.gov.uk/british-national-overseas-bno-visa

HMG is working to ensure BN(O) status holders who take up this offer feel fully supported and welcomed when starting their life in the UK. I look forward to welcoming applications from those individuals who wish to make the UK their home.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Design Update**

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick): [\[HCWS750\]](#)

In late 2018, the Government established the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission. Under the leadership of Nicholas Boys Smith and the late Sir Roger Scruton, it was tasked with championing beauty in the built environment and advising the government on the reforms needed to ensure new homes are built to much higher, locally popular design standards and reflect local character and preferences.

The Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission's report, 'Living with Beauty', set out 45 policy propositions, for government and industry, on ways the planning and development process needed to change to provide the conditions for building more beautiful places. The report set out three principle aims: to 'ask for beauty', to 'refuse ugliness' and to 'promote stewardship'.

When the report was published, we welcomed the Commission's recommendations and committed to taking forward as many of them as possible. We agreed with the Commission's assessment that the design quality of new development is too often mediocre and that systemic change would be needed to ensure design and beauty were a core part of the planning process, not an afterthought.

Over the past 12 months, we have undertaken a review of the existing planning system to consider what changes the government could make to deliver on the Commission's ambitions. As part of this, on 6 August we published 'Planning for the Future' which included proposals for putting beauty at the heart of the planning system. This set out the importance of setting local expectations on design, ensuring communities have their say and promoting more widespread use of digital technologies to open up the design and planning processes to communities and encourage more participation in the planning system.

Following this work, on 30 January 2021, we published a comprehensive response to the Commission's report setting out clear steps the government is taking to embed beauty, design and placemaking in the planning system.

First, we are proposing significant revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework to put a greater emphasis on design and beauty. For the first time in the modern planning system, beauty and placemaking will be a strategic policy in their own right. This will put an emphasis on granting permission for well-designed buildings and refusing it for poor quality schemes. To ensure local preferences lie at the heart of this, we are asking all local authorities to work with local communities to produce local design codes or guides, setting out the design standards that new buildings will be expected to meet. These reforms will empower communities to expect and demand beauty in the built environment.

Second, we are also introducing a new expectation that all new streets should be tree-lined. This will deliver on the government's manifesto commitment for tree-lined streets,

improve biodiversity and support the government's wider ambitions to plant 40 million trees. The updated National Planning Policy Framework will also include wider changes to address environmental issues, including on managing the risk of floods, supporting heritage listings and amend the rules for the application of Article 4 Directions. The consultation on the revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework was launched on the 30 January 2021 and will close on 27 March 2021.

Third, in line with the Commission's recommendations, we have produced the first National Model Design Code. We agree with the Commission's view that the use of local design codes, in which communities have a say, is an effective way of setting design expectations that will shape and deliver beautiful homes and places. Whereas a design guide sets out high level principles of good design, a design code sets out illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters or constraints for the physical development of a site or area. The National Model Design Code provides a clear framework setting out the parameters that contribute to good design and a step-by-step process for local authorities to follow to produce their own local codes and guides. We have made clear in the National Planning Policy Framework that all areas should produce their own codes or guides, based on the principles set out in the Design Code. The Prime Minister also recently set out his ten point plan for a green industrial revolution, which will create, support and protect hundreds of thousands of green jobs, whilst making strides towards net zero by 2050. This includes plans to make cycling and walking more attractive ways to travel, making our homes, schools and hospitals greener, warmer and more energy efficient and protecting and restoring our natural environment, planting 30,000 hectares of trees every year, whilst creating and retaining thousands of jobs. This vision is at the heart of the National Model Design Code which puts a strong emphasis on building greener and more energy-efficient developments.

Fourth, to ensure communities understand the principles and vision set out in the National Model Design Code and to support them to apply it, we intend to establish a new Office for Place within the next year. This organisation will draw on Britain's world-class design expertise to support communities to turn their visions of beautiful design into local standards all new buildings will be required to meet. We will be establishing an interim Office for Place within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, with a transition board chaired by Nicholas Boys Smith tasked with considering what form the organisation should take, informed by responses to the 'Planning for the Future' consultation. The interim Office for Place will begin the work to drive up design standards now. This year it will be piloting the Design Code with 20 communities and empowering local authorities to demand beauty, design quality and placemaking, through training on the principles outlined in the Code. We have launched an expression of interest for local authorities to apply to be one of the first ten pilot areas and the recipients of a share of £500,000 to support this work. We are seeking views on the draft National Model Design Code, alongside the National Planning Policy Framework consultation.

Fifth, the Government is also relaunching the Community Housing Fund, making £4 million available to help Community Land Trusts bid for funds to support them to prepare bids for the £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme. This programme is the largest

investment in affordable housing in a decade and will provide up to 180,000 new homes across England, should economic conditions allow.

