



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 2 February 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:31 P.M., 02 February 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.
Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Crime: Victims

Ellie Reeves: [\[143869\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, following the recent HMCSPi inspectorate report on victim communication, what steps she is taking to implement the recommendations in that report.

Michael Ellis:

The latest HMCPSI report on the Victim Communication and Liaison (VCL) scheme was published on 22 October 2020. The report suggested the CPS should fundamentally review at national level how the VCL scheme is being delivered.

The CPS accepts the need for a radical review of their communications with victims, and the need to make quick progress. The CPS is therefore planning to undertake an evidence-based assessment of victims' needs, including conducting user research to inform the review. The CPS are taking a phased approach to this work so that early, targeted improvements can be made at the same time as developing a longer-term programme of more impactful change.

■ Crown Prosecution Service: Eurojust

Ellie Reeves: [\[143871\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of the UK withdrawing from participation in (a) the European Arrest Warrant, (b) membership of Europol and (c) membership of EuroJust on the work of the CPS in prosecuting international crime.

Ellie Reeves: [\[143872\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what steps she has taken to ensure the CPS can operate (a) effectively and (b) to the same standard when prosecuting international crime in the context of no longer being a member of Eurojust.

Ellie Reeves: [\[143873\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many outstanding cases the CPS were working on as a part of EuroJust in December 2020.

Michael Ellis:

The Crown Prosecution Service ('CPS') has worked with other prosecutors, law enforcement, the courts and the Home Office to ensure the CPS continues to have access to the capabilities it needs and that effective international cooperation with EU Member States on extradition, gathering of evidence and asset recovery continues. The CPS has also engaged extensively with EU counterparts in order to safeguard existing cases using EU tools as well as operate the new arrangements effectively.

As well as providing for streamlined extradition arrangements, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) provides for cooperation between the UK and Europol and the UK and Eurojust to facilitate multilateral law enforcement and criminal justice cooperation. The UK remains fully operational at Eurojust with a Liaison Prosecutor Desk which was up and running from 1 January 2021. In December 2020, the CPS was participating in 33 out of 41 Joint Investigation Teams involving the UK and the CPS remains equally involved in all of these today.

The TCA equips operational partners on both sides with the capabilities that help protect citizens and bring criminals to justice – promoting the security of all our citizens.

■ Crown Prosecution Service: Staff

Ellie Reeves:

[\[143870\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many CPS staff were employed and (a) in what role and (b) at what grade those staff were employed in each year from 2010 to 2020.

Michael Ellis:

The number of staff employed by the Crown Prosecution Service ('CPS'), broken down by grade, between 31/03/12 to 31/03/20, can be found in the tables below. To retrieve data for years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, and the detail for roles across all years, would represent a disproportionate cost to the CPS.

31/03/2020

ONS Grade	Headcount	FTE
AA/AO	1351	1226.88
EO	1217	1115.80
G6/G7	2656	2447.11
HEO/SEO	886	849.75
SCS	82	80.71
Grand Total	6192	5720.26

31/03/2019

ONS Grade	Headcount	FTE
AA/AO	1392	1263.23
EO	1175	1069.66
G6/G7	2589	2384.21

31/03/2019

HEO/SEO	791	757.75
SCS	78	77.10
Grand Total	6025	5551.95

31/03/2018

ONS Grade	Headcount	FTE
AA/AO	1436	1309.02
EO	1186	1084.08
G6/G7	2472	2274.88
HEO/SEO	810	775.08
SCS	76	75.38
Grand Total	5980	5518.44

31/03/2017

ONS Grade	Headcount	FTE
AA/AO	1536	1409.30
EO	1199	1094.03
G6/G7	2399	2206.89
HEO/SEO	780	745.46
SCS	70	69.38
Grand Total	5984	5525.04

31/03/2016

ONS Grade	Headcount	FTE
AA/AO	1527	1398.90
EO	1223	1112.19
G6/G7	2354	2170.88
HEO/SEO	743	710.50

31/03/2016

SCS	68	67.78
Grand Total	5915	5460.26

31/03/2015

ONS Grade	Headcount	FTE
AA/AO	1683	1549.14
EO	1298	1189.95
G6/G7	2445	2258.48
HEO/SEO	789	754.83
SCS	65	65.00
Grand Total	6280	5817.40

31/03/2014

ONS Grade	Headcount	FTE
AA/AO	1882	1726.96
EO	1381	1267.24
G6/G7	2558	2362.03
HEO/SEO	777	744.30
SCS	65	65.00
Grand Total	6663	6165.54

31/03/2013

ONS Grade	Headcount	FTE
AO/AA	2061	1877.40
EO	1551	1422.82
G6/7	2801	2592.40
HEO/SEO	850	807.52

31/03/2013

SCS	66	66.00
Grand Total	7329	6766.14

31/03/2012

ONS Grade	Headcount	FTE
AA/AO	2087	1896.94
EO	1601	1468.00
G6/G7	2961	2740.09
HEO/SEO	932	887.29
SCS	67	66.80
Grand Total	7648	7059.12

*DATA IS AS AT 31ST MARCH EACH YEAR

This data is taken from the Trent and Oracle HR Database.

The data is compiled to ONS specification – it excludes career break, unpaid loans, fee paid and non-salaried staff.

The data excludes no pay staff which are derived from the CIS file provided to us.

Data shows HC and FTE to ONS Grade

■ Sentencing: Appeals**Ellie Reeves:**[\[143868\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, with reference to the Victims Commissioner's annual report 2019/20, what steps the Attorney General is taking with the Lord Chancellor to promote the changes to the review into the unduly lenient scheme to ensure victims are aware of their right to request a challenge.

Michael Ellis:

The Law Officers promote the unduly lenient sentence scheme and its extension, including in Parliament and on social media.

The AGO has also worked with the Ministry of Justice to take steps to raise awareness of the scheme as part of the revised statutory Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, which was published in November 2020 following consultation. The revised

Code will come into force on 1 April, and now includes a requirement for the Witness Care Unit to inform victims of the unduly lenient sentence scheme promptly once sentencing has taken place. This will help to improve awareness of the scheme and also understanding of when cases may be eligible.

Lee Anderson:

[\[145155\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the unduly lenient sentence scheme.

Michael Ellis:

The Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme is a vital safeguard in our criminal justice system. It permits the Law Officers to intervene personally in a case where a sentencing judge has fallen into gross error and imposed a sentence which is outside the reasonable range.

Sentencing judges get it right in the vast majority of cases. In those rare cases where they get it wrong, the scheme ensures that justice is served.

I recently argued in person before the Court of Appeal that the dangerous and depraved serial rapists Joseph McCann and Reynhard Sinaga should have received whole life sentences. The Court of Appeal did not impose whole life sentences, but it did increase their minimum terms from 30 to 40 years to properly reflect the truly heinous nature of their offending and protect the public from them.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Boohoo: Debenhams**

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[R\] \[142972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what additional support the Government plans to provide to Debenhams staff and suppliers following its brand acquisition by Boohoo.

Paul Scully:

The DWP Rapid Response Service is in ongoing conversations with Debenhams, who have been offered support from the service. The Rapid Response Service offers support including: helping people write CVs and find jobs; providing information about benefits; helping people to find the right training and learn new skills; and helping with costs like travel to work expenses.

We are helping those who have lost jobs in the pandemic through our £238m JETS (Job Entry Targeted Support) programme and have launched a £2bn Kickstart scheme.

Local authorities have been allocated a further £500m in discretionary funding via the Additional Restrictions Grant to support those businesses that are significantly impacted by the restrictions even though they may not be required to close. This is in addition to £1.1bn already allocated in November 2020. Local authorities have

discretion to use this funding to support businesses in the way they see fit, which could include supporting businesses which supply the retail sector.

Dr Lisa Cameron: [R] [142974]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Boohoo concerning its acquisition of the Debenhams brand.

Paul Scully:

While Government has no role in the strategic direction or management of private retail companies, officials have been in regular contact with the administrators throughout the administration process, who have been exploring all potential options to protect Debenhams and its employees.

■ Conditions of Employment and Industrial Health and Safety

Andy McDonald: [145030]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many workplace inspections were carried out by the (a) Employment Standards Agency Inspectorate, (b) HMRC National Minimum Wage Enforcement Team, (c) Health and Safety Executive and (d) the Gangmaster Labour Abuse Authority for the yearly reporting period 2019-20.

Andy McDonald: [145031]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many investigations were carried out by the (a) Employment Standards Agency Inspectorate, (b) HMRC National Minimum Wage Enforcement Team, (c) Health and Safety Executive and (d) the Gangmaster Labour Abuse Authority for the yearly reporting period 2019-20.

Andy McDonald: [145032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many front-line enforcement officers there were in the (a) HMRC National Minimum Wage Enforcement Team, (b) Health and Safety Executive and (C) Gangmaster Labour Abuse Authority for the yearly reporting period 2019-20.

Andy McDonald: [145033]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what classifications the issues investigated the by (a) Employment Standards Agency Inspectorate; (b) HMRC National Minimum Wage enforcement team; (c) Health and Safety Executive; and (d) Gangmaster Labour Abuse Authority fell under for the reporting period 2019/2020.

Paul Scully:

Please see responses to each request for information in the table below:

BODY	NUMBER OF WORKPLACES INSPECTED IN 2019/20 [1]	NUMBER OF INVESTIGATIONS IN 2019/20	NUMBER OF FRONTLINE ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS IN 2019/20	CLASSIFICATION OF ISSUES IN 2019/20
Employment Agency Standards	303	1698[2]	18	Non-payment or withholding earnings, being charged to find work, contractual disputes, lack of clarity of deductions, advertising of roles, and failure to obtain either sufficient information from a hiring company or work-seeker.
HMRC National Minimum Wage	3300[3]	3300[4]	442	Non-payment of national minimum wage
Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority	214 inspections of applicants for licenses and licence holders[5] 390 investigation cases[6]	390	50	Civil cases- compliance with the GLAA licensing standards relating to relevant UK legislation governing the workplace and employer/worker relationships, forced labour, and employer responsibilities to Government - https://www.gla.gov.uk/media/5963/licensing-standards-october-2018-final-reprint-jan-2020.pdf Criminal cases: offences committed against the Gangmasters (Licensing) Act 2004, being unlicensed, using workers from unlicensed gangmasters, or the wider labour market offences including Modern Slavery.
Health and Safety Executive	13, 402	7,024[7]	980 (inc 498 Band 3 and 4 inspectors[8])	The Health and Safety Executive handled over 32,000 complaints for the yearly reporting period 2019-20 but HSE does not record the subject matter of the complaint.

[1] The enforcement bodies may take different approaches to workplace inspections and investigations depending on the type of offence being investigated.

[2] Number of complaints investigated.

[3] This number includes employer interview which could be in person or via phone or letter. HMRC triage cases to decide the type of intervention dependent on the level of risk of the case. Workplace inspections are not always appropriate as payroll records may be with agents or payroll providers.

[4] Number of investigations closed in 2019/20. Some investigations may have begun earlier.

[5] The number therefore relates to the number of cases, and not individual workplaces. In such civil inspections there may be a number of visits to premises where workers are supplied to.

[6] These related to investigations against Gangmasters (licensing) Act offences as well as cases involving other labour market offences, for which the GLAA exercises a wider authority in England and Wales. Those offences are defined in section 3(3) of the Immigration Act 2016, and include forced labour offences under the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

[7] Investigations of fatal and non-fatal incidents reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013.

[8] Band 3 and 4 inspectors undertake the delivery of the operational division workplans, this includes inspections and investigations into reported incidents and concerns and where non-compliance with health and safety legislations is identified, the inspectors take regulatory action in accordance with our published Enforcement Policy Statement.

■ Conditions of Employment: Re-employment

Kate Osamor:

[\[143021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to end the practice of fire and rehire.

Paul Scully:

Despite the unprecedented package of support provided by this Government, some employers will need to offer different terms and conditions to their employees in order to ensure the sustainability of their business and avoid redundancies.

However, using threats about firing and re-hiring as a negotiating tactic is unacceptable. In addition, if the employer changes any of the terms without the employee's agreement, the employee may be entitled to seek legal redress. Laws are in place to ensure that there is fair procedure in redundancy and dismissal matters as well as contractual terms and conditions cannot discriminate unlawfully.

The Department has engaged Acas to look into fire and rehire practises and they are talking to business and employee representatives, to gather evidence of how fire and rehire has been used.

Dan Carden:

[\[145112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with (a) employers and (b) trade unions on the use of fire and re-hire tactics in negotiations with employees.

Paul Scully:

The Department has engaged Acas to look into fire and rehire practices and they are talking to business and employee representatives, to gather evidence of how fire and rehire has been used.

Acas officials have made good progress in their independent and impartial discussions and are expected to share the evidence gathered with BEIS officials in February this year.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

John Redwood:

[\[142748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the planned increase in production is of the AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccine for UK use by March 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has invested over £300 million to scale up the UK's manufacturing capabilities. Vaccines are the way out of this pandemic and vaccine supplies are part of our critical national infrastructure. Vaccines are a precious resource in very high demand across the world; therefore, for security reasons, it is not possible to provide detail about the size of our supplies and exact detail about deliveries.

We remain in close contact with all vaccine suppliers to ensure we can hit our target of offering vaccinations to priority groups 1 to 4, as advised by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, by 15 February 2021.

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[142785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many doses of the covid-19 vaccine are produced each day in the UK.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has invested over £300 million to scale up the UK's manufacturing capabilities. Vaccines are the way out of this pandemic and vaccine supplies are part of our critical national infrastructure. Vaccines are a precious resource in very high demand across the world; therefore, for security reasons, it is not possible to provide detail about the size of our supplies and exact detail about deliveries.

We remain in close contact with all vaccine suppliers to ensure we can hit our target of offering vaccinations to priority groups 1 to 4, as advised by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, by 15 February 2021.

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[142786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the UK manufacturing capacity is of the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has invested over £300 million to secure and scale up the UK's manufacturing capabilities to be able to respond to the pandemic. This includes:

a) Facilities that have come online:

- £4.7 million for skills training through the Advanced Therapies Skills Training Network, which will be delivered through both virtual and physical centres;
- £8.75 million for the set-up of the rapid deployment facility at Oxford Biomedica in Oxfordshire; and
- £65.5 million for the early manufacture of the University of Oxford / AstraZeneca vaccine.
- We have also funded fill and finish through a contract with Wockhardt in Wrexham, North Wales which is currently providing Fill-Finish capabilities to the University of Oxford / AstraZeneca vaccine.

b) Facilities that will come online later this year, to help provide longer term UK capacity:

- £93 million to accelerate the completion and expanded role of the Vaccine Manufacturing Innovation Centre in Oxfordshire; and
- £127 million for the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult Braintree in Essex.

In addition to the above, we have also funded the expansion of the Valneva factory in Livingston, Scotland.

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[R\] \[145008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of negotiating an amendment to his contract with Oxford-AstraZeneca to change its emphasis on providing vaccines on only a non-profit basis to make provision for a suitable premium for each additional dose provided in advance of agreed delivery schedules.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Details of negotiations between the Government and vaccine developers are commercially confidential. The Government robustly negotiated with suppliers to ensure the best possible terms in order to ensure access to safe and effective vaccines as soon as possible. Through this approach, the Government has secured early access to 407 million vaccine doses through agreements with seven vaccine developers – this includes 100 million doses of the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine.

The UK was the first country in the world to procure, authorise and then deploy both the Oxford University/AstraZeneca and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines.

The UK vaccine supply and scheduled deliveries will fully support vaccination of priority cohorts 1 to 4, as advised by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, and we are on track to offer a first vaccine to every person in these cohorts by 15 February 2021.

Mr William Wragg:

[\[145045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a crowdsourcing scheme for covid-19 vaccine acceleration ideas.

Nadhim Zahawi:

At the start of the pandemic, the Government acted swiftly to establish the Vaccine Taskforce to ensure that the UK population has access to clinically effective and safe vaccines. Activity includes:

- Securing early access to 407 million vaccines doses through agreements with seven separate vaccine developers.
- Funding the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to deliver a range of 'rapid response' research to better understand and tackle COVID-19, which included research into vaccines, treatments, and diagnostic tests.
- Investing over £300 million to secure and scale up the UK's manufacturing capabilities to be able to respond to the pandemic.
- Launching a new NHS service in July 2020 to enable people across the UK to sign up to COVID-19 vaccine trials – over 390,000 have signed up to volunteer.

The UK was the first country in the world to start a vaccination programme using the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, shortly followed by the Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine. Due to our swift and decisive action there has been a regular and steady supply of vaccine doses arriving into the UK since early December 2020. We are on track to offer a first dose of the vaccine to priority cohorts 1 to 4, as advised by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, by 15 February 2021.

■ Director of Labour Market Enforcement

Greg Clark:

[\[144983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that the duties of the Director of Labour Market Enforcement are undertaken while that post is vacant; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

We are in the process of recruiting a new Director of Labour Market Enforcement and will announce an appointment in due course.

The main duties of the Director are to prepare a yearly strategy, an annual report, and maintain an information hub. The previous Director has already submitted his Strategy for 2021/22 and it will need to be considered by the Government and

enforcement bodies before approval for publication, as required by the Immigration Act 2016.

The three enforcement bodies themselves are responsible for their overall work and enforcement responsibilities. They will continue to work hard to protect workers and bring enforcement action against employers who break the rules.

■ Energy: Storage

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[144919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the introduction of a revenue floor mechanism to support long duration energy storage.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As we set out in the Energy White Paper in December 2020, we will outline our next steps for addressing barriers to energy storage in our new Smart Systems Plan – to be published in spring 2021 in partnership with Ofgem.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[144920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will place in the Library the contract with ICF for the management of the Green Homes Grant Scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Department contracted ICF to administer the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme. In line with government best practice, further information about the contract will be made available in due course.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[144921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the contract awarded to ICF to manage the Green Homes Grant Scheme was issued on a competitive basis.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Department contracted ICF to administer the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme, following a compliant competition, using the Crown Commercial Grants and Programme Services framework. The contract went out to tender on 13th August 2020 and ICF were awarded the contract.