Looking forward, the Government's 'Planning for the Future' White Paper published on 6 August 2020 outlined a set of reforms that are intended to lay the foundations for future housebuilding and economic development, whilst meeting our commitments to design, the environment and climate. As more homes are delivered under the new system, they will be built to higher standards, placing a clear emphasis on design, beauty, heritage and sustainability and ensuring that communities are at the heart of the planning system. We are currently analysing the 40,000 consultation responses and will publish a response in due course.

Finally, the Government is also encouraging local communities to nominate historic buildings, monuments, parks and gardens and other heritage assets they value so they can be protected through the planning system. Following an overwhelmingly positive response to the expressions of interest, funding has been doubled to £1.5 million, allowing 22 areas to develop and update their local heritage lists, instead of the ten originally announced.

The response to the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission's report, along with the reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, the National Design Code, the intention to establish the Office for Place and our wider proposals to reform the planning system, will ensure that for the first time design is established as a core pillar of the planning process. They will encourage a more diverse and competitive building industry. They will make the planning process more digital and accessible for everyone, not just those with planning expertise or with the time to attend late night meetings. They will support communities to define their visions of good design and empower them to demand these standards are met in all new developments. Ultimately, they will ensure that beautiful homes and places become the expectation and the norm.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ The United Kingdom's Free Trade Agreements

Minister for International Trade (Mr Ranil Jayawardena): [\[HCWS748\]](#)

In under two years, HM Government has secured trade deals with 63 countries, which covered £217 billion of trade in 2019. Taken alongside our recent deal with the European Union, trade worth £885 billion in 2019 is now covered. No country, anywhere in the world, at any point in history, has conducted trade negotiations concurrently on this scale nor with our ambition.

We reached agreements with some of our largest trading partners such as Canada, South Korea, Switzerland and Norway – and agreed Economic Partnership Agreements with South Africa, Kenya and others. Most recently, on 29th December 2020, we secured a trade agreement with Turkey – worth £18.6 billion in the previous full year. All have been on the basis of providing continuity to the existing trading arrangements that we enjoy and providing a firm foundation for deeper trading relations in the future.

This strong progress not only accounts for 97% of the value of trade with non-EU countries that we initially set out to secure agreements with – it goes further. Since the beginning of the Transition Period, we expanded the ambition of our programme to go above and beyond its original scope. In doing so, we secured agreements with Japan, Singapore, Vietnam and Turkey, which accounted for £72 billion of trade in 2019.

This has been the culmination of extensive work led by my Department, working hand-in-hand with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and carried out across the whole of HM Government. Whilst this has been a difficult time, we and our partners have adapted our work – as far as possible – to reflect the reality of the global pandemic, and respecting public health, to bring forward deals that work for British businesses and the British people.

Parliamentary scrutiny has, and always will be, important in trade negotiations. All continuity agreements are laid in Parliament under the terms of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (CRAg) for scrutiny, and we will continue following this process for future trade agreements.

HM Government has built on statutory commitments by voluntarily publishing parliamentary reports alongside agreements, identifying and explaining clearly any differences with previous EU agreements. My Department has held close and constructive discussions with the Parliamentary Committees on the progress of our programme over the last few years too; I was pleased to see this engagement praised by the Lords' International Agreements Sub-Committee in their report on *Working Practices*.

Trade remains a reserved matter, but we have engaged with the devolved administrations, crown dependencies and overseas territories on the continuity programme regularly, including through sharing of texts and providing implementation support.

Where a continuity agreement was unable to complete the CRAg process before the end of the Transition Period, we have brought them into effect via 'Provisional Application', or through a 'Bridging Mechanism'. These are tried and tested methods, used widely around the world, and do not affect Parliament's ability to fully scrutinise these deals under CRAg. All signed agreements will be submitted to Parliament for scrutiny. We have also recently re-published a technical note outlining how we have brought agreements into force and effect, as well as those we have not been able to complete, due to entry-into-force considerations.

Many deals have been done – even where it was previously thought by some to be impossible – but we have always been clear that we will only agree to a deal if it is in the British national interest, irrespective of deadlines. Likewise, factors in those countries with who are negotiating, such as elections or delays in forming a government, can intervene and halt trade negotiations. As a result, it was not possible to secure agreements with Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Algeria, Montenegro and Albania by the end of the Transition Period. British exports to these markets totalled less than £1 billion in 2019, or just 0.07% of our total trade.

In addition, though we were unable to sign an agreement for entry into force on 1st January, Ghana reached a consensus with us on the main elements of an agreement on 31st December 2020. All these countries remain valued partners on a range of economic and security issues, so our message is clear – if they wish to regain the terms of trade that have existed in recent past, they will find a willing partner in Britain. We have published updated guidance on GOV.UK to make sure businesses are aware of the changes that came into force at the turn of the year.

Our continuity programme will deliver a real and positive impact for British businesses and consumers. And this is not the end of the journey. There is more to do in the months and years ahead.

All the deals my Department is negotiating will bring trade and investment to Britain – delivering economic growth, creating opportunity in every corner of our great country, helping Britain bounce back.

Trade leads to better jobs and higher wages for workers; and more choice and lower prices for consumers. Trade helps protect our environment and protect our health. Trade is a force for good and I look forward to making further progress in the future.

■ UK Trade Update

Secretary of State for International Trade (Elizabeth Truss): [\[HCWS747\]](#)

Today, the Government submitted its notification of intent to begin the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) accession process.

This notification of intent comes shortly after the UK celebrates one year since leaving the EU and becoming an independent trading nation.

It is our first step in accession to CPTPP which is part of a big strategic move that aims to deepen the UK's access to fast-growing markets and major economies of the future, including Mexico, Malaysia and Vietnam, for the benefit of UK business.

Joining the £9 trillion free trade area will cut tariffs for vital UK industries like food and drink and cars and create new opportunities for future industries like tech and services, ultimately supporting and creating high-value jobs across the United Kingdom and helping the country build back better from Covid.

Unlike EU membership, joining does not require the UK to cede control over our laws, borders, or money.

The UK would be the first country to take forward accession negotiations since the agreement was formed in 2018, putting us at the front of the queue to become the next full member. A number of other economies have also expressed an interest in joining, including Thailand, Colombia and South Korea.

Joining is a critical part of the government's wider trade strategy, which aims to deepen links with some of the fastest growing parts of the world, partnering with countries who believe in free and fair trade.

CPTPP is one of the most important free trade areas in the world, accounting for 13% of global GDP in 2019. CPTPP GDP would rise to 16% if the UK were to join.

CPTPP removes tariffs on 95% of goods traded between members and reduces other barriers to trade across four continents. CPTPP countries accounted for £111 billion worth of UK trade in 2019 and the 2016-2019 annual growth in UK trade with CPTPP member countries was 8% a year. Joining now opens the way to further increase trade with these economies, enabling the UK to build back better by bringing more opportunities for our businesses and supporting jobs for our people.

Benefits that membership will bring for businesses include:

- Modern digital trade rules that allow data to flow freely between members, remove unnecessary barriers for businesses, and protect commercial source code and encryption.
- Eliminating tariffs quicker on UK exports including whisky (down from 165% to 0% in Malaysia) and cars (reducing to 0% in Canada by 2022, two years earlier than through the UK-Canada trade deal).
- Rules of Origin that allow content from any country within CPTPP to count as 'originating'. For example, this would mean that cars made in the UK could use more Japanese-originating car parts, such as batteries.
- Easier travel for businesspeople between CPTPP countries, such as the potential for faster and cheaper visas.

As well as removing trade barriers, CPTPP helps businesses trade easily across borders and keep supply chains open and predictable. Joining CPTPP will help us diversify our supply chains, which could help make us more resilient in an adverse environment such as the Coronavirus pandemic.

Joining CPTPP also creates an opportunity to help level-up the UK. UK regions and nations exported between £1bn and £3.7bn worth of goods to CPTPP countries last year, including £2.4billion worth of exports from Scotland, £2billion from the North West, and £3.1billion from the East Midlands.

CPTPP membership is a key part of the Government's plan to position the UK at the centre of a network of modern free trade deals that support jobs and drive economic growth at home, while also positioning us as a champion of free trade and reform of the rules-based system abroad.

CPTPP sets modern rules in areas of increasing importance for UK industry and business. This includes strategically important sectors such as digital, financial, professional and business services. Digitally delivered services from the UK to CPTPP members, for example, already hit £18.7billion in 2019, joining now creates an opportunity to unleash forward leaning parts of our economy like this.

Furthermore, membership puts the UK in a prime position to help reshape these global rules in UK strengths like digital and data, and in services.

It would help to secure our future place in the world as a leader in a network of countries committed to free trade and send a powerful signal to the rest of the world that as an independent trading nation the UK will champion free trade, fight protectionism and remove barriers to trade at every opportunity. In doing so, we aim to turn the UK, a newly independent trading nation, into a global hub for businesses and investors wanting to trade with the rest of the world

Over the last two years, we have engaged with all 11 member countries at both ministerial and official level to discuss UK accession to CPTPP. All CPTPP members have welcomed the UK's interest in accession.

As part of one of the largest consultation exercises run by the UK Government in 2018, we sought views on potential UK accession to CPTPP and are using these responses to inform our preparations. We are continuing to engage business, civil society, and trade unions on an ongoing basis where they can outline their priorities.

As we have committed, the UK will publish its negotiation objectives, scoping analysis, and consultation response for public and parliamentary scrutiny, and when we are ready to begin formal negotiations.

We will only accede to CPTPP on terms compatible with the UK's broader interests and domestic priorities.

The Government has been clear that the NHS and the price it pays for drugs is not for sale in any trade negotiations – including CPTPP – and that it will not sign trade deals that compromise the UK's high environmental protections, animal welfare and food standards.