Catherine West: [\[145086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many Green Homes Grant applications have been received in each English region.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme opened for application on 30 September 2020. As of 31 January, 69,053 grant applications have been received. Applications¹, given by region in England, are as follows:

- North East: 2,593
- North West: 12,098
- Yorkshire and the Humber: 9,712
- East Midlands: 6,698
- West Midlands: 8,556
- East of England: 7,401
- Greater London: 6,491
- South East: 8,369
- South West: 6,696

¹ There is a discrepancy between the quoted total number of grant applications (69,053) and total English regional grant applications (68,614). This is due to 439 applications not listing an English region.

Catherine West:[\[145087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether any underspend in the first tranche of the £2 billion Green Homes Grant programme to March 2021 will be rolled over to the extended scheme in 2021-22.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The original funding for the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme was announced as a short-term stimulus, for use in the 2020/21 financial year only. In the 2020 Spending Review, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £320 million of funding for the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme for 2021/22, as part of funding allocated to make homes and buildings more energy efficient and less carbon intensive.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus**Marco Longhi:**[\[143135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to enable all hospitality venues to re-open when January 2021 covid-19 lockdown restrictions are lifted.

Paul Scully:

As my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said, we intend to publish our plan for taking the country out of lockdown in the last week of February. That plan will depend on the continued success of our vaccination programme, and on Covid-related deaths falling at the pace we would expect as more people are inoculated.

■ Hydroelectric Power

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[144917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to support the future of the UK's hydropower industry as part of the UK's renewable energy mix.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government acknowledges the valuable contribution of hydropower to the UK energy mix over many decades, including at times when other renewables do not generate. Most hydro capacity was installed in Scotland last century, with a smaller amount in Wales and England, and most of these installations are still operating. Potential for further development is limited to small-scale projects. We met our projections five years early from the 2012 comprehensive review for hydro deployment by 2020.

■ Imports: Ethics

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[142872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2021 to Question 130679 on Imports: Ethics, how often the Government reviews its guidance to key stakeholders to underline the need for vigilance against supply chain abuses; and when the next such review is planned.

Paul Scully:

As set out in the previous answer, the Government is clear it expects UK businesses to act responsibly to ensure their products are sourced ethically, and to consider due diligence approaches for their supply arrangements as a means to ensure this. The Government keeps guidance under constant review. We published updated Overseas Business Risk Guidance for China on 12 January 2021, which urges businesses with links to Xinjiang to undertake careful and robust due diligence to ensure their operations do not directly or indirectly contribute to human rights violations.

■ Magazine Press: Toys and Games

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[143037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to restrict the distribution of plastic toys with children's magazines.

Paul Scully:

All children's toys on the UK market, whether sold or supplied individually or along with children's magazines, must meet the safety requirements set out in the Toys (Safety) Regulations 2011 ('The Regulations'). Under the Regulations, any toys distributed in the UK must not jeopardise the safety or health of users or third parties when they are used as intended or in a foreseeable way, bearing in mind the behaviour of children. The Regulations also set out requirements for warnings and safe use labels on toys and other safety obligations that must be met by

manufacturers, importers and distributors; again, these apply however the toys are supplied.

Any toys distributed along with children's magazines must be safe and meet the requirements of the Regulations. The Office for Product Safety and Standards and local authority Trading Standards have powers to enforce the Regulations.

■ New Businesses

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[145081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support people to set up their own business once covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Paul Scully:

The Government aims to make the United Kingdom the best place to start, grow and run a business. The Government provides a wide range of support and information for small businesses. The main source of information is the GOV.UK website, with support also available via the Business Support Helpline on FREEPHONE 0800 998 1098 and via the network of 38 local Growth Hubs in England.

The Government understands that accessing finance can be a barrier to small and medium businesses (SMEs) starting out. This is why we established the Start Up Loans programme in 2012. For those starting a new business or for businesses which have been trading for up to 24 months, the Start Up Loans Company provides loans of between £500 to £25,000 at a competitive rate of 6%. In addition to finance, every loan recipient is offered a dedicated mentoring service and access to a free expert business mentor for 12 months to help them with every aspect of setting up a business. The Start Up Loans programme, operated by the British Business Bank, has delivered almost 77,000 loans overall in the UK, supporting nearly £650 million of funding since the programme's launch in 2012 to the end of September 2020.

In summer 2018, the British Business Bank also launched a website that offers independent and impartial information on different finance options for scale-up, high growth and potential high growth businesses. The site features infographics and checklists to help businesses get 'investor ready' as well as articles and guides from finance providers on how smaller businesses can identify and access finance suited to their growth ambitions. At its heart is the Finance Hub's Finance Finder, a simple six-step tool that enables smaller business to explore and identify finance options suited to their needs. In light of the coronavirus pandemic, the Finance Hub has been updated to clearly signpost the financial support options available for businesses during this period of economic uncertainty.

Further initiatives include the BEIS-led Small Business Leadership Programme and Peer-to-Peer networks, to help businesses build resilience and grow. The Young Innovators Programme was also launched by Innovate UK and the Prince's Trust to support young entrepreneurs with tailored mentoring and access to £5,000 funding.

■ Night-time Economy: Coronavirus

Stuart Anderson:

[\[143112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to roll out lateral flow testing to support the safe re-opening of venues in the night-time economy.

Paul Scully:

The Government recently (10 January 2021) announced the expansion of rapid, regular testing to include people without symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), which is now available across the country. The offer is currently targeting people who are unable to work from home during the national lockdown. The Government will keep under review any further expansion to support wider sectors. All coronavirus business support information is available on GOV.UK.

■ Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[144949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will extend Sir Wyn Williams's Post Office Horizon IT inquiry to include the issue of potential perjury in each of the items listed under the scope of that inquiry.

Paul Scully:

The purpose of the Inquiry is to understand and acknowledge what went wrong in relation to Horizon and to ensure that there is a public summary of the failings that occurred at Post Office Ltd. At the Inquiry's outset its Terms of Reference were published, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-office-horizon-it-inquiry-2020/terms-of-reference>.

As such, the Inquiry will consider only those matters set out in its Terms of Reference.

■ Post Office: Fujitsu

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[144950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps Post Office Ltd have taken to recoup the costs from Fujitsu associated with the failure of the Fujitsu Horizon IT system.

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 to recoup costs, is an operational matter for Post Office Limited.

■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[142973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what additional steps his Department is taking to support high street retail (a) during and (b) after the end of the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Retailers that are required by law to close during the current period of national restrictions can access grants of up to £3,000 per month (Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed)). In addition, each closed business will be eligible for a one-off payment of up to £9,000 to help them through Spring. This is the Closed Business Lockdown Payment.

Local authorities have been allocated a further £500m in discretionary funding via the Additional Restrictions Grant to support those businesses that are significantly impacted by the restrictions even though they may not be required to close. This is in addition to £1.1bn already allocated in November 2020. Local authorities have discretion to use this funding to support businesses in the way they see fit. For example, this could include supporting businesses which supply the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors.

We have extended the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to the end of April 2021.

We have extended the application deadline for the existing loan schemes to 31 March 2021, ensuring there is further support in place for firms who need it during this ongoing period of difficulty. The Government has already announced that more support will be available beyond March, through a successor loan scheme, and more details of the scheme will be announced in due course.

We will continue to work with the retail sector to ensure restrictions can be lifted once the health data allows.

■ Sharing Economy: Industrial Health and Safety**Kirsten Oswald:**[\[145041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 132959, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to amend section 44(1)(d) and (e) of the Employment Rights Act 1996 to extend the provisions to apply to all limb (b) workers, and on what timescale; and if will he make a statement.

Paul Scully:

Following the High Court Judgment on the 13th of November 2020, work is underway to amend section 44(1)(d) and (e) of the Employment Rights Act 1996 to extend the health and safety protections contained in these provisions to all limb (b) workers, as well as employees. The Government is committed to making these legislative changes as soon as parliamentary time allows.

■ Shipping: Competition

Emma Hardy:

[\[143073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to increase the competitiveness of the business environment to support the growth of the UK maritime industry.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government recognises the importance of the UK maritime sector to our economy. BEIS is working with the sector and other Government departments to facilitate access to innovation support via UKRI programmes.

BEIS will continue to work with the Maritime Enterprise Working Group, addressing issues of common concern to secure a truly competitive, sustainable and globally successful marine engineering and shipbuilding industry.

■ Tidal Power

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[144918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the role that tidal range energy can play in the UK's future energy mix.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government recently ran a Call for Evidence inviting views on what scope there is for marine technologies across the UK, including examining what additional support could move tidal range and other technologies towards commercialisation. This concluded on 30th September 2020 and BEIS officials are currently reviewing the responses received.

■ Wind Power

Martyn Day:

[\[143010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress he has made on ensuring that networks throughout the UK receive adequate funding to maximise the capacity of onshore wind to contribute to the Government net-zero emissions target.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Funding for electricity networks to ensure they have appropriate capacity for new and existing wind assets is set out by Ofgem as the energy regulator. This is managed through the price control process, including the Strategic Wider Works arrangements for delivery of large onshore electricity transmission projects. Whilst the Government has no direct role in this process, we support the energy networks, Ofgem and other parties in facilitating the sustained growth in onshore wind needed over the next decade to help achieve our aims for net zero emissions by 2050 and to contribute to the green industrial revolution.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Census: Coronavirus**

Hywel Williams: [\[142805\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the census.

Chloe Smith:

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) have kept ministers up-to-date on their Census preparations throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

The ONS have recently published an update on how everyone can be safely counted in Census 2021.

For more information please see:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/news/statementsandletters/census2021andcoronavirus>

■ **Census: Staff and Voluntary Work**

Charlotte Nichols: [\[143144\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what ratio of paid staff to volunteers are working to assist in compliance with completing the census in 2021, compared with 2011.

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 PQ143144 [Response to PQ143144.pdf]

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Sarah Owen: [\[144853\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the efficacy of the Government's communications strategy during the covid-19 outbreak at reaching people whose first language is not English.

Sarah Owen: [\[144854\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the efficacy of the Government's communications strategy at tackling vaccine hesitancy amongst Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to PQ [55066](#) on 10 June 2020, and PQ [96936](#) on 7 October 2020.

To date, Covid-19 material has been translated into 26 languages, and has been made available to all local authorities as editable assets.

Working with the Cabinet Office, vaccine communications from DHSC have appeared in 600 national, regional, local and specialist titles, including BAME media for Asian, Bangladeshi, Bengali, Gujarati and Pakistani communities. To improve our understanding of vaccine hesitancy, we are now working with over 90 faith, healthcare provider networks, influencers and experts from a range of communities.

■ G7: Cornwall

Luke Pollard: [\[143092\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of hosting the G7 summit in Cornwall in June 2021 on travel (a) to, (b) from and (c) within the South West during that period.

Luke Pollard: [\[143095\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he plans to communicate to (a) overseas Governments, (b) Commonwealth Governments and (c) international media in respect of covid-19 precautions before they attend the G7 summit in Cornwall in June 2021.

Penny Mordaunt:

Further to the answer given to [PQ143093](#), there will be some limited local transport disruption as a result of essential security measures.

We are discussing necessary health and safety measures for delegates with G7 partners and others.

■ Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised Committee

Louise Haigh: [\[145077\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the next meeting of the Specialised Committee on the Protocol is set to take place.

Penny Mordaunt:

Details of the meetings of the committees established by the Withdrawal Agreement will be announced in the usual way.

■ Speaker: Pensions

Mr William Wragg: [\[145042\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many former Speakers of the House are in receipt of a pension associated with that office.

Julia Lopez:

The Speaker pensions are paid from the Consolidated Fund account. These accounts do not list Speaker pensions independently. They are listed as part of the

number of recipients of Pensions for Parliamentary Officers for political and civil services. (P31 of the 2019/20 Consolidated Fund accounts)

The number of pensions in payment quoted in the Consolidated Fund accounts, relate to pensions for former Prime Ministers, Speakers, Comptrollers and Auditors General, Parliamentary Commissioners, Information Commissioners, Northern Ireland Chief Electoral Officers and Chairs of the Electoral Commission.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Louise Haigh: [\[145075\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the complete list of products on the Prohibited and Restricted List that will require a variation of Export Health Certificates on trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland from 22nd February 2021.

Louise Haigh: [\[145076\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether sausages made in Great Britain can be exported to Northern Ireland after 1 July 2021.

Penny Mordaunt:

Further to the answer given by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster the urgent question today, details of the products are available online at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/export-food-and-agricultural-products-special-rules#restricted-and-prohibited-goods>

Details of the agreements reached within the Joint Committee, including on chilled meats, are also available online.

■ UK Trade with EU: Northern Ireland

Stephen Farry: [\[143173\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking to assist Northern Ireland based companies, experiencing supply chain interruption from suppliers in Great Britain, to identify alternative suppliers in the EU.

Penny Mordaunt:

Further to the answers given by my Right Honourable Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the House today, the Government has no such policy.

For those moving goods into Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK, there is a substantial package of support available including the free to use Trader Support Service and the Movement Assistance Scheme, where SPS certification is required.

■ Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee

Louise Haigh: [\[144735\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the UK-EU Joint Committee will next convene.

Louise Haigh: [\[144736\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the UK-EU Joint Consultative Working Group (a) last convened and (b) will next convene.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Joint Consultative Working Group met on 29 January 2021. The Working Group will continue to meet at dates to be decided by the co-chairs.

Details of meetings of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee have been published online and dates of future meetings will be announced in the usual way.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Career Development

John Healey: [\[144926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel have been promoted to officer ranks in each year since 2010 by ethnicity.

Johnny Mercer:

The requested information can be found in the table below for financial year 2012/13 onwards. No data is held for the period prior to financial year 2012/13. UK Regular Personnel¹, by ethnicity², that have been promoted from the other ranks (OR) into the officer ranks (OF), by financial year³:

FINANCIAL YEAR	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
BAME	~	10	10	20	20	20	30	30
White	340	370	460	500	600	630	640	650
Unknown	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~
Tri-Service Total	340	380	470	520	620	660	670	680

Notes:

¹ UK Regulars comprise Full time Service personnel, including Nursing Services, but excluding Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel, Gurkhas, mobilised

Reservists, Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS), Locally Engaged Personnel (LEP), Non Regular Permanent Staff (NRPS), High Readiness Reserve (HRR) and Expeditionary Forces Institute (EFI) personnel. This table includes those promoted to both trained and untrained officers and, therefore, there is potential for some personnel to return to the other ranks.

² As recorded on the Joint Personnel Administrative system.

³ Figures in the tables have been rounded to the nearest 10, though numbers ending in a "5" have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent systematic bias caused by rounding numbers upwards. Numbers of 5 or less are represented by "~".

Additional statistical information on diversity in Defence can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-index>

Defence is committed to achieving a more diverse workforce and has embarked on a range of activities to increase the number of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and female recruits into the Armed Forces. Whilst the representation of BAME personnel joining the officer ranks is improving, we recognise that progress in terms of the representative rates of our people – both military and civilian – has been too slow. It is clear there is still much further to go and we are working hard to fulfil the key objective in our 2018-2030 Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to eliminate discrimination and improve diversity throughout Defence:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-2018-to-2030-a-force-for-inclusion>

■ Armed Forces: Housing

John Healey:

[144927]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department has taken to improve armed forces personnel satisfaction rates in Service Family Accommodation and Service Living Accommodation.

Jeremy Quin:

Our approach to improving satisfaction is founded on a combination of investment in the condition of our accommodation and improvements the maintenance service it receives.

Over £200 million will be spent in this Financial Year on significantly improving and modernising around 5,000 homes, as well as enhancing their energy efficiency.

In addition, the Department continues to invest in new family homes with over 1,000 new-build properties provided in the last two years.

Currently more than £200 million is spent annually on improving Single Living Accommodation (SLA).

We have also defined terms of for the new maintenance contracts that will roll out later this year in order to provide for an enhanced level of service.

Stephen Morgan: [\[145115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent estimate he has made of the number of military homes owned by Annington Homes that are awaiting repairs.

Jeremy Quin:

As of 29 January 2021, 9,861 occupied Annington Homes properties in England and Wales were awaiting reported response repair action.

Properties will be attended to in line with the contractual timeframes for repairs once categorised as Emergency, Critical, Urgent or Routine. The number of outstanding repairs per category is shown in the following table.

REPAIR CATEGORY	VOLUME
Emergency	1
Critical	34
Urgent	1,451
Routine	8,375
Total	9,861

In December 2020, 95.38% of all repairs reported were responded to within their required timeframes; this exceeded the required performance target.

The Ministry of Defence provides a prioritised response repair service for all Service Family Accommodation in the UK. Seasonal variation normally results in a repair spike during the winter months. This results from factors such as inclement weather causing issues to property and a higher rate of heating faults being reported.

Stephen Morgan: [\[145116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 June 2020 to Question 60855 on Annington Homes, what progress has been made on resolving the issue of rent payable for the lease of the service family accommodation estate.

Jeremy Quin:

This matter is currently subject to a formal arbitration process chaired by Lord Neuberger. An initial determination on the first sites selected for arbitration was received in September 2020 with the next batch subject to Arbitration hearings during February 2021. The Ministry of Defence expect to have determination on all sites by autumn 2021.

Stephen Morgan: [\[145117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many maintenance appointments for (a) service family accommodation and (b) single living accommodation have been missed in each of the last five years.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence does not explicitly record the number of missed appointments for Service Family Accommodation or Single Living Accommodation.

However, since April 2017, 9,088 missed appointment Compensation Claims have been approved.

Stephen Morgan: [\[145118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much compensation has been paid for missed maintenance appointments in each of the last five years; and what form that compensation took.

Jeremy Quin:

The Compensation Scheme for missed maintenance appointments was introduced on 1 April 2017. Since that time, compensation, in the form of High Street Vouchers, has been paid as set out in the table below:

FINANCIAL YEAR (FY)	AMOUNT OF COMPENSATION PAID (GBP)
FY 2017/2018	£99, 710.00
FY 2018/2019	£103.270.00
FY 2019/2020	£65, 320.00
FY 2020 to 29 Jan 2021	£39, 200.00

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Procurement

Jack Lopresti: [\[142900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential future requirement for an armoured infantry fighting vehicle capability that can operate (a) in high threat combat environments and (b) with main battle tanks.

Jeremy Quin:

Regular analysis conducted by the Army has confirmed the requirement for armoured vehicles that can work together in high threat combat environments. This analysis has formed part of the evidence base for the Integrated Review.

■ Chinook Helicopters: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[142808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of purchasing Chinook helicopters from the US.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence always aims to get the best equipment for our Armed Forces at best value for the taxpayer. Decisions on specific requirements, including helicopters, are only made following approval of a full business case to ensure value for money and that the proposed solution meets our capability requirements.

The Chinook Capability Sustainment Programme remains in the assessment phase and the investment decision is under consideration as part of the ongoing Integrated Review.

■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft

Mark Tami:

[\[144618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what (a) maintenance, (b) repair, (c) overhaul and (d) upgrade work relating to the F-35 programme his Department has awarded to Sealand Support Services Limited; and what timescale those contracts cover.

Jeremy Quin:

Sealand Support Services Limited (SSSL) has been assigned by the US Government as a Maintenance Repair Overhaul and Upgrade (MRO&U) service provider for F-35 Lightning aircraft components. SSSL is currently going through the stand-up and activation stage to become an 'Approved Supplier' to Lockheed Martin and is negotiating the contracts that will underpin the MRO&U workload. Consequently, there are no contracts currently in place.

■ Military Aircraft

Jack Lopresti:

[\[143736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the Combat Air capacity required by the UK beyond that provided by F-35B aircraft attributed to Carrier Strike; and how the UK F-35 Programme of Record will contribute to that capacity.

Jeremy Quin:

The operational capacity and capability offered by the Combat Air Force, constituting Typhoon and F-35b Lightning, have ambitious capability development plans to ensure that the UK can sustain operational advantage into the future. Our requirements are reviewed regularly - including as part of the ongoing Integrated Review - to ensure provision of a balanced portfolio which addresses current and future threats in line with our National Security Objectives.

■ Military Aircraft: Procurement**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[142813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of his Department's aerospace procurement budget is exposed to dollar exchange rates.

Jeremy Quin:

At April 2020, 66% of 10-year forecast spending on planned equipment projects for air support, combat air and helicopters was expected to be placed in US Dollars.

■ Ministry of Defence: Staff**Chris Law:** [\[142961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the gender balance is of full-time permanent contract staff in his Department.

Johnny Mercer:

As at 1 October 2020, there were 19,620 male and 13,037 female full-time civilian staff employed on a permanent contract by the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

The most recent publication for the MOD Diversity Dashboard can be found on the [Gov.uk](#) website, at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-diversity-dashboard-index>

Darren Jones: [\[144816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many officials in their Department were dedicated to their Department's responsibilities associated with the delivery of the Industrial Strategy in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019, (d) 2020 and (e) 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence does not record the exact numbers of officials who contribute to the delivery of industrial strategy. A large number of teams across the department support work in this area. These include staff working on prosperity, industrial policy, strategic relationship management and the National Shipbuilding and the Future Combat Air Strategies. In March 2020 we announced the launch of the cross-Government Defence and Security Industrial Strategy review which will outline how we work with the defence sector in the future.

■ Type 31 Frigates: Iron and Steel**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[144951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to Answer 5 March 2020 to Question 21163, with regards to the Type 31 Frigate contract, whether his Department still plans to cut steel this year.

Jeremy Quin:

Yes, on current plans the steel will be cut for the first of the Type 31 Frigates in 2021.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts: Visas****Rachel Reeves:**[\[145005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the EU legislation database and existing visa waiver agreements between the EU and other countries such as Colombia, UAE, Tonga, St Lucia which include a definition of paid activity to not cover artists performing an activity on an ad-hoc basis; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of that system to exempt UK musicians and other performers from entry requirements or restrictions on short-term work in the EU for 90-days.

Caroline Dinéage:

In the UK-EU trade negotiations, the EU tabled a proposal for a permanent visa waiver for short stays covering UK and EU citizens. This drew on bilateral agreements the EU has with some other third countries, such as Columbia, Peru and the UAE. Accepting a permanent short stay visa waiver for all current and future EU Member States was not, and is not, compatible with our manifesto commitment to take back control of our borders. 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 UK's points-based immigration system has been developed in the national interest.

The EU's proposal was accompanied by a Joint Declaration intended to direct those Member States who currently require short stay visas for "paid activities" to waive that requirement for "artists performing an activity on an ad-hoc basis". This offer would not have met the needs of touring musicians: it did not deal with work permits at all, and would not have allowed support staff to tour with artists. The proposal the UK put forward in negotiations would have reduced the additional administrative burdens on artists when touring and was based on input from the cultural sector – but this was repeatedly rejected by the EU.

■ Broadband and Digital Technology**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[143720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what long-term plans his Department is making to tackle inequalities throughout the UK in access to (a) broadband, (b) digital devices and (c) digital skills training.

Caroline Dinéage:

Ofcom is reviewing affordability issues in the communications market, and intends to publish recommendations in the first half of this year. This will improve the evidence base of where households face difficulty, and inform any future Government interventions.

Public libraries are also a vital component in providing access to the internet. There are around 2,900 public libraries in England providing a trusted network of accessible locations offering free Wi-Fi, computers, and other technology. The library staff, supported by volunteers, have been trained on digital skills to enable them to provide library users with support in using digital. Their vital role has been recognised with the new regulations enabling libraries to continue some services during this lockdown period including access to public PCs for essential purposes.

The Government has introduced a new digital entitlement for adults with no or low digital skills to undertake specified digital qualifications, up to Level 1, free of charge. Essential Digital Skills qualifications (EDSQs) are funded under the digital entitlement and based on new national standards which set out the digital skills people need to get on in life and work. We also support the provision of basic digital skills training for adults in community settings through the Adult Education Budget.

In April 2020 we also introduced the Skills Toolkit, an online platform which is already providing free courses to help individuals build the skills that are most sought after by employers. We have recently expanded the platform so that people can now choose from over 70 courses, covering digital, adult numeracy, employability and work readiness skills, which have been identified as the skills employers need the most. These courses will help people stay in work, or take up new jobs and opportunities.

■ Culture Recovery Fund

Daisy Cooper:

[\[143127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, to what extent his Department assessed (a) the size of an organisation's cash reserves and (b) combined wealth of individual backers, when awarding funds from the Cultural Recovery Fund.

Caroline Dinenage:

For the first round of funding in the Culture Recovery Fund, all organisations applying were asked to detail sources of income and levels of restricted and unrestricted reserves, to help the delivery bodies understand the financial position of each applicant up to 31 March.

Applicants were also asked in their application to detail how Covid-19 had impacted financial viability (including how they had exhausted all other reasonable options such as viable alternative options for commercial, contributed and philanthropic income, and using their reserves/resources), and therefore why a grant was necessary.

■ Cybercrime: Advisory Services

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[143712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many Ofcom employees have the security clearance necessary to advise industry on cyber attacks.

Matt Warman:

As the communications regulator, Ofcom's role is to ensure communication providers' comply with their legal duties on security under the Communications Act 2003. Ofcom

is also the competent authority for the digital infrastructure sector under the Network and Information Systems Directive 2020.

It is the role of the NCSC to advise industry following cyber attacks.

The NCSC will continue to play this role working closely with Ofcom under the new regime introduced in the Telecoms Security Bill. Ofcom will work with NCSC to ensure that it always has access to the right level of information which can be accessed by those with the appropriate level of security clearance.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Marketing

Owen Thompson:

[\[144745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 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.

Caroline Dinenage:

DCMS spent the following on on communications, advertising and marketing:

August 2020:

Marketing and advertising:

England:

- £48,773

Wales:

- £28,328

UK:

- £80,528

Communications:

- UK: £800

September 2020:

Communications:

- UK: £1,368

October 2020:

Communications:

- UK: £2,155

November 2020:

Communications:

- UK: £222

December 2020:

Marketing and advertising:

- UK: £15,291

Communications:

- UK: £761

■ Journalism: Visas

Ben Lake:

[\[145102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the ability of UK journalists to travel frequently across national borders in the EU without visa requirements.

Mr John Whittingdale:

For short stays of up to 90 days in any 180-day period, the EU has legislated so that UK nationals will not need a visa when travelling to and within the Schengen Area for tourism and other limited purposes. This should include business meetings, visitors coming for journalistic or media purposes and short-term study. Some Member States may also allow additional activities without a visa beyond those stipulated in the Schengen rules. However, Member States can require a visa for what they regard as a paid activity. UK nationals should check with their host state(s) before travelling.

■ Platinum Jubilee 2022

Rachael Maskell:

[\[145067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to plan for the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in 2022.

Caroline Dinenage:

DCMS is leading the cross government support to the Royal Household as it plans to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The Jubilee, along with the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham and the Festival of the UK, will contribute to an outstanding year of national events in 2022.

■ Tennis

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[143734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to put in place additional support for indoor tennis centres; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many sport clubs have benefited from. 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.

■ Video Games: Investment

Jonathan Gullis: [\[143152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential economic merits of The Independent Game Developers' Association's proposal for a video games investment fund.

Caroline Dinage:

DCMS' Creative Industries Economic Estimates show that the UK video games industry contributed an estimated £2.9 billion to the UK economy in 2019, up from £0.4 billion in 2010, and its headcount has grown to 27,000, a 47% increase since 2013.

I am pleased that in 2021/22 my Department will be continuing to fund the UK Games Fund, which provides valuable support to early stage games development businesses and talented graduates throughout the UK. We continue to consider what further actions we can take to underpin the games sector's vital contribution to the UK's future economic success. We are currently looking closely at industry's most recent proposals, including The Independent Game Developers Association's updated proposal for the creation of a new, large scale video games investment fund.

EDUCATION

■ 16-19 Bursary Fund: Coronavirus

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[142882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the 16-19 Bursary Fund for the 2020-21 school year (a) nationally and (b) in areas particularly financially affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[142883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will bring forward proposals to make emergency 16-19 bursary funding available to providers who have depleted their allocations and are unable to continue supporting their low-income students due to levels of demand during the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

We are very grateful for all the work 16-19 providers are doing to support students through the COVID-19 outbreak. We are also keenly aware of the pressures being faced by those providers and the financial difficulties that some students have.

Last year we enabled providers to apply for additional Bursary Fund to help them meet the cost of devices and connectivity, and this year we have announced that 16-19 providers can apply for an allocation of devices from our Get Help with Technology scheme.

We continue to keep the Bursary Fund situation under review, including gathering evidence, with a view to considering what more we can do to support students and providers through this difficult time.

■ Adoption: Bureaucracy**Luke Pollard:**[\[143089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to reduce bureaucracy in the adoption system, since his speech for National Adoption Week on 14 October 2020.

Luke Pollard:[\[143090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to improve access to the Child's Adoption Fund since his speech for National Adoption Week on 14 October 2020.

Vicky Ford:

In his speech during National Adoption Week my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, reaffirmed his commitment to finding a stable, loving home for all children. Since then, this government has continued to support the development of Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs), which are designed to improve adopter recruitment, speed up matching and improve adoption support. There are now 30 RAAs covering 141 local authorities.

In the same week that the Secretary of State for Education gave his speech, the RAA and sector led national recruitment campaign, #youcanadopt, launched its Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) specific outreach work, including piloting a triage service for BAME prospective adopters. By encouraging people of all backgrounds to come forward to adopt, and supporting them through that process, we aim to reduce waiting times for BAME children, who normally wait the longest to be found a new adoptive family.

In December 2020, Krish Kandiah was announced as the new chair of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB). Krish will work with the ASGLB to provide leadership to the sector and improve services for children and families.

On 15 January 2021, the Secretary of State for Education announced that funding for the Adoption Support Fund will continue for the next financial year ensuring that

adopted children and families will continue to receive much needed support until March 2022. We are working closely with adoption stakeholders, including regional and voluntary adoption agencies, to identify delays and barriers in accessing the Adoption Support Fund and actions needed to overcome these:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-secretary-launches-review-of-childrens-social-care>.

■ Apprentices: Taxation

Karin Smyth:

[142995]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2020 to Question 22783 on Apprentices: Taxation, where that unspent levy money is located in his departmental budget.

Gillian Keegan:

The apprenticeship levy is collected by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs from all UK employers with a pay bill above £3 million. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland receive a share of levy funding and decide how their allocations should be used.

In each of the 2019-20 and 2020-21 financial years, the annual budget available for investment in apprenticeships in England was set at almost £2.5 billion, which is double that spent in the 2010-11 financial year. This budget is agreed in advance with Her Majesty's Treasury and is set at a level to fund employer demand for apprenticeships; it is not dependent on income from the levy and does not equate to the funds in employer's apprenticeship service accounts.

When an employer draws from its levy account, it effectively draws down funding from the fixed, annual apprenticeships budget. We do not anticipate that all employers who pay the levy will need or want to use all the funds in their accounts, though they are able to do so.

Unspent levy money does not therefore feature in the department's apprenticeship budget. The budget is not affected by the value of funds which may enter or expire from employers' accounts each month.

Funds raised by the levy are used to support the whole apprenticeship system through the set apprenticeships budget, supporting apprenticeships in smaller employers and covering the ongoing costs of apprentices already in training.

■ Assessments: Coronavirus

Dr Rupa Huq:

[144772]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his oral contribution of 3 November 2020 on Exams and Accountability 2021, Official Report, column 435, what recent discussions he has had with universities on grading exams generously in response to disruptions to student learning as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

The government recognises that students have faced many changes over the last year, as providers have had to adapt teaching, learning and assessment methods in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Some universities have put in place policies stating that students should not be awarded a degree classification below their level of academic performance prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. It is designed by providers as a safety net for students to ensure they are not unfairly impacted by these challenging circumstances.

While providers are autonomous, and responsible for setting their own assessment practices, the government expects providers to make all reasonable efforts for student achievement to be reliably assessed and for qualifications to be awarded securely. It is vital that a fair approach to exams and assessment is in place and understood by students. The Office for Students (OfS), the higher education regulator in England, has issued guidance to the sector setting out expectations about provider approaches to teaching and assessment during this time. OfS guidance is clear - standards must be maintained, but clearly changes to assessments may be required in some circumstances.

The government will continue to work closely with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, professional bodies and the OfS to ensure students continue to leave university with qualifications that have real value, reflect their hard work and allow people to progress.

■ Children: Internet**Chi Onwurah:****[142925]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect on children's socialisation of their social contact moving online as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

We know that the COVID-19 outbreak and the associated measures and restrictions, such as social distancing and school closures, is having a range of impacts on the lives of children and young people. We are working across government to understand the data and evidence as it emerges; this includes a summary of published sources in the Public Health England Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveillance report children and young people chapter:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report/7-children-and-young-people>.

We know that receiving face-to-face education is best for children's and young people's mental wellbeing and for their educational achievement. We have made sure that schools have the flexibility to offer a place in school as a vulnerable child to any pupils for whom being in school will help them manage their mental health or to access support more easily. Schools will continue to offer pastoral support, as well as

relationships, sex and health education (RHSE) as part of the curriculum, to pupils working remotely at home.

The RHSE curriculum covers relevant issues such as mental wellbeing, friendships, Internet safety and harms, online relationships and online media. The department has developed an online service featuring innovative training materials and an implementation guide. This support will cover all of the teaching requirements in the statutory guidance and will be inclusive of all pupils. The materials are available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health>.

We are supporting schools to offer pastoral support through the £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return scheme. The scheme funds trained local experts to provide additional advice and resources for schools and further education providers to help support the resilience, wellbeing and recovery of pupils, students, parents, carers and staff in light of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown. The scheme will give staff the confidence to support their own colleagues as well as pupils and students and pupils' parents and carers, and to know how and where to access appropriate specialist support where needed.

The government is also making sure that children, young people and families have advice directly about dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak and staying safe online. Public Health England has published guidance for parents which includes signposting to further support such as the Every Mind Matters website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>.

We have developed guidance for parents and carers which has been published on GOV.UK to signpost them to trusted resources and advice on keeping children safe online. The guidance also points to specific routes of support regarding particular online harms which may be of concern:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-parents-and-carers-to-keep-children-safe-online>.

■ **CITB and CITB Northern Ireland: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Owen Thompson:

[145080]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether (a) the Construction Industry Training Board and (b) the Construction Industry Training Board Northern Ireland are able to access furlough funding.

Gillian Keegan:

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs' guidance (updated 26 January 2021) regarding the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme states: '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.'

The construction levy is regarded as public funding by Her Majesty's Treasury. However, the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) also raises other income

via commercial activity. Therefore, in some cases, it may be deemed appropriate for the CITB to request specific staff be 'furloughed'. Any requests are referred to the CITB's sponsor team in the Department for Education in the first instance.

The Construction Industry Training Board Northern Ireland is a matter for the Department for Economy (Northern Ireland).

■ Extended Services: Coronavirus

Bill Esterson:

[145007]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the financial viability of out-of-school wraparound childcare providers that are not able to operate normally during the current covid-19 restrictions period; and whether he plans to offer them financial support.

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, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/guidance-for-schools-coronavirus-covid-19>.

As indicated in the answer I gave on 28 January 2021 to Question [142909](#), the department does not hold a central register of wraparound providers, and so we are unable to make an accurate assessment of the financial viability of providers. However, we recognise that the wraparound childcare sector, like many sectors, is facing unprecedented financial pressures as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Therefore, as explained previously, the government has made a range of financial packages of support available for businesses to access throughout the current crisis. This includes tax relief, business loans or cash grants through, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, as well as a £594 million discretionary fund for councils and the devolved administrations to support local businesses that may not be eligible for other support, during the current national lockdown.

We are also still encouraging 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 the expanded Holiday Activities and Food Programme mentioned in my previous answer to Question [142909](#), 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 Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021.

Bambos Charalambous: [145091]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect on children's (a) learning and (b) development of the closure of wraparound childcare providers.

Bambos Charalambous: [145092]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the UK's financial recovery from the covid-19 outbreak of offering tailored grant funding to wraparound childcare providers.

Vicky Ford:

Ensuring that working parents and carers have access to the childcare they need remains a priority for the government. That is why we have ensured that all before-school and after-school clubs, holiday clubs, and other out-of-school settings have been able to continue to stay open for children eligible to attend school on-site (i.e. for critical worker children, and vulnerable children and young people) for the duration of the national lockdown, in line with the protective measures guidance for the sector, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

We have also made clear that schools should be continuing to offer before-school and after-school provision for those pupils eligible to attend for on-site provision, where it is feasible for them to do so. We have provided guidance for schools to support them to resume this provision. A copy of the guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

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

The department also recognises that the wraparound childcare sector, like many sectors, is facing unprecedented financial pressures as a result of the COVID-19

outbreak. It is for this reason that the government has made a range of financial packages of support available for businesses to access throughout the current crisis. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>. This includes tax relief, business loans or cash grants through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, as well as a £594 million discretionary fund for councils and the devolved administrations to support local businesses that may not be eligible for other support during the current national lockdown, announced on 4 January 2021.

■ Further Education: Remote Education

Karin Smyth:

[\[145052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that further education colleges receive a further allocation of laptops.

Gillian Keegan:

For students in further education across England, we have extended the Get Help with Technology service to provide support with devices and connectivity. This forms part of a £400 million investment, including an additional £100 million announced in January 2021, to help children and young people continue their education at home and access online social care services.

Colleges and other further education institutions are eligible to receive devices where they have students aged 16 to 19 who are in receipt of free meals, and where they have students aged 19 and over with an education, health and care plan who are also in receipt of free meals.

Further education providers will own the laptops and tablets provided under this scheme and can lend these to the young people who need them the most.

The vast majority of further education providers with eligible students have already been invited to order devices, and orders are currently being fulfilled within 5 working days.

Once providers have joined the service and placed an order for devices, they will also be eligible to request 4G wireless routers for financially disadvantaged students who do not have a broadband connection at home.

■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments

Julian Sturdy:

[\[142914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether students taking (a) GCSEs and (b) A-levels in the 2020-21 academic year will receive centre assessed grades; and what plans his Department has to provide a mechanism by which Ofqual can adjust those grades.

Nick Gibb:

The Government remains clear that exams are the fairest method to assess students. Given the further disruption, however, the Department cannot guarantee that all

students will be in a position to sit their exams fairly this summer. GCSE, AS and A levels will not go ahead as planned.

The Department has already confirmed our proposals that in summer 2021 pupils taking GCSE, AS and A levels regulated by Ofqual should be awarded grades based on an assessment by their teachers. Ofqual and the Department launched a consultation on the evidence needed to inform teachers' assessments of their students' grades, including providing externally set papers to support their assessments.

Teachers will be provided with training and guidance to support them, balancing flexibility with the need to make sure grades are valid and consistent. To further support this, the consultation also proposes that exam boards should both provide information for schools and colleges to inform their own quality assurance, and that the exam boards themselves should undertake checks of schools' and colleges' processes and the evidence for the grades submitted. We have proposed that changes to teachers' grades should be the exception and will only be if the grade could not legitimately have been given based on the evidence. The Department proposes that all students will have a route to appeal their grades.

Ofqual and the Department are working at pace to provide further clarity to the sector and will publish the outcome of the consultation as soon as possible.

■ Higher Education: Coronavirus

Karin Smyth:

[\[141517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what methodology his Department used to determine the level of the one-off funding of £20 million to higher education providers in December 2020 to help to address student hardship during financial year 2020-21.

Michelle Donelan:

We realise that this is an incredibly difficult time for students and are aware of the disproportionate impact that the COVID-19 outbreak will have on some students. The up to £20 million of additional hardship funding has been made available to support those that need it most, particularly disadvantaged students.

The level for this funding was set following discussions with Student Money Advisers within higher education providers and with reference to the views of providers gathered by Universities UK.

The funding has been targeted towards those providers who recruit and support high numbers of disadvantaged students, reflecting where this funding is needed most to enable students to continue with their courses and achieve successful outcomes.

We asked the Office for Students to ensure that the funding is available to students as quickly as possible, so that it can meet the immediate needs of students and be allocated by the end of this financial year (31 March 2021).

On the 2 February 2021 we announced that we are making available a further £50 million of hardship funding for this financial year, for higher education (HE) providers

to use to support students in greatest need. This funding can be distributed to a wide population of students, including international students impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. This funding is in addition to the £256 million of Student Premium funding which HE providers are also able draw on this academic year towards student hardship funds. We shall continue to monitor the situation going forward to look at what impact this funding is having.

■ Nurses: Apprentices

Karin Smyth:

[145049]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many nursing (a) apprenticeship starts and (b) apprentices there were in 2019-20.

Gillian Keegan:

There were 82,200 apprenticeship starts in the health, public services, and care sector subject area in the 2019/20 academic year in England. The data for this can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships/2019-20>.

We want to increase the number of nursing apprenticeships and now have a complete apprentice pathway, from entry level to postgraduate advanced clinical practice in nursing. This will support people from all backgrounds to enter a nursing career in the NHS.

The number of apprenticeship starts and participating apprentices in the 2019/20 academic year on the Registered Nurse and Nursing Associate apprenticeship standards are shown in the table below:

	APPRENTICESHIP STARTS IN 2019/20	APPRENTICESHIP PARTICIPATION IN 2019/20
Registered Nurse – degree	940	2,080
Nursing associate	3,620	8,370

Notes:

- (1) Data source is the Individualised Learner Record.
- (2) Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
- (3) There are different versions for both of these standards. These have been combined to give a single total for 2019/20.
- (4) Participation is the count of funded learners that participated at any point during the year.

We are working closely with employers, Health Education England and ministers in the Department of Health and Social Care to make sure that the NHS is fully supported to recruit apprentices, both in nursing and a range of other occupations.

■ Schools: Uniforms

Philip Davies:

[\[142858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the value for money of sole-supply arrangements for school uniforms.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has not carried out an assessment of the value for money of sole supply arrangements. The Department publishes guidance for schools on school uniform. Our guidance is clear that when deciding how to source school uniform, the governing body should give highest priority to the consideration of cost and value for money for parents. The governing body should be able to demonstrate how best value has been achieved. The guidance also recommends that schools avoid exclusive single-supply contracts unless a regular competitive tendering process is run to secure best value for parents. The Department believes that this approach provides the right balance to secure open and transparent arrangements and good value for money.

The Government is supporting the Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms) Private Members' Bill to enable us to issue statutory guidance on the cost of school uniform. The Department's existing guidance on cost considerations will form the basis for the new statutory guidance.

■ Shipping: Vocational Guidance

Emma Hardy:

[\[143074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of students that are pursuing careers in the maritime sector.

Gillian Keegan:

Young people need information on the range of jobs and careers and encounters with employers to inspire them about what they can achieve. Information on the maritime sector is available from a number of sources. The National Careers Service provides independent, professional advice on careers, skills, and the labour market.

The Careers and Enterprise Company is making sure that every young person has access to inspiring encounters with the world of work, including work placements, work experience and other employer-based activities. It is offering support to schools by increasing the level of employer input into careers programmes.

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

There are a number of apprenticeships in the maritime sector; at present four standards are available for delivery.

■ Students: Fees and Charges

Karin Smyth:

[\[141513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with universities regarding the potential effect on those institutions of a reduction in undergraduate tuition fees where the quality of the course has been impacted by the covid-19 pandemic.

Michelle Donelan:

I recognise that the COVID-19 outbreak has brought, and will continue to bring, very significant challenges for higher education (HE) providers, including financially. This is why I established the HE taskforce which is made up of representatives from across the sector to discuss COVID-19 related challenges which universities and other HE providers are facing.

Alongside the taskforce, I have been regularly meeting with representatives of the HE sector, including university Vice Chancellors, the National Union of Students, the Union for Colleges and Universities and the devolved administrations.

Universities are autonomous and responsible for setting their own fees, up to a maximum of £9,250 for standard full-time undergraduate courses offered by approved (fee cap) providers. However, the Government has been clear that universities are expected to maintain quality and academic standards and the quantity of tuition should not drop. Universities should seek to ensure all students, regardless of their background, can access their studies remotely. We have seen some fantastic and innovative examples of high-quality online learning being delivered by providers across the country.

If students have concerns about the quality of their course, 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.

The changing COVID-19 situation will continue to present challenges and the nature and extent of impact will remain variable across the sector. The Office of Students is monitoring the situation and the Department for Education is working closely with it and sector representative bodies to maintain an up-to-date understanding of issues arising during the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Students: Private Rented Housing

Clive Lewis:

[\[141535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2021 to Question 137247, whether the use of £256 million of existing funds by providers is ringfenced for hardship support; and how much new funding is ringfenced for student hardship support in relation to the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

On the 2 February 2021 we announced that we are making available a further £50 million of hardship funding for this financial year, for higher education providers to use to support students in greatest need.

This funding can be distributed to a wide population of students, including international students impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak.

This funding is in addition to the £20 million of hardship funding made available in December 2020 and to the £256 million of Student Premium funding which higher education providers are also able draw on this academic year towards student hardship funds.

We shall continue to monitor the situation going forward to look at what impact this funding is having.

■ Turing Scheme**Paul Blomfield:**[\[145006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 22 January 2021 to Question 137193, when the Turing Scheme will be open for applications.

Michelle Donelan:

We will be launching a website with more information on the Turing Scheme and setting out the application process in the coming weeks, for mobilities to start in September 2021.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Subsidies****Luke Pollard:**[\[143087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assumptions his Department has used on the level of rents for agricultural land as Basic Payment Scheme payments are phased out.

Victoria Prentis:

Rent prices could fall for tenant farmers as Direct Payments are removed. There is evidence that Direct Payments inflate farm rent prices, meaning some of the payment supports the income of the landowner, not the tenant farmer.

Academic evidence suggests that an average of 20 to 25 cents per euro paid to tenants across the EU goes to the landlord, though the land market conditions in England give reason to believe the figure could be different here. A combination of high demand for farmland, varied rental agreements and re-directed Direct Payment spend means that any fall in rents is difficult to estimate with certainty. Additionally, it's likely there would be large regional and local variations linked to considerable differences in demand and supply of land across the country.

■ Animal Products: Exports**Navendu Mishra:**[\[142070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the list of businesses in England, Scotland and Wales approved to export Animal By-Products to the EU, how many businesses have been excluded from that list that have approval numbers issued; and for what reasons that list was not published until 8 January 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

Publication on GOV.UK of the lists of GB Third Country Approved Establishments, on the EU's TRACES customs system, is a temporary fix. The expectation remains that details will be published by the European Commission. Defra will continue to publish updates on GOV.UK until then.

All qualifying premises known to Defra are included. We published at the earliest opportunity after we learned that the European Commission had not published details.

■ Drax Power Station: Biofuels**John Redwood:**[\[142751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will work with Drax power station and UK forestry to source UK biomass to replace imports.

Rebecca Pow:

Our woodlands provide habitats, capture carbon and provide sustainable sources of fibre and fuel. We are seeking to increase planting across the UK in this parliament, and to bring more woodlands into management. This will increase the domestic supply of wood for a range of markets.

We are also developing a Biomass Strategy for publication in 2022 and will issue a call for evidence shortly. As part of the strategy we will review the amount of sustainable biomass available in the UK, and how this could be best utilised across the economy to achieve net zero.

■ Dredging: Weaver Vale**Mike Amesbury:**[\[145135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of dredging the River Weaver in the Northwich and Sutton Weaver areas of Weaver Vale constituency.

Mike Amesbury:[\[145136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to allocate funding to a regular schedule of dredging for the river Weaver and Dane in Weaver Vale constituency.

Rebecca Pow:

Dredging is an important part of the Environment Agency's (EA) river maintenance regime. The EA will undertake dredging where there is evidence that it will reduce flood risk to local properties cost effectively without increasing flooding downstream.

The River Weaver is a water course modified to act as a navigation and as such the water level is controlled via structures and assets that are owned and operated by the Canal & River Trust. The navigation sections are dredged to maintain standards to allow the draught of vessels.

The EA investigated the potential merits of dredging in 2013 as part of its assessment of options for reducing the risk of flooding in Northwich. The EA looked at different siltation scenarios, including if silt levels and shoals built up, to see what impact there would be on flood risk. The EA concluded that this was not a significant issue in relation to controlling water levels in Northwich, and dredging was not found to be beneficial.

The EA has allocated resource to the future maintenance of the assets – the defence walls and demountable assets – that protect the town from main river flooding. However it has not allocated funding to dredging the River Weaver.

■ Environmental Land Management Scheme**Harriett Baldwin:**[\[142915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to include provision within Environmental Land Management scheme proposals to pay farmers and landowners to create active travel routes, including on old disused rail lines.

Victoria Prentis:

Beauty, heritage and engagement with the environment is an important part of our new environmental schemes.

These could support the creation of active travel routes through providing funding for access to infrastructure or for educational visits, for example. We will engage with a range of stakeholders as we develop the scheme. This includes through our tests and trials programme. Several tests and trials are considering how access can be incorporated in the new schemes.

We are working with stakeholders and end users to determine the specific land management actions that will be paid for under the Environmental Land Management scheme. We will set out more details on this later this year. 'The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024' set out examples of the types of actions that we envisage paying for under the scheme.

We'll also be testing and piloting key aspects of the new schemes in real situations with farmers and land managers beginning in 2021. This aims to learn and innovate prior to the start of an early prototype of the Sustainable Farming Incentive Scheme in 2022.

■ Export Health Certificates

Louise Haigh:

[\[145074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish guidance on the completion of health certificates for products on the prohibited and restricted list.

Victoria Prentis:

We published the certificates for meat products listed as prohibited and restricted by the EU on 27 January, and the certificates' notes for guidance, for use by the certifying officers, on 29 January.

■ Fisheries

Luke Pollard:

[\[143088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 22 January 2021 to Question 138067 on Fisheries, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement's content on fishing on the ability of the Government to require fish caught under a British quota to be landed in a British port.

Victoria Prentis:

Reservation No 13 of the Services and Investment chapter in the UK/EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement allows the UK to set landing requirements for vessels flying its flag. A consultation on how to strengthen the economic link licence condition in England closed in November and officials are working on the Government's response which we will publish shortly. Fisheries is a devolved matter and so any changes to the economic link arising from the consultation will only apply to the English fleet.

■ Fishing Vessels

John Redwood:

[\[142753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take urgent steps to help expand the UK fishing fleet.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government remains committed to supporting the fishing industry and our coastal communities. The Trade and Co-operation Agreement with the EU reflects the UK's new status as an independent coastal state, and we have taken back control of our fishing waters. By the end of the five-and-a-half-year period, the share of fish in our waters which UK boats will catch will rise from half to two thirds.

The Government is supporting the opportunities available to the UK's fishing industry and has committed to providing £100m of investment to rejuvenate the industry and coastal communities across the UK. Further details will be set out in due course.

■ Food: Labelling

Ben Lake:

[\[143060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has issued guidance for consumers on distinguishing whether products that are labelled as produce of Morocco are from the disputed territory of Western Sahara.

Victoria Prentis:

The underlying principles of food labelling rules are that information provided on food should enable consumers to make informed choices and that any misleading information, including on the origin or provenance of food, is prohibited. In order to comply with the legal requirement not to mislead consumers established in Article 7.1 of the retained Regulation 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers, produce grown in Western Sahara which requires origin labelling or has it indicated on a voluntary basis, should be labelled as origin Western Sahara, not as origin Morocco.

The UK-Morocco Association Agreement applies in the same way as the EU-Morocco agreements. It treats products originating in Western Sahara subject to controls by customs authorities of Morocco in the same way as the EU-Morocco Association Agreement, in line with the European Court of Justice's ruling on that issue and the subsequent amendment of the EU-Morocco Association Agreement. It means that products originating in Western Sahara subject to controls by customs authorities of Morocco benefit from the same trade preferences as those granted by the UK to products covered by the UK-Morocco Association Agreement.

The UK is clear that the application of parts of the UK-Morocco Association Agreement to certain products originating in Western Sahara, in line with European Court of Justice's ruling on that issue, is without prejudice to our position on the status of Western Sahara, which we regard as undetermined.

■ Insecticides

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[142885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to support the use of non-chemical alternatives to neonicotinoids.

Victoria Prentis:

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

The NAP supports the development of alternatives to chemical pesticides, as part of the IPM approach. Our proposed plan will increase uptake of non-chemical approaches by improving advice and skills sharing, and by providing financial support through the new Environmental Land Management Scheme.

The Government has recently agreed to allow the use of a neonicotinoid seed treatment on sugar beet in 2021. This is an exceptional measure and we do not see such products as a permanent solution for sugar beet growers. The sugar beet industry has been developing alternative approaches including improved husbandry, plant breeding to develop new varieties and potential new insecticide products. Their forward plan maps out the route to develop each of these areas further so that economic production is possible without neonicotinoid seed treatments.

■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[142781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to assess in which areas of the UK roadside air pollution is most prevalent and dangerous; and what steps he is taking with local authorities to tackle air pollution in those areas.

Rebecca Pow:

The 2017 UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations outlines how local authorities with persistent NO₂ exceedances, identified using national modelling, must take robust action to improve air quality. We are working closely with these local authorities and making £880m of funding available to deliver compliance with NO₂ levels as soon as possible.

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

Local authorities have a range of powers to take action to reduce pollution from road vehicles, such as restricting car access around schools and enforcing anti-idling laws. In addition, Defra's Air Quality Grant programme provides funding to local authorities for projects in local communities to tackle air pollution. The Government has awarded over £64 million in funding since the air quality grant started in 1997.

■ Plastics: Packaging

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[143145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to reduce the use of single use plastic in supermarket packaging.

Rebecca Pow:

Reducing the use of single use plastic packaging is important. In the 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy we set out our ambitions to double resource productivity and eliminate avoidable waste by 2050. To help us achieve this, we are reforming the packaging producer responsibility regulations and developing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging.

EPR for packaging will see packaging producers paying for the waste management costs associated with the packaging that they place on the market. This will ensure

producers are thinking about the necessity of any packaging they use. Where producers use single-use packaging, it is important that it is easily collected and recycled. EPR for Packaging will see producers' fees modulated (varied) to account for certain criteria, including recyclability. Producers who use easily recyclable packaging will pay less than those who use hard to recycle, or unrecyclable, packaging.

In developing EPR for packaging we will also take consideration of how EPR could be used to encourage packaging reuse and refill systems. We will consult on our proposals this year. This consultation will set out our proposals for the timing of implementing the reforms.

Industry, however, is already acting. The UK Plastics Pact is jointly founded between The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and the Ellen McArthur Foundation and is supported by the Government. The Pact brings together organisations from across the plastics supply chain with four key targets for 2025 that aim to reduce the amount of plastic waste generated. One of these targets is to eliminate single-use plastic packaging. Our proposed reforms will support the Pact in achieving those targets. Through the pact, work has been done to increase the sale of unpackaged products. The WRAP Fresh Produce Guidance was published in November 2019 which includes advice for retailers to help determine if fresh produce can be provided loose.

■ **Plastics: Waste**

Navendu Mishra:

[140304]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Environment Agency's visits in 2018 to all facilities which treated or reprocessed plastic waste to check they were not losing plastic fragments into surface water, how many and what proportion of such facilities were identified as losing plastic fragments into surface water.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) regulates a number of activities which have the potential to cause plastic waste pollution in the River Mersey. The EA is responsible for the regulation of permitted and exempt plastics recycling plants, which includes inspection and compliance checks to ensure plastics recyclers are complying with their environmental permits.

In 2018 the EA visited facilities which treated or reprocessed plastic waste and checked they were not losing plastic fragments into surface water draining into the Mersey. The EA undertook an investigation on the River Tame to identify if there were any permitted activities based on the Tame catchment with the potential to discharge micro-plastics into the watercourse.

The EA identified and inspected three sites. One of these sites was identified as having the potential to discharge plastic waste into the Tame. The EA worked with

the operator to prevent waste escaping from the site and potentially causing pollution to the watercourse and the operator subsequently moved to a different area.

The EA also works nationally to reduce waste crime which helps to minimise and prevent loss of plastic waste into the environment from businesses by keeping it in the waste management system. The EA has worked with the energy sector to reduce the loss of plastic media from their cooling treatment processes. The EA has also worked with water companies to prevent plastic bio-bead loss from the wastewater processes. The EA is working with businesses and leading academics to investigate the types and quantities of plastics, including micro-plastics, entering the environment. This research will feed into plans to tackle this type of pollution at source.

■ Sewage: Seas and Oceans

Stephen Morgan: [\[141594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the January 2021 Surfers Against Sewage, Ocean & Climate Report; and if he will make a statement.

Stephen Morgan: [\[141595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to protect oceans as part of work to tackle the climate emergency.

Rebecca Pow:

The work carried out by Surfers Against Sewage on their Ocean & Climate Report provides a timely reminder of the urgent need to reduce emissions and the importance of nature-based solutions in our response to climate change and biodiversity loss.

The most effective thing we can do to reduce the impacts of climate change on the ocean is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The UK government has therefore set a legally binding target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Internationally, 2021 is a critical year for the ocean, climate and nature. We are committed to working closely with our partners to drive a recognition of the linkages between the ocean, climate and biodiversity. We will use our COP26 Presidency to secure ambitious emission reductions and drive action on the Leaders' Pledge for Nature commitments, recognising the role of nature-based solutions in building resilience and adapting to the impacts of climate change, as well as supporting mitigation.

At the recent One Planet Summit, the UK accepted the position as Ocean Co-Chair of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People and between this and the UK-led Global Ocean Alliance we now have over 60 countries supporting a target to protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030 as part of our aim for an ambitious and transformational post-2020 global biodiversity framework for adoption at the 15th Conference of Parties of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 15).

Together with Vanuatu, the UK Government is driving forward ambitious action to reduce plastic pollution in the ocean through the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (CCOA), a growing group of 34 Commonwealth member states. To support the ambitions of CCOA, the UK Government has committed up to £70 million to boost global research and support developing countries to stop plastic waste from entering the ocean in the first place. Through one of our UK Aid programmes, the Global Plastic Action Partnership, the UK is working in partnership with Indonesia, Ghana, Vietnam and Nigeria to stem the tide of plastics entering in the ocean.

The UK has also committed to launch a £500m Blue Planet Fund, financed from official development assistance (ODA), to protect the ocean and reduce poverty in developing countries.

In November 2020 the UK announced its support to start negotiations on a new global agreement at the United Nations Environment Assembly that will create the system change required to tackle increasing levels of marine plastic litter and microplastics.

The UK is also taking action domestically to avoid further irreversible impacts to the ocean from climate change and biodiversity loss.

The protection, restoration and management of the marine environment are central to objectives in the 25 Year Environment Plan and the UK Marine Strategy on clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse seas that are managed sustainably. We already have 38% of UK waters in Marine Protected Areas and our focus is ensuring these are effectively protected.

We have stated our intention to pilot Highly Protected Marine Areas in Secretary of State waters and we look forward to publishing the Government's response to Richard Benyon's review in due course.

The Fisheries Act 2020 protects our marine environment and develops plans to restore our fish stocks back to more sustainable levels.

As part of our commitment to ocean recovery we are supporting coastal and estuarine restoration projects, including blue carbon habitats. The £80 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund will help environmental organisations start work now on restoration projects across England, including the inshore marine environment.

Our new Storm Overflows Taskforce is bringing together government, the water industry, regulators and environmental NGOs to work urgently on options to tackle sewage pollution issues.

As announced on 22 January, and welcomed by Surfers Against Sewage, this Taskforce has agreed a long-term goal to eliminate harm from storm overflows.

Water companies have also agreed to make real-time data on sewage discharges available at bathing sites all year round. This data will be made available to help surfers, swimmers and other recreational water users to check the latest information and make informed choices on where to swim.

We recognise there is more that needs to be done beyond providing more and better information, and so we will continue to work with the industry to reduce frequency and harm of discharges from storm overflows.

■ Shellfish: Wales

Nia Griffith: [\[144638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to facilitate the immediate export to the EU of Welsh non-depurated shellfish from class B waters from wild stock.

Victoria Prentis:

We notified the industry in October and December 2020 that the EU would not accept non-depurated, live, bivalve molluscs from class B waters harvested from wild stock from 1 January 2021.

Since then, we have heard that the EU Commission additionally has concerns about the trade from registered aquaculture production businesses. We have not however had a formal notification setting these out.

We are rapidly working to identify any scientific or legal basis that might undermine the trade so that it may continue to operate on a secure footing. This work includes discussions with EU Member States and the European Commission.

We understand the importance of this trade for Welsh shellfish businesses and others in the UK.

Live bivalve molluscs such as oysters, mussels, clams, cockles and scallops can continue to be exported to the EU if they are harvested from class A waters, have been cleaned or have cleared end product testing in GB.

■ Supermarkets: Coronavirus

Grahame Morris: [\[144992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the seven participating supermarkets in the priority delivery slots scheme on reducing minimum spends on deliveries for people using those slots so that they are not penalised financially for following official guidance to stay at home.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is continuing to hold regular conversations with each of the seven supermarkets participating in the priority access to online deliveries offer: Asda, Iceland, Morrisons, Ocado, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose. The department uses these meetings as an opportunity to convey any concerns raised by charities or local authorities around topics such as delivery charges and minimum spends. Although Defra cannot legally dictate the delivery costs and minimum spends applied by supermarkets, our regular conversations ensure that supermarkets understand the impact that delivery charges and minimum spends can have in preventing a clinically extremely vulnerable person from being able to access food.

Alongside encouraging supermarkets to seriously consider the impact delivery charges and minimum spends can have on clinically extremely vulnerable people, the department also monitors delivery charges and minimum spends and circulates this information to local authorities to allow them to advise their residents accordingly.

Olivia Blake:

[\[145186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential benefits to the wellbeing and financial security of vulnerable people isolating as a result of the covid-19 outbreak from supermarkets (a) suspending charges for people using priority supermarket delivery slots and (b) reducing minimum spends on deliveries for people using priority supermarket delivery slots.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is continuing to hold regular conversations with each of the seven supermarkets participating in the priority access to online deliveries offer: Asda, Iceland, Morrisons, Ocado, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose. The department uses these meetings as an opportunity to convey any concerns raised by charities or local authorities around topics such as delivery charges and minimum spends. Although Defra cannot legally dictate the delivery costs and minimum spends applied by supermarkets, our regular conversations ensure that supermarkets understand the impact that delivery charges and minimum spends can have in preventing a clinically extremely vulnerable person from being able to access food.

Alongside encouraging supermarkets to seriously consider the impact delivery charges and minimum spends can have on clinically extremely vulnerable people, the department also monitors delivery charges and minimum spends and circulates this information to local authorities to allow them to advise their residents accordingly.

■ Timber

John Redwood:

[\[142750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to encourage the use of UK-produced timber to reduce wood miles.

Rebecca Pow:

This spring we will publish a new England Tree Strategy, setting out plans to increase tree planting in line with our manifesto commitments, and to increase the management of existing woodlands. These actions will provide more domestic timber now and, in the future, reducing our reliance on imports. To drive sustainable investment into UK woodlands we also want to see the expansion and use of the Grown in Britain Certification mark throughout the supply chain, reducing the carbon footprint of the construction industry.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Aid Workers: Vetting****Sarah Champion:**[\[142946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has to work with representatives of the aid and development sector to ensure UK nationals are required to undertake enhanced DBS checks.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: The Government is committed to ensuring that UK aid sector employers have access to the information they need to make informed recruitment decisions.

FCDO and Home Office officials will work with representatives of the aid and development sector to ensure that the existing criminal record disclosure regime is being used as effectively as possible. Officials will seek to clarify the nature and scope of any issues faced by hiring organisations, and will take steps to ensure that employers in the sector are fully aware of the most appropriate route for criminal records checks depending on the location of recruitment decisions and the type of activity involved.

■ **Coronavirus****Rachael Maskell:**[\[143001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the continuing emergence of new variants of the Sars Cov-2, if the Government will make it its policy to support the proposed (a) WTO Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights waiver and (b) WHO Covid-19 Technology Access Pool to facilitate collaboration in developing effective tools against those new strains.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is playing a leading role in global efforts towards rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, as well as in identifying new variants through world-leading genomic analysis capability and surveillance systems. Our investment in the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations supports ongoing vaccine research and development to respond to an evolving virus.

The UK does not consider waiving intellectual property (IP) rights to be an appropriate course of action in boosting the manufacture of safe and effective vaccines. The IP system has mobilised research and development to deliver new medicines and technologies to detect, prevent, and treat COVID-19. Along with international financing commitments and collaboration, it has facilitated partnerships necessary for rapid scaling-up of production for new safe and effective products. Since the World Health Organisation (WHO) provided initial details on the COVID-19 technology access pool (C-TAP) in October 2020, the UK has engaged industry and the research community. Whilst we welcome the voluntary nature of the pool, we

need to avoid a 'one-size fits all' approach from deterring potential participants. We continue to explore how the C-TAP operating model can address this issue.

■ Coronavirus: International Cooperation

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[144801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 142040 on Coronavirus: International Cooperation, (a) how many and (b) which pharmaceutical companies have contributed to the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool since its creation.

Wendy Morton:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: The World Health Organization (WHO) is currently establishing the governance structures, and refining the operating model for the COVID Technology Access Pool (C-TAP). This includes undertaking stakeholder consultations, in which the UK has participated. The WHO maintains the details of any contributors to the initiative.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Rachael Maskell:

[\[143000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will take steps to ensure that Gavi supports (a) the Covid-19 Technology Access Pool and (b) other measures and solutions that aim to overcome intellectual property barriers that limit the number of manufacturers of the covid-19 vaccine and, as a result, access to that vaccine.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, playing a leading role in financing the global effort, and working to identify end-to-end solutions that ensure affordable access for all.

The UK believes that the Intellectual Property (IP) system has acted as an enabler during the pandemic. We are committed to working with international partners, including Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, on initiatives such as the World Health Organization's COVID-19 technology access pool (C-TAP). We are taking action to bring industry and researchers to the table on C-TAP, and will continue to do so where it strengthens the international pandemic response.

The UK is committed to collaborating with public and private partners, both in the UK and internationally, in exploring voluntary arrangements for sharing intellectual property. We encourage approaches such as non-exclusive voluntary licensing, which promote affordable access for all, while also providing incentives to create new inventions to accelerate development and equitable access to affordable health technologies in all countries for responding to COVID-19.

■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Christianity**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[144948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his counterpart in the Democratic Republic of Congo to determine the steps that country is taking to tackle the killings of Christians and others by Islamic extremist groups in January 2021.

James Duddridge:

The UK is concerned about violence against all communities, whatever their religion or belief, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The violence is symptomatic of a broader picture of instability in eastern DRC. We continue to urge the DRC Government and the UN to work together to protect civilians from ongoing violence and address the root causes of conflict. During my visit [Minister Duddridge] to DRC in November 2020, I discussed the importance of addressing these issues with President Tshisekedi.

We are committed to ensuring the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO) has a mandate focused on the protection of civilians and that vulnerable communities remain central to the UN's work in DRC. We are providing approximately £52 million of financial support in 2020/21 and three military staff officers to support the mission. Our six-year, £70 million, peace and stability programme is also helping communities secure land access, construct critical infrastructure and access income-generation opportunities in DRC.

■ EU Countries: Travel**Mrs Flick Drummond:**[\[144722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what bilateral negotiations are planned or underway between officials of his Department and representatives of the Governments of (a) France, (b) Spain and (c) other EU countries on securing a reciprocal rights for UK citizens to travel visa-free in the EU beyond the 180 day period set out in the Schengen Borders Code for third-country nationals.

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. This may require applying for a visa and/or permit.

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. The Government also keeps arrangements and advice for British Citizens travelling abroad under regular review.

■ Falkland Islands: Fisheries

Stephen Doughty:

[\[145026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress he has made on negotiations on access for Falkland Islands fisheries to EU markets.

Wendy Morton:

UK negotiations with the EU have now concluded. During the negotiations, the UK Government made clear to the EU from the outset that our mandate included the UK's Overseas Territories, but the EU maintained it had no mandate to negotiate a future relationship with the Overseas Territories. As a result, tariffs now apply on exports from the Overseas Territories to the EU. The Government is fully committed to working with the Falkland Islands Government to mitigate against the impact of tariffs, as well as taking up the benefits of the UK's independent trade policy.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Females

Chris Law:

[\[142971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many women were employed by his Department in each year since 2018.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: On 2 September 2020 the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office merged to become the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. The data below for 2018 and 2019 is separated into DfID and FCO data. The data for 2020 is FCDO.

The data below is taken from 31 December for each of the three years.

For DfID in 2018 there were 1543 women in 2018 and 1517 women in 2019.

For FCO in 2018 and 2019 there were between 2000-2499 women.

As of 31 December 2020 there are between 3500 and 3999 women in the FCDO.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff

Chris Law:

[\[142969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the gender balance is of full-time permanent contract staff in his Department.

Nigel Adams:

As of 31 December 49.5% of FCDO full-time permanent staff are female.

Chris Law:

[\[142970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the gender balance is of temporary contract staff in his Department.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: As of 31 December 49.8% of FCDO temporary staff are female. Temporary staff includes staff on fixed term contracts, interchange from another Government department and secondments. The figure does not include contractors.

■ Fossil Fuels

Anna McMorrin:

[\[144821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many fossil fuel projects CDC Group plans to support in 2021; where those projects are located; and which of those projects are planned to reach financial close in the next six months.

James Duddridge:

CDC's fossil fuel policy was published in December 2020. The policy excludes new investment in the vast majority of fossil fuel subsectors, with very limited exceptions. CDC will only consider investments in gas power and related infrastructure if they are aligned with the Paris Agreement and aligned with a country's pathway to net zero emissions by 2050.

Prior to 2021, CDC made investment commitments to two gas power generation projects which are expected to reach financial close in 2021. Both of these projects are in Africa. A small number of the investment funds to which CDC committed prior to the adoption of its fossil fuel policy, in December 2020, may make investments to fossil fuel projects under their existing legal mandates.

Specific pipeline information is not disclosed as this is commercially sensitive.

CDC has invested over \$1 billion of climate finance in the past three years and has set a target for 30% of all new commitments in 2021 to be to climate finance.

CDC's policy is aligned with the HMG fossil fuel policy which excludes fossil fuel investments, except under certain circumstances. Any time line for completely stopping gas investments would be dependent on HMG fossil fuel policy.

Anna McMorrin:

[\[144822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many of the fossil fuel projects that CDC Group is currently considering support for are (a) upstream, (b) midstream, (c) downstream and (d) for power generation; and where each of those projects is located.

James Duddridge:

CDC published a new fossil fuel policy in December 2020, which will be applied to all new commitments. This policy excludes future investment in the vast majority of fossil

fuel subsectors including coal, oil and upstream gas exploration and production, with very limited exceptions.

Prior to 2021, CDC made investment commitments to two gas power generation projects which are expected to reach financial close in 2021. Both of these projects are in Africa. A small number of the investment funds to which CDC committed prior to the adoption of its new fossil fuel policy, in December 2020, may make commitments to fossil fuel projects under their existing legal mandates.

Specific pipeline information is not disclosed as this is commercially sensitive.

CDC's policy is aligned with the HMG fossil fuel policy which excludes fossil fuel investments, except under certain circumstances. Any time line for completely stopping gas investments would be dependent on HMG fossil fuel policy.

Anna McMorrin:

[\[144823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will pause the approval of fossil fuel projects by CDC Group until his new policy on those projects is adopted.

James Duddridge:

The Prime Minister announced at the Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December 2020 that the Government will no longer provide any new direct financial or promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas, with very limited exemptions. Immediately following the announcement, CDC published its updated fossil fuel policy, which is fully aligned with the Government's approach, and is effective. The policy excludes future investment in the vast majority of fossil fuel subsectors with very limited exceptions. CDC's approach is consistent with the Paris Agreement and requires investments to demonstrate alignment with a country's pathway to net zero emissions by 2050.

Further details on CDC's updated fossil fuel policy are available at:
www.cdcgroup.com/en/news-insight/news/announcing-our-new-fossil-fuel-policy-and-guidance-on-natural-gas-power-plants/?fl=true.

■ G7: Cornwall

Luke Pollard:

[\[143096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to require that (a) heads of government and (b) other people attending the G7 summit in June 2021 produce a negative covid-19 test before entering the UK.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has some of the strongest safeguards against importing COVID-19 including variants of the virus and we expect foreign officials and diplomats to comply with UK health measures at the border.

We will take all necessary measures to ensure that the G7 Summit is fully COVID-secure and will discuss these with our G7 partners to ensure that their delegates are safe and avoid posing any risk to other attendees or local communities.

■ Holidays Abroad: Coronavirus**Jim Shannon:**[\[142929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to issue guidance for people who have booked holidays for summer 2021 in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Adams:

FCDO travel advice aims to help British nationals to take informed decisions about travelling abroad. Anyone intending to travel at this time however, must follow the current UK COVID-19 restrictions. They must not leave home or travel, including internationally, unless they have a legally permitted reason to do so. The Prime Minister has indicated that current restrictions in respect of England will be reviewed mid-February. The devolved administrations will also be reviewing their restrictions according to their announced timelines.

■ Hong Kong: Human Rights**Jim Shannon:**[\[142931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Chinese counterpart on the effect of national security legislation on human rights in Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

As the Foreign Secretary said on 1 July 2020, the National Security Law (NSL) constitutes a clear and serious breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. It violates the high degree of autonomy of executive and legislative powers and independent judicial authority, provided for in the Joint Declaration. The legislation also contains a slew of measures that directly threaten the freedoms and rights protected by the Joint Declaration.

The Foreign Secretary has raised this issue with his counterpart, Chinese State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs Wang Yi. Additionally, the Permanent Under Secretary of the FCO summoned the Chinese Ambassador on 1 July 2020 to register our deep concerns about the NSL. We will continue to raise our concerns with the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities.

■ Human Rights**Stuart Anderson:**[\[143111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help protect human rights and the right to peaceful protest (a) in India and (b) around the world.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: Respect for human rights and democratic freedoms underpin the UK's foreign policy. UK Ministers and officials have regular and frank discussions about the full range of human rights concerns, wherever they

occur, and we use our bilateral relationships, our development programmes, and our presence in multilateral institutions to drive progress. In discussions with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ministers and officials raise the most pressing human rights issues of the day. We also set out concerns on a wide range of countries at every session of the Human Rights Council. The UK co-sponsored a resolution on Peaceful Protests at the 44th session of the UN Human Rights Council.

We engage with India on a range of human rights matters, including at ministerial level. On his visit to India in December 2020, the Foreign Secretary discussed human rights with the Minister of External Affairs, Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.

■ Human Rights: Prisoners

Jim Shannon:

[\[142930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure the protection of human rights defenders imprisoned and at risk from the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: The UK strongly supports human rights defenders worldwide to enable them to carry out their work safely and without fear. We regularly assess how we can enhance our ability to make a positive difference, including in the context of the increased risks posed by the Covid-19 outbreak.

In July 2019, the UK set out its ongoing dedication to support and protect human right defenders in the document "UK Support for Human Rights Defenders". The publication makes clear that our diplomatic network will work with and alongside Non Governmental Organisation representatives and human rights defenders to address the challenges they face. This includes human rights defenders who are detained, on trial or imprisoned.

On 4 June 2020, the UK joined human rights Ambassadors from six other European nations to issue a statement highlighting the importance of ensuring a safe enabling environment for human rights defenders. The statement made clear that states have a responsibility to ensure that any emergency powers in place to combat Covid-19 are not used as tools to repress civil society, marginal groups or populations as a whole.

■ Mozambique: Politics and Government

Stephen Doughty:

[\[145029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the Government is providing to the Government of Mozambique to help tackle serious insecurity and attacks by ISIS-affiliated groups in the north of that country.

James Duddridge:

The UK is deeply concerned by the deteriorating security situation in northern Mozambique, and the increasing attacks by groups with links to Islamic extremism. We are working with the Government of Mozambique to address the root drivers of

conflict and instability, including through engagement with the Government of Mozambique's regional development authority in Cabo Delgado, and by providing targeted technical assistance under the framework of a Defence Memorandum of Understanding. To date, the UK has provided £19m of humanitarian and development support to internally displaced people in northeast Mozambique through UN agencies, ensuring displaced people have access to food, shelter and basic healthcare.

■ Overseas Aid

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: [\[143829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 25 January 2021 to Question 140169 on Overseas Aid, when his Department plans to (a) allocate and (b) publish its allocations for country budgets.

James Cleverly:

The Prime Minister has set an ambitious agenda to increase UK impact overseas through closer integration of cross-Government activity. This includes all UK Missions working to a single, whole-of-government set of objectives for which the Head of Mission is fully accountable. Whole-of-Government Country Plans will be crucial to delivering coherent, consistent and impactful international work. We will confirm plans to publish in due course.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[144797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the Official Development Assistance budgets for 2021 will be 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 set out to the House of Commons on 26 November how a new strategic approach will allow us to drive greater impact from our £10 billion of ODA spending next year, notwithstanding the difficult financial pressures faced.

Budgets will be allocated based on this strategy as well as considerations of need including levels of poverty, ability of countries to fund themselves and to ensure that every pound we spend on ODA goes as far as possible and has greatest impact the UK could help achieve. Internal planning is underway to deliver these objectives.

Layla Moran: [\[144833\]](#)

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 the (a) percentage change and (b) real-terms change is in the allocation of Official Development Assistance to each Department for financial year 2021-22 compared to 2020-21.

James Cleverly:

HM Treasury are committed to publishing the 2020-21 allocations in due course. This will provide a comparison to 2021-22 allocations as set out in the Foreign Secretary's Written Statement.

Overseas Aid: LGBT People**Alicia Kearns:**[\[143932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which countries his Department provides with (a) funding and (b) support for the protection of LGBTQ+ (i) freedoms and (ii) human rights.

Alicia Kearns:[\[143933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, in which countries the UK Government is supporting efforts to end LGBTQ+ conversion therapy.

Wendy Morton:

The UK plays an active role across the world in support of LGBT rights. We work through our embassies and high commissions and through international organisations, including the UN, Council of Europe, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Commonwealth, to promote non-discrimination towards LGBT people, and to address discriminatory laws. In our role as co-chair of the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC) with Argentina, we are ambitious about what we can achieve through delivery of the ERC's first UK led strategy that seeks to shape, guide and re-energise the ERC's work to advance LGBT equality.

Due to its highly sensitive and sometimes dangerous nature, it would not be appropriate to specify the countries our LGBT programmes operate in, but we have consistently committed funding to LGBT rights programme work. In addition to funding through our UK Aid Connect Programme and International Programme Fund, in October, we announced £3.2m of new funding to continue the work we announced during the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 2018 that works with civil society to support countries seeking legislative reform. We also prioritised £800,000 of funding for The Commonwealth Equality Network (TCEN) to support civil society work to advance LGBT equality.

Palestinians: Textbooks**Andrew Bowie:**[\[143050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 21 January 2021 to Question 138478, whether he has made representations to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency on reports that educational material published by that UN agency during the covid-19 pandemic includes content promoting violence against Israel.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government has zero-tolerance to incitement of violence, and we have raised this issue with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We contacted the UNRWA directly regarding this issue and understand that as soon as the mistake was identified, the UNRWA took swift action to correct the issue and conducted a thorough review to address any education materials in breach of its policies. We continue to monitor the situation to ensure self-learning materials remain in line with UN values.

Andrew Bowie:[\[143051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 21 January 2021 to Question 138479, what assessment he has made of the long-term effect of extremist educational material reportedly taught by UK-funded teachers in the West Bank and Gaza on the prospects for a two-state solution.

James Cleverly:

An independent review of the content in Palestinian textbooks led by our European partners is currently underway. The study is due to be completed in early 2021. We continue to press our European partners to complete the review as soon as possible. We will study its findings carefully.

We have a regular dialogue with the PA in which we raise concerns about allegations of inappropriate content in textbooks. We continue to urge the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to avoid engaging in, or encouraging, any type of action and language that makes it more difficult to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict.

Peace Negotiations: Females**Chris Law:**[\[142968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding he has allocated to the Commonwealth Fund programme Women Mediators across the Commonwealth for 2020-22.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: The UK has provided £2.6 million to support the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth Network since 2018, including £1 million in 2020/21. Funding for 2021/22 has not yet been confirmed. Despite the need to take tough but necessary decisions, including temporarily reducing the overall amount we spend on ODA, we remain committed to championing the full, equal and meaningful role of women in all aspects of peace and security.

Qatar: Muslim Brotherhood**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[142819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether Qatari authorities agreed to end their support for the Muslim Brotherhood as part of the declaration signed on 5 January 2021 to end its blockade.

James Cleverly:

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) unity matters to long-term regional security and stability. We welcome the improvement in relations and opening of air, land and sea borders between Qatar and its neighbours, signified by the Al Ula Declaration of 5 January at the GCC Summit. This Declaration underlines the commitment of the GCC Member States to the goals set out in the GCC Charter, including achieving security, peace, stability, and prosperity in the region by working as a single, unified economic and political group.

Religious Freedom: Overseas Aid**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[143054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the Government's decision to reduce the aid budget on supporting freedom of religion and belief in the global south.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: The UK is committed to defending Freedom of Religion of Belief (FoRB) for all and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's human rights policy priorities. On 20 December 2020, the Prime Minister appointed Fiona Bruce, MP for Congleton, as his Special Envoy for FoRB. Mrs Bruce will work with ministers, officials and others to deliver the Government's goal of seeing everyone, everywhere able to have and practise a faith, belief, or no religious belief, in accordance with their conscience. In addition, UK aid is currently supporting the Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development (CREID) to address key challenges in building religious tolerance in five countries in Africa and Asia, and the FoRB Leadership Network which work in eight countries in Africa and Asia.

We have taken the tough decision to spend 0.5% of our national income on global poverty reduction next year. It is our intention to return to 0.7% as soon as possible. Difficult budget decisions will be necessary; we are running a prioritisation exercise to ensure every pound we spend goes as far as possible and makes a world-leading difference. We will not pre-empt decisions about individual programmes.

Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu**Taiwo Owatemi:**[\[143926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he is having with his Ugandan counterpart on the home imprisonment of presidential candidate, Bobby Wine.

James Duddridge:

I [Minister Duddridge] tweeted on 19 January about the treatment of Robert Kyagulanyi, also known as Bobi Wine, and our High Commissioner in Kampala pressed the Ugandan authorities to end these unacceptable restrictions on his liberty. I [Minister Duddridge] welcome the High Court of Uganda's decision of 25 January

that the detention of Kyagulanyi was unconstitutional and unlawful and that these restrictions have been lifted. The British High Commissioner in Kampala continues to meet political actors from all parties and met Kyagulanyi on 27 January. They discussed the political situation in Uganda, the restrictions to political freedoms before and after the elections and the electoral process. The High Commissioner has urged all parties to reject violence, engage in peaceful dialogue and follow due process to address any electoral irregularities. As a long-standing partner to Uganda, and a steadfast advocate for Ugandan democracy, the UK will continue to follow post-election developments closely.

■ Saudi Arabia: Arms Trade

Claudia Webbe: [\[143160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the value is of arms exports licenses for weapons sold to Saudi Arabia (a) over the last 12 months and (b) since 2014.

Claudia Webbe: [\[143161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many arms exports licences issued to Saudi Arabia are in military list categories (a) ML4 and (b) ML10; and what is the value of those licences.

Claudia Webbe: [\[143165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether new open arms export licences to Saudi Arabia have been issued; and whether new companies have been registered to use open licences.

Claudia Webbe: [\[143166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether applications for arms export licences to Saudi Arabia have been denied .

James Cleverly:

HM Government publishes Official Statistics (on a quarterly and annual basis) on export licences granted, refused and revoked to all destinations on GOV.UK containing detailed information including the overall value, type (e.g. Military, Other) and a summary of the items covered by these licences. This information is available at www.gov.uk/government/collections/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data, and the most recent publication was on 13th October 2020, covering the period 1st April - 30th June 2020.

■ Tigray: Armed Conflict and Human Rights

Stephen Doughty: [\[145028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the accuracy of reports of attacks on civilians and serious human rights violations in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, by any party to the conflict, whether internal or external.

James Duddridge:

[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: 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 raised 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.

■ Uganda: Overseas Aid**Stephen Doughty:**[\[145027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) support, (b) training and (c) funding the Government has provided to the Government of Uganda's (i) armed forces, (ii) security forces, (iii) police and (iv) judicial system in each of the last five years, either in Uganda or the UK.

James Duddridge:

[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: Regarding assistance to the police and prison service, since 2018, the UK has provided civil society organizations with £55,450, through UK Official Development Assistance, to train the Uganda Police Force and Uganda Prison Service in taking a human rights based approach when working with minority groups. Police officers work through domestic and international human rights legislation, the implications for their work, understanding the right of individual vulnerable groups and understanding their role in promoting human rights. Frontline prison workers are taught about the rights and needs of vulnerable prisoners and helps to change attitudes and practices towards vulnerable persons in detention. To date, over 2000 police and prison staff have been trained under this initiative.

■ Yemen: Armed Conflict**Claudia Webbe:**[\[143162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government takes into account the potential risk of harm to civilians in Yemen in assessing whether or not to grant arms export licenses.

Claudia Webbe:[\[143164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will immediately suspend all arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government takes its arms licensing responsibilities seriously, and assesses all export licences in accordance with strict licensing criteria. Criterion 2c of the Consolidated Criteria prohibits the granting of export licences where there is a clear

risk that the items to be exported might be used in the commission of a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The protection of civilians during armed conflict is a cornerstone of IHL. We will not issue any export licences where there is a clear risk that the items might be used in the commission of a serious IHL violation.

■ Yemen: Food

Claudia Webbe: [\[143156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps to offer legal protection to commercial food importers in Yemen from the US designation of the Houthis as a terror group.

James Cleverly:

We are currently analysing the US humanitarian and commercial exemptions, but we are concerned that they are insufficient to avoid a serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen. To mitigate this risk, we have already engaged with the US to urge them to ensure that the vital humanitarian response, including food supplies, is not disrupted and will raise this urgently with the new administration.

■ Yemen: Humanitarian Aid

Claudia Webbe: [\[143155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he is having with international partners on how to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches Yemenis in need.

Claudia Webbe: [\[143157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to contribute to international efforts to help (a) tackle starvation and (2) prevent famine in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

We are playing a leading role in combating hunger in Yemen by committing £214 million this financial year (2020/21), of which £200m has already been disbursed. Our funding is providing support to at least 500,000 vulnerable people each month to help them buy food and household essentials, enrolling 25,000 children on malnutrition programmes and providing 1 million people with improved water supply and basic sanitation across Yemen.

We have shown extensive leadership by hosting an event at the UN in December, which sounded the alarm on the increased risk of famine and called on donors to disburse funding. Ministers and officials will continue to engage closely with the UN and other donors, including the new US administration, to ensure life-saving humanitarian aid reaches the millions of Yemenis in need.

■ Yemen: Military Intervention

Claudia Webbe: [\[143163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps with the Secretary of State for Defence to publish the Ministry of Defence's tracker of all recorded incidents of Saudi Arabian airstrikes impacting civilians in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

I am unable to answer the honourable Member's question due to ongoing legal proceedings.

■ Yemen: Peace Negotiations

Claudia Webbe: [\[143158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Saudi Arabian and United Arab Emirates counterparts on their role in the peace process on Yemen.

Claudia Webbe: [\[143159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy to condemn Saudi Arabia for its role in the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

The UK continues to fully support UN Special Envoy Martin Griffith's efforts to secure a political settlement to the conflict in Yemen. We regularly engage with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and all our partners across the Gulf regarding the situation in Yemen and in support of UN peace efforts. Most recently I spoke with Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister al-Jubeir and Emirati Deputy Foreign Minister Gargash on 13 January to discuss the latest developments.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Contact Tracing: Computer Software**

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[134257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2021 to Question 104209, whether the total figure provided for the number of downloads of the NHS Covid-19 app includes multiple downloads of the app to the same device on different occasions.

Helen Whately:

The download figures released are unique downloads per a user's Apple or Google account, so it does not include multiple downloads of the app to the same device. A download is only counted once per user account and we do not count downloads to separate devices registered on the same user account; re-downloads following a deletion; re-downloads due to a device upgrade; or app upgrades.

■ Coronavirus: British Overseas Territories**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[142817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure sufficient supplies of covid-19 vaccines are provided to the Overseas Territories.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[142818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to provide (a) medical and (b) technical expertise to support covid-19 vaccination programs in the Overseas Territories.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government continues to support the Overseas Territories throughout the pandemic and is committed to provide a share of the United Kingdom's vaccines, as part of our broader commitment to the Territories. The Department of Health and Social Care is working with Public Health England, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Vaccine Taskforce, on a programme to deliver vaccines to the Overseas Territories, which commenced on 5 January. In addition, Public Health England have supported each Overseas Territory, in the development of vaccination programmes. This is a complex operation but will ensure that vulnerable people in the Overseas Territories will be protected.

■ Coronavirus: Children**Peter Kyle:** [\[144771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made on the trials of covid-19 vaccines in children aged 12 to 15 years old.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency have approved one United Kingdom vaccine trial that includes the 12-15-year age group.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing**Helen Hayes:** [\[133992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to Answer of 17 December 2020 to Question HL9906 on Coronavirus: Screening, what (a) qualifications and (b) experience are required of consultants working on the covid-19 Test and Trace programme; and what the average daily rate is of the consultants employed by each of those firms so deploying consultants on that programme.

Helen Whately:

The Test and Trace programme has required qualified multi-disciplinary capabilities within areas such as digital technology, supply chain, logistics, procurement, programme and project management, to be able to deliver a major Government project. The suppliers contracted to deliver these services are responsible for ensuring that the consultants hold the necessary qualifications, skills and experience.

All consultancy firms have been selected from pre-competed Crown Commercial Services frameworks that requires an assessment of skills and experience for a place to be awarded.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Chi Onwurah: [\[144679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to improve data (a) collection, (b) granularity and (c) analysis of covid-19 transmission by area.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: Statistics for NHS Test and Trace are published weekly. Their latest report confirms plans to improve the reported data by making available additional demographic information for people tested, increasing data for new testing technologies and by providing details on testing in care homes and details of close contacts who go on to test positive. The report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-test-and-trace-england-statistics-14-january-to-20-january-2021>

■ **Coronavirus: Loneliness**

Colleen Fletcher: [\[143782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the NHS of loneliness and social isolation amongst (a) elderly and (b) vulnerable people during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have made no such estimate.

■ **Coronavirus: Portsmouth**

Stephen Morgan: [\[90222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure continued access to covid-19 tests for Portsmouth residents when the testing site at Tipner in Portsmouth ceases to operate.

Helen Whately:

Residents of Portsmouth have continued access to Covid- 19 tests at Eldon Car Park, PO12DJ and Unit 9 North Harbour Road, Cosham, PO63TL.

■ **Coronavirus: Press Conferences**

Sir Charles Walker: [\[143716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the official with responsibility for mental health, of the equivalent seniority to the Chief Medical Officer

and the Government Chief Scientific Officer, has not been invited to take the podium at a televised Number 10 coronavirus press conference; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: As Chief Medical Officer, Professor Whitty's interest covers both mental and physical health. Both the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientific Officer are permanent secretary level appointments.

■ **Coronavirus: Prisons**

Esther McVey:

[\[130711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the prison population has received (a) a lateral flow test and (b) a PCR test for covid-19; and what estimate he has made of the number of false (i) positives and (i) negatives within each of those groups.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We do not publish the data requested.

■ **Coronavirus: Quarantine**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[144858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding from the public purse Sitel has received under the terms of its contract with the Government to run the Isolation Assurance Service during the covid-19 outbreak.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[144859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there are penalties for underperformance in the terms of Sitel's contract with the Government to run the Isolation Assurance Service during the covid-19 outbreak.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[144860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether an open tendering process was undertaken in advance of the Government awarding the contract to Sitel to run the Isolation Assurance Service during the covid-19 outbreak.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[144861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the criteria are for the assessment of the performance of Sitel under the terms of its contract with the Government to run the Isolation Assurance Service during the covid-19 outbreak.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[144862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what grounds the Government awarded the contract to Sitel to run the Isolation Assurance Service during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: The Isolation Assurance Service (IAS) is undertaken through an existing Public Health England (PHE) contract which has been formally updated and is on a rolling agreement with two-weeks' notice. Sitel is the only company working on the IAS. The spend on setting up and running the IAS to end of September 2020 was £664,000.

The performance indicators for Sitel's contract for the IAS are contained in the original Crown Commercial Services roster agreement and within the PHE contract. The PHE contract is amended as requirements change.

There are no penalties, however both the Crown Commercial Service Framework Agreement and the PHE contractual side have performance sections in them. These refer to items such as regular review meetings, staff training, timely submission of reports, billing, agreed stand up times for staffing and cancelation of the contract. PHE does have the ability to retain 5% of the fees for poor performance.

Sitel was contracted under direct award as an existing supplier who had successfully assisted in previous urgent and sensitive situations.

■ Coronavirus: Schools**Zarah Sultana:**[\[144857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cases of covid-19 need to be reported in (a) primary schools and (b) secondary schools, to be classified as a covid-19 outbreak in that school.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: An outbreak is confirmed in a primary or secondary school when two or more test-confirmed cases of COVID-19 among individuals in a school whose illness onset dates are within 14 days of one another.

There must also be evidence of either identified direct exposure between at least two of the test-confirmed cases in the school - for example, under one metre face to face, or spending more than 15 minutes within two metres - during the infectious period of one of the cases, or when there is no sustained local community transmission therefore an absence of an alternative source of infection outside the school setting for the initially identified cases.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Mr Marcus Fysh:**[\[107037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the (a) latest and (c) most accurate estimates of the proportion of the population that has covid-19 infection as at 21 October 2020; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the methodology used on differing estimates on covid-19 infection.

Helen Whately:

The proportion of the population that are infected with the COVID-19 virus is measured through a number of surveillance studies including the COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS) and the REACT-1 real-time assessment of community transmission of coronavirus study. Both studies provide an estimate of people with COVID-19 infection in the community at a given time – those with symptoms and those without.

Estimates of the population in England that were infected with the COVID-19 virus in October 2020 are as follows:

- CIS - 1.42% (25 October to 31 October); and
- REACT-1 1.28% (16 October – 25 October)

Emma Hardy:[\[113628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the accuracy rate of rapid lateral flow tests manufactured by Innova Tried and Tested is in (a) the first week of infection, (b) two to four weeks after infection, (c) asymptomatic and (d) symptomatic individuals.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: The information is not held in the format requested.

Jane Stevenson:[\[121017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his policy is on covid-19 testing for under 18s.

Helen Whately:

Children of any age can get a test. Those aged 12-17 years old can use the test themselves or have their parent or guardian perform the test. Children aged 11 years old and under must have the test performed by a parent or guardian.

Mr Gregory Campbell:[\[128883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of immunity that has been acquired by people verified as having tested positive for covid-19 in the last three months.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 December 2020]: Currently, we do not know how long immunity developed from infection or vaccines lasts.

Further research is being carried out to establish the efficiency of long-term immunity after infection or vaccination that remains after initial antibody levels have dropped off.

Esther McVey:[\[130054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which of the eight recommendations of the Impact of false-positives and false-negatives in the UK's COVID-19 RT-PCR testing programme published on 3 June 2020 his Department has actioned.

Helen Whately:

Recommendation number six is currently being reviewed. All other recommendations have either been completed or are ongoing.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[124144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether unpaid carers receiving carers allowance will be prioritised for covid-19 vaccination in-line with paid care staff.

Caroline Lucas:[\[124155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to add unpaid carers to the priority list for a covid-19 vaccine; and if he will make a statement.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[124263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will give unpaid carers priority access to a covid-19 vaccine.

Mohammad Yasin:[\[124275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including unpaid carers on the priority list for the covid-19 vaccination in England.

Stephen Morgan:[\[124303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ask the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation to revise their recommendations and include unpaid carers on the priority list for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that the vaccine should be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people over 80 years old and health and social care workers.

We recognise the vital role unpaid carers play in caring for vulnerable individuals. JCVI recommends that carers 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 alongside people with underlying health conditions.

Afzal Khan:

[\[131469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle vaccine disinformation among Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities to ensure take-up of the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department understands the danger of vaccine disinformation and is working closely with Public Health England, NHS England and NHS Improvement and other departments to ensure that everyone has access to the accurate information they need when getting vaccinated.

As part of this campaign to tackle misinformation the Department has reached out to black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities to ensure transparency and has brought community leaders and trusted voices on board to support departmental efforts.

Externally, the Department of Health and Social Care is also working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to help social media platforms identify and take action on incorrect claims on the virus, including anti-vaccination narratives that could endanger people's health. Further to this there are also BAME-targeted TV, radio and newsprint partnerships aimed at providing clear and accurate messaging about the COVID-19 vaccine programme which is being translated into 13 languages.

Jon Trickett:

[\[133678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance is in place for people with advanced dementia to gain consent for covid-19 vaccinations in (a) care homes and (b) the community.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Before giving a COVID-19 vaccine, vaccinators must ensure that they have obtained informed consent from the individual or a person legally able to act on the person's behalf and that this has been recorded appropriately. Where a person lacks the capacity to consent at the time of vaccination, in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act 2005, a decision to vaccinate may be made in the individual's best interests once all practical steps have been taken to support the person to make the decision for themselves. The decision-maker acting on an individual's behalf must consider all the relevant circumstances, including the person's wishes, beliefs and values, the views of their family and what the person would have wanted if they had the capacity to make the decision themselves.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[133830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has received guidance from (a) Israel or (b) other countries on improving the covid-19 vaccination rollout programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department is regularly in discussions with other countries, including Israel, on a wide range of COVID-19 issues, to share learnings and collaborate internationally on the vaccination programme.

Stephen McPartland:[\[133836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to prioritise the administration of covid-19 vaccines to (a) paramedics and (b) ambulance staff in line with other health professionals.

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.

The JCVI considers frontline health and social care workers who provide care to vulnerable people a high priority for vaccination, which includes paramedics and ambulance drivers.

Claire Hanna:[\[134247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria he plans to use to rank key workers for the purpose of prioritising occupations for the vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

Prioritisation decisions for the next phase of delivery are subject to the surveillance and monitoring of data and information from phase one, as well as further input from independent scientific experts such as the JCVI.

Robert Largan:[\[134627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on that country's covid-19 green passport initiative.

Christian Wakeford:[\[134645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on that country's covid-19 vaccination strategy.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department is regularly in discussions with other countries, including Israel, on a wide range of COVID-19 issues, to share learnings and collaborate internationally on the vaccination programme.

Mr Laurence Robertson: [\[135790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will prioritise food processing staff for the covid-19 vaccine; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Cunningham: [\[135921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's policy is on (a) whether frontline police officers will be prioritised for the covid-19 vaccine and (b) when that group will be offered the covid-19 vaccine.

Alberto Costa: [\[135980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of prioritising frontline nursery care workers in the rollout of the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that the priority for the current COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

The Government will set out plans for phase two of the vaccination programme in due course, based on further advice from the JCVI. Phase two of the roll-out may include further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[135845\]](#)

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

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[135848\]](#)

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

Dan Jarvis: [\[135944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to categorise early years (a) education and (b) support staff as a priority group for the covid-19 vaccine.

Kate Osborne: [\[136073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will prioritise police officers for the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), advised that the priority for the current COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of

health and social care staff and systems. The Government will set out plans for phase two of the vaccination programme in due course, based on further advice from the JCVI. Phase two of the roll-out may include further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services. This could include first responders, the military, those involved in the justice system, teachers, transport workers, and public servants essential to the pandemic response.

Neil Coyle:

[\[136538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to administer the covid-19 vaccination to migrants in detention.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Working together with our partners across the secure and detained estate, vaccinations have begun in prisons and detention centres, as the vaccination programme expands to deliver to the top priority cohorts as defined by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Hilary Benn:

[\[138874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what advice he has received on making homelessness workers and the street homeless priority groups within the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with voluntary community and social enterprise partners, inclusion health providers and others to develop an accessible model for delivery of the vaccine to people from inclusion health populations.

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

Homelessness workers may be categorised as frontline healthcare workers or social care workers. If they are frontline health care workers, they will be vaccinated in priority group two. If they are frontline 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.

Ian Mearns:

[\[138929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the accessibility of covid-19 vaccination centres for people who suffer from sight loss, including information sent to patients in a format they can understand; and what steps his

Department took to ensure accessibility for people with sight loss when selecting venues for vaccination clinics.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 21 January 2021]: The Department is working to ensure that simple accessible advice and information is available to everyone who needs it. All material will be available in a range of formats, including translations, easy read, braille and is accessible for those with hearing impairment.

Vaccine deployment will take account of disabled people in various care settings, as accessibility is part of the assurance process for all delivery models for the COVID-19 vaccine. All vaccination venues will be accessible and will meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Christian Matheson:

[\[139031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ask the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation to prioritise people with learning disabilities 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. 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.

Dan Carden:

[\[140248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the rate at which housebound people in high priority groups are receiving the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The National Health Service is vaccinating in line with the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation's priority cohorts and people within high risk communities are being vaccinated to meet these targets. Most recent figures show that the NHS, working with their partners, have now vaccinated four in five of the over 80 year olds in England. As more general practitioner and community pharmacy led local vaccination services become operational, we will be able to extend the number of vaccinations given to those who are housebound through roving teams.

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[143854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, at what stages of the covid-19 vaccination prioritisation process will (a) children's social care workers and (b) staff in SEN school settings be offered vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) 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.

In line with the JCVI's recommendations, individuals who regularly work with clinically extremely vulnerable individuals or those who have underlying health conditions, 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. In addition, if a special school staff member is identified as being in one of the other at-risk cohorts, they will be contacted by the National Health Service at the appropriate time based on the JCVI's advice.

Luke Pollard:

[\[143907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, where early years providers are on the schedule for the roll-out of covid-19 vaccines.

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

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[143921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government has taken to tackle (a) misinformation and (b) disinformation about the covid-19 vaccine among people from BAME backgrounds.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We are working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to help social media platforms identify and take action against incorrect claims about the virus in line with their terms and conditions. This includes anti-vaccination narratives that could endanger people's health. The Counter Disinformation Unit looks for trends on social media platforms so that it can work with them and other partners to respond to misleading content rapidly.

Senior clinicians, Ministers and officials are also holding regular briefing sessions with stakeholders, medical charities, faith groups and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) community leaders about the vaccines we have authorised for use and the vaccine rollout. Additionally, the Government is sponsoring content on social media channels and a range of news media outlets to provide information and advice to communities across the community.

The communications plan includes targeted information and advice via TV, radio and social media and is being translated into 13 languages. Print and online material, including interviews and practical advice has appeared in 600 national, regional, local and specialist titles including BAME media for African, Asian, Bangladeshi, Bengali, Gujarati, Jamaican, Jewish, Pakistani and Turkish communities.

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[144614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of making the covid-19 vaccine mandatory for (a) the general population, (b) NHS staff, (c) police and other front-line workers and (d) care home staff.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The United Kingdom operates a system of informed consent for vaccinations. There are no current plans to make the COVID-19 vaccine compulsory.

Luke Pollard:

[\[144893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of prioritising early years providers for the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. For the first phase, the JCVI 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 early years workers are captured in phase one due to their age or clinical risk factors they will be prioritised. However the Government, as advised by the JCVI, are not considering vaccinating early years workers as a phase one priority at this stage. Prioritisation decisions for next phase delivery are subject to of the surveillance and monitoring data and information from phase one, as well as further input from independent scientific experts such as the JCVI. Phase two may include further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services.

Dame Angela Eagle:

[\[144937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) efficacy of the AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccine on over 65s and (b) implications for his policies of Germany banning the vaccine for its over-65 population.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Current evidence for the AstraZeneca vaccine does not suggest a lack of protection against COVID-19 in people aged 65 years and over. The Department continues to work closely with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and its international counterparts to assess any new data on the use of all COVID-19 vaccines.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Marketing

Owen Thompson:

[\[144751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, 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 August 2020 to December 2020.

Edward Argar:

The Department did not run any paid for communications, advertising or marketing activity centrally between August 2020 and December 2020.

■ Health Services: Older People

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[144605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to tackle the long-term pressures on NHS services in response to the ageing population.

Edward Argar:

The NHS Long Term Plan sets out a range of important commitments to improve care and prevention to help control the growth in demand associated with an ageing population. This means treating people at the right time, in the right place, so that conditions are treated before they become serious and place greater pressure on the National Health Service.

The Government is supporting delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan through a historic long-term settlement, which will see NHS funding increase by £33.9 billion by 2023-24.

■ Heart Diseases: Health Services

Henry Smith: [\[141422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that services for people with heart and circulatory diseases can be provided throughout the covid-19 outbreak to mitigate poorer health outcomes from delays to treatment.

Henry Smith: [\[141423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to build long term capacity in hospitals to allow services to tackle the backlog of care for people with heart and circulatory diseases.

Jo Churchill:

On 23 December, NHS England and NHS Improvement published their operational priorities for winter and 2021/22. This confirms that maximising capacity in all settings to treat non-COVID-19 patients and responding to other emergency demands are key priorities for the National Health Service this winter. Cardiac services have been highlighted as a priority area for improvement through developing system-based recovery plans that focus on addressing treatment backlogs and long waits.

To support the NHS in tackling the impact of COVID-19, a £3 billion, one-year package has been announced for 2021/22 as part of the Spending Review. This includes £1 billion to address backlogs and tackle long waiting lists, by facilitating up to one million extra checks, scans and additional operations. Additionally, the NHS is running an ongoing media campaign 'Help us help you', which includes clear messaging for patients to call 999 with symptoms of a heart attack or stroke. NHS services will continue to adapt to ensure that they are there for those who need them, as well as launching a major campaign urging people to come forward for help.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Afzal Khan: [\[143897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what number of people admitted to hospital since March 2020 have contracted covid-19 as an inpatient.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Given the incubation period of the virus and local differences in application of testing protocols, it is not possible to definitively determine the number of people who contracted the virus while in hospital.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Philip Davies:

[\[142856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 19 January 2021 to Question 135884 on Mental Health Services: Children and Young People, in what format his Department holds that information.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The annual data for mental health services presents numbers and percentages of individuals in contact with National Health Service-funded secondary mental health, learning disability and autism services including those referred throughout the year. This takes into account the fact that some individuals may have been referred multiple times during a year. Data is broken down by age and percentage of the population. Data relating solely to the rate of referrals per 100,000 population is not available.

Due to changes in the dataset in 2016/17, it is not possible to provide comparable rates for years prior to 2017/18. The annual data is published by NHS Digital as part of its annual mental health bulletin and the most recent publication, published on 28 January, is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-bulletin>

■ NHS Test and Trace: Schools

Ellie Reeves:

[\[130184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the ability and capacity of NHS Test and Trace to trace contacts in schools.

Helen Whately:

No such assessment has been made. Contact tracing in schools is carried out by schools, rather than NHS Test and Trace.

■ Pregnancy: Screening

Jeremy Hunt:

[\[144978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress the UK National Screening Council has made on its review of the potential merits of late pregnancy ultrasounds for undiagnosed breech presentation of babies.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The United Kingdom National Screening Committee (UK NSC) received a proposal to look at fetal presentation as a new screening topic as part of its annual call for topics in 2019. The proposal suggested that all pregnant women could be screened at around 36 weeks gestation using a handheld ultrasound device at routine antenatal appointments to check the positioning of the baby.

The UK NSC's evaluation group assessed the proposal as being of relevance within the Committee's remit and agreed that an evidence map should be commissioned to scope the volume and type of evidence available. This was noted by the UK NSC at its February 2020 meeting. The outcome of this evidence map will be presented at the upcoming UK NSC meeting on the 5 March 2021 to consider and recommend next steps.

HOME OFFICE

■ Antisocial Behaviour

Stuart Anderson:

[\[143113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what funding the Government makes available for locally-led projects that aim to tackle anti-social behaviour and create safer communities.

Kit Malthouse:

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides the police and local authorities with flexible tools and powers they can use to respond quickly and effectively to anti-social behaviour. The powers in the 2014 Act are local in nature, and it is for local agencies to determine whether their use is appropriate in the specific circumstances.

It is for Chief Constables and PCCs, as operational leaders and elected local representatives, to decide how best to respond to local crime priorities but to help ensure that the police have the resources they need, we have given them the biggest funding increase in a decade and are recruiting 20,000 additional officers by March 2023, which provides extra resource to protect the public and keep us safe.

Our £25m Safer Streets Fund is also supporting areas that are disproportionately affected by acquisitive crimes, and through effective crime prevention measures, such as improved streetlighting and CCTV, many of the projects are also helping to tackle anti-social behaviour.

■ Antisocial Behaviour: Wales

Alex Davies-Jones:

[\[145183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, to publish the number of reports of anti-social behaviour received by police each year since 2015 across (a) Pontypridd constituency and (b) Wales.

Alex Davies-Jones:

[\[145184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many instances of anti-social behaviour were reported to the police in England and Wales in each month from January 2020 to January 2021.

Alex Davies-Jones:

[\[145185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Criminal Behaviour Orders have been made in (a) England and (b) Wales in each year since the introduction of those orders.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects information on the number of incidents of Anti-social behaviour recorded by the police in England and Wales. This is published annually by the Office for National Statistics in Table P9 of its Police Force Area tables. The latest available data for 2019/20 including trends back to 2007/08 can be found here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/policeforceareadatatables>

Information below Police Force Area level is not held centrally.

Data is currently only collected by the Home Office from police forces on a quarterly basis, so it is not possible to provide monthly breakdowns.

The Home office does not currently collect data on the number of Criminal Behaviour Orders issued.

■ Asylum: Children

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[144713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to Question 137959, what support her Department is providing to help children who live in initial asylum hotel accommodation who (a) are enrolled in a local school to access space, an internet connection and the devices necessary for home learning and (b) are to be enrolled in a local school.

Chris Philp:

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

We prioritise the dispersal of families with children from hotels to ensure that children can attend school in the locality of where they will live.

■ Asylum: Napier Barracks

Holly Lynch:

[\[143838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department holds on the number of asylum seekers currently housed at Napier barracks who have tested positive for covid-19.

Chris Philp:

Asylum seekers at the barracks, in common with the rest of the population, must self-isolate if they test positive or have been exposed to someone who has. We are

working closely with the local health authority and Public Health England and additional support staff, as well as on site medical staff, to ensure that all individuals who have to self-isolate can do so and are following all medical advice. Some individuals have not agreed to be tested.

We do not publish data on the numbers of asylum seekers who have tested positive for covid-19.

■ Asylum: Penally Camp

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[145082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers does her Department intend to transfer into the temporary accommodation site at the Penally training camp over the next four weeks.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[145083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers will be transferred out of the temporary accommodation site at the Penally training camp in the next four weeks.

Chris Philp:

We are not able to provide the information requested.

We have a statutory obligation to provide accommodation to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. Due to the unpredictable nature of asylum intake we are unable to forecast the number of people to be accommodated at Penally over the next four weeks.

Transfer out of Penally is dependant on the amount of dispersed accommodation being available through people being granted asylum and moving on and the procurement of additional dispersal properties. We are unable to predict the number of people who will be dispersed from Penally camp in the next four weeks.

■ Immigrants: Health Services

Drew Hendry: [\[144727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of permanently removing the immigration health surcharge for all key workers contributing to the response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

The overall purpose of Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) is to ensure a contribution to our magnificent NHS is made by those who can access its services.

Health and social care workers from overseas are doing this already through their work. This is why the Home Office and the Department of Health and Social Care have worked to exempt these groups from payment of the IHS through the

introduction of the Health and Care Worker visa and the launch of the IHS reimbursement scheme.

However, it is only fair on UK taxpayers to expect people arriving in the UK, to work in non-healthcare roles, to contribute to the comprehensive range of NHS services available to them from their arrival. IHS payments help to sustain vital NHS services and provide comprehensive access to those services, regardless of the amount of care needed during their stay.

Many other countries require those migrating to them to take out private health insurance and they can face charges if they need to access services, which can be far more expensive than the IHS and does not always provide the comprehensive cover the NHS does, especially for pre-existing conditions.

The IHS ensures those who choose to come to the UK to work, study or live do not need to worry about insurance or pay for unexpected treatment whilst they are here. This represents a fair deal for migrants, for the UK taxpayer and for our world-class NHS.

To date, the IHS has raised over £1.5 billion for the NHS throughout the UK. Income from the IHS is distributed to the devolved administrations, including the Scottish Government, in line with the Barnett formula.

■ Marriage of Convenience

Jessica Morden:

[\[142848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many cases of immigration marriage fraud were reported in the UK in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020; what the average time taken was for her Department to respond to those reports in each of those years; and in how many of those cases the perpetrator of immigration marriage fraud was removed from the UK in each of those years.

Kevin Foster:

Reports of suspected Immigration marriage fraud (sham marriage) are reported to the Home Office by Superintendent registrars and member of the public.

The Home Office received reports:

From Superintendent registrars: 2,805 in 2018, 3,155 in 2019 and 2,822 in 2020.

From members of the public, 7,027 in 2018, 5,554 in 2019 and 4,390 in 2020.

The Home Office initially assesses every incoming piece of information within twenty-four hours of receipt. Beyond this, the average time taken to deal with each case of marriage fraud (sham marriage) is not recorded and is therefore not held.

The number of people involved in a marriage referral from a Superintendent registrar who have been removed from the UK by year of referral is, 138 in 2018, 87 in 2019 and 10 in 2020.

It is not possible to produce data for those reported by the public as this information is not readily available/held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Matthew Pennycook: [\[143036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich of 11 December 2020 on his constituent's Windrush compensation scheme offer.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Secretary responded on 27 January 2021.

■ **Passports**

Peter Gibson: [\[143116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of adding time left on an individual's old passport onto their new one.

Kevin Foster:

The UK was the last country to carry over validity from a previous passport, with the maximum validity carried over on renewal being up to nine months. However, the international guidelines for passports state a passport should be valid for a maximum of 10 years, and a passport for a child should be issued for a maximum of five years.

As part of its work to prepare for all eventualities ahead of the UK leaving the European Union, Her Majesty's Passport Office determined, for third-country nationals travelling to most countries in Europe, any period of validity of a passport older than 10 years may not be accepted. This highlighted the potential for confusion to passport holders about validity dates if the validity period was not set in line with the international guidelines.

Additional validity therefore ceased to be carried over from a previous passport since 10 September 2018, and there are currently no plans to re-introduce this policy

■ **Prevent Independent Review**

Afzal Khan: [\[145137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the recruitment process for the independent review of the Prevent strategy; and what representations has she received on the effectiveness of that recruitment process.

Afzal Khan: [\[145138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) discussions and (b) engagement she had with (i) civil liberties groups, (ii) the Muslim Council of Britain and (iii) other Muslim organisations prior to the appointment of the independent reviewer of Prevent.

Afzal Khan:

[\[145139\]](#)

(FAO Amelia) To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to comments made by William Shawcross, then Director at the Henry Jackson Society, in a speech on 17 January 2012, that Europe and Islam is one of the greatest, most terrifying problems of the future, if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the independence of the Prevent review.

Kit Malthouse:

Prevent plays an essential role in stopping vulnerable people being drawn into terrorism.

The Independent Review of Prevent will look at the effectiveness of the Government's strategy to protect vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism. It will also make recommendations for the future.

The process for the appointment of the Independent Reviewer of Prevent was published on 27 April 2020. A fair and open competition to appoint the next Independent Reviewer invited applicants to demonstrate their independence, expertise, credibility, written and analytical skills, and resilience. A panel, led by an independent chair, convened to assess each application against the essential criteria and decide who to recommend to Ministers for interview. Following the interviews, the panel's advice on the appointable candidates was sent to Ministers for a decision on who to appoint. Ministers found that Mr Shawcross met these criteria and possessed the right range of skills and experience to conduct this important Review. To protect the confidentiality of candidates, details of applications are only shared with relevant stakeholders in the recruitment process. The appointment was completed in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments, which sets out the regulatory framework for public appointments processes. It is not part of that process to consult external bodies in advance of the appointment being made.

As Mr Shawcross has accepted the appointment, he is responsible for the conduct and recommendations of the Independent Review. The Home Secretary cannot predetermine the findings of the Review.

■ Refugees: Syria

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[144963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has for the continuation of refugee resettlement after the conclusion of the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme.

Chris Philp:

The UK will continue to welcome refugees through resettlement following the completion of the VPRS. This commitment, alongside a future firm and fair asylum system, will ensure we continue to offer safe and legal routes to the UK for vulnerable refugees in need of protection. Our focus will remain on helping people directly from regions of conflict and instability.

■ UK Border Force and UK Visas and Immigration: Coronavirus**Stephen Doughty:**[\[145025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 28 May 2020 to Question 41464 on UK Border Force and UK Visas and Immigration: Coronavirus; if she will publish the same data for each month from May 2020 to January 2021.

Chris Philp:

The attached table shows at column C the number of Border Force and UK Visas and Immigration employees who have been recorded as beginning a period of sickness absence due to COVID-19 symptoms.

Column D shows the number of employees recorded as beginning a period of isolation at home on paid special leave, either resulting from being identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 symptoms or because the employee themselves had been required to shield in line with Government guidance.

We do not hold data centrally on those employees who have mild symptoms and are well enough to continue to work from home, or who are isolating at home but are able to work from home and therefore do not need to take paid special leave.

We do not hold data centrally on the outcomes of COVID-19 testing of our employees.

Attachments:

1. PQ 145025 - Absences [Official Sensitive PQ145025.xlsx]

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Buildings: Fire Prevention****Dame Margaret Hodge:**[\[144924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent progress has been made on the research being undertaken by the Building Research Establishment on trigger thresholds.

Christopher Pincher:

The project on trigger thresholds was commissioned in September 2020 and the research remains ongoing.

■ Buildings: Insulation**Dame Margaret Hodge:**[\[144925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many public sector buildings in England with combustible insulation have been identified.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department publishes data on the identification and remediation progress of high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings in England with ACM cladding

systems unlikely to meet building regulations. The latest data is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/aluminium-composite-material-cladding#acm-remediation-data>.

■ Homelessness: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[143071]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support his Department is providing to homeless people during the period of covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced in January 2021.

Eddie Hughes:

Given the new variant of COVID-19, and the current 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 asked all local authorities to ensure that even more rough sleepers are safely accommodated, and will be asking 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.

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

This additional support builds on the package of winter support announced last year. This includes a £10 million Cold Weather Fund for all local authorities to bring forward COVID-secure accommodation this winter and to keep vulnerable people safe. This sits alongside the Protect programme, which provides targeted support to local authorities with higher numbers of rough sleepers to meet the specific challenges they face. Through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme we have provided support to ensure that as few people as possible return to the streets. This includes bringing forward 3,300 new homes this year for rough sleepers, backed by £150 million, leaving a national legacy of this Government's support. £91.5 million was also allocated to 274 councils in England to provide immediate accommodation and support to vulnerable people during the pandemic.

The Government has also established an unprecedented package of support to protect renters. This includes legislating through the Coronavirus Act 2020 to delay when landlords can evict tenants, a 6 month stay on possession proceedings in court, a pause on bailiffs enforcing eviction notices, and a range of financial support to enable renters to continue paying their living costs, including rental payments.

In total, we are spending over £700 million in 2020/21 on homelessness and rough sleeping. We will also be spending over £750 million to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping next year, further demonstrating the Government's commitment to

end rough sleeping this Parliament and fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act.

■ **Housing: Gender Recognition**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[145109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the availability of safe housing for the trans community during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[145110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of housing support available to trans people who have had to move out of their homes due to transphobia.

Eddie Hughes:

Throughout the pandemic, we have worked closely with local authorities and the sector to offer vulnerable people safe accommodation and support. That work is ongoing 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.

The Government has worked with Stonewall Housing to provide staff working with LGBTQ+ individuals across various housing services an understanding of the issues this group face and how best to support LGBTQ+ people.

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

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[145111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to ensure housing suitability for the trans community.

Eddie Hughes:

The Regulator of Social Housing sets regulatory standards for registered providers of social housing.

The [Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard](#) sets clear expectations around understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants. It requires all registered providers to treat their tenants with fairness and respect, and to demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs.

The [Tenancy Standard](#) requires registered providers to let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way, taking account of the housing needs and aspirations of their tenants and potential tenants. In addition, when framing and operating their

policies on the allocation of social housing local authorities must have regard to the public sector equality duty in s.149 of the Equality Act 2010.

■ **Waking Watch Relief Fund**

Neil Coyle: [\[145038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the eligibility criteria for the Waking Watch Relief Fund will be published; when application decisions are likely to be assessed; and when payments will be made available.

Christopher Pincher:

The Waking Watch Relief Fund Full Fund Application Guidance which sets out eligibility criteria and details of the application process was published on 31 January and is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/waking-watch-relief-fund>.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia**

Tommy Sheppard: [\[145053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many applications for licences for export of arms to Saudi Arabia have been rejected on the grounds that they were inconsistent with the EU and National Arms Export Consolidated Criteria since the outbreak of war in Yemen in late 2014.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government publishes Official Statistics (on a quarterly and annual basis) on export licences granted, refused and revoked to all destinations on GOV.UK containing detailed information including the overall value, type (e.g. Military, Other) and a summary of the items covered by these licences. This information is available at: gov.uk/government/collections/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data and the most recent publication was on 13th October 2020, covering the period 1st April – 30th June 2020.

Whilst no Standard Individual Export Licences (SIELs) have been refused since 2015, 11 Open Individual Export Licences (OIELs) have been rejected for military rated exports to Saudi Arabia.

■ **Business: UK Trade with EU**

Colum Eastwood: [\[145181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department is advising businesses to register in the EU Single Market.

Graham Stuart:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 28 January to Question UIN 143100.

■ Trade Agreements: Cameroon**Emily Thornberry:** [\[144970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to publish the text of the Economic Partnership Agreement secured with Cameroon on 30 December 2020, together with an accompanying explanatory memorandum and parliamentary report.

Emily Thornberry: [\[144971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to publish the Memorandum of Understanding on interim trading arrangements with Cameroon, which came into force on 1 January 2021.

Greg Hands:

The United Kingdom and Cameroon have each agreed to temporarily give effect to the preferences under the UK-Cameroon Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) from 1 January. A time-limited bridging mechanism in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding has been applied, pending completion of domestic scrutiny processes for entry into force of the EPA.

We have published a Technical Note in Parliament, which can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/947282/cnc-information-note-dec2021.pdf setting out further detail and our assessment of the use of Bridging Mechanisms for implementing agreements.

Despite the exceptional circumstances which made this approach necessary to ensure continuity of trade, we will lay this agreement in Parliament under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act (CRaG) as soon as possible. The accompanying Parliamentary Report and Explanatory Memorandum will also be published when this Agreement is laid in Parliament.

JUSTICE**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Damien Moore:** [\[911696\]](#)

What support his Department is providing to HM Courts and Tribunals Service in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

To ensure the safety of the physical estate and continue our efforts to tackle demand on the system we invested £142m in court buildings and facilities, and a further £110m to make the estate Covid-secure, recruit 1,600 additional staff, and create more Nightingale Courts.

This funding – the largest investment in justice for decades – helped the system to turn a corner in December 2020 so that we were closing the same number of cases as before the pandemic in almost all jurisdictions, including Crown Courts.

There is further to go, and through our Spending Review settlement, we have secured significant additional funding next financial year to recover our courts and tribunals system.

Ben Everitt: [\[911705\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to support victims of domestic abuse.

Alex Chalk:

Supporting and protecting victims of domestic abuse has been a central priority of this Government, backed by major additional investment.

The latest commitment of £40m for victims' services includes £9.7m for local community-based DA support, plus £8m for new independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs).

We will pass the landmark Domestic Abuse Bill which creates new domestic abuse protection orders, institutes a new Domestic Abuse Commissioner, and empowers domestic abuse complainants to give their best evidence in court.

Mark Pawsey: [\[911706\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to reform the sentencing system.

Chris Philp:

The Sentencing White Paper I published in September 2020 set out my plans for a new, smarter approach to sentencing. A system that protects the public, as well as one which the public understand and have confidence in.

These reforms will ensure dangerous criminals are kept in prison for longer, while new measures aim to tackle the underlying causes of criminal behaviour and improve the rehabilitation and supervision of offenders in the community.

■ Domestic Abuse: Sussex

Andrew Griffith: [\[143178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to support victims of domestic abuse in Sussex.

Alex Chalk:

On 1st February, the Government announced an additional £40m for victims' services. This funding will include £9.7m for Domestic Abuse, £16m to further expand the availability of Independent Domestic Violence Advisers and Independent Sexual Violence Advisers and this funding will be available for two years, and £800k for Finding Legal Options for Women Survivors (FLOWS), a digital tool that helps victims of domestic abuse to apply for emergency protection from the courts.

In 2020/21, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) provided £1.85m in core grant funding to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Sussex, for local commissioning of support services for victims of crime, including Domestic Abuse. In addition, MoJ provided £842,538 in emergency COVID-19 funding last year to Sussex PCC to provide additional support for Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence service

providers. It is not possible to disaggregate spending on victims of Domestic Abuse from the total funding, as victims of Domestic Abuse are supported by specific providers as well as providers offering a range of services. PCCs also spend money from other sources outside of the MoJ grant on victims' services including Domestic Abuse.

For 2021/22, the MoJ has committed to match the same levels of funding for the Core Victims Grant for PCCs to ensure that victims of Domestic Abuse continue to receive the support they need.

■ Fines

Shabana Mahmood: [\[142869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 134404 on fines, how many decisions (a) were made over the phone, (b) involved a request for supporting documentation (c) were referred back to Court in financial years (i) 2019-20 and (ii) 2020-21, to date.

Shabana Mahmood: [\[142870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 134404 on fines, what the average timescale is to receive a decision when (a) responding via the telephone (b) supporting documentation is required (c) a decision is referred back to Court in each of the last three financial years.

Chris Philp:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Legal Profession: Human Rights

Shabana Mahmood: [\[142865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has held discussions with the President of the Supreme Court on the appropriateness of UK legal professionals sitting on proceedings in nations where human rights abuses have been noted.

Shabana Mahmood: [\[142866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he expects the consultation with the President of the Supreme Court on the appropriateness of UK legal professionals sitting on proceedings in nations where human rights abuses have been noted to conclude; and whether the findings of that consultation will be published.

Alex Chalk:

The UK Government are committed to ensuring that the UK judiciary and UK lawyers should maintain the highest reputation in upholding the rule of law wherever they may sit on proceedings.

For example, in relation to Hong Kong, UK judges have played an important role in supporting the independence of Hong Kong's judiciary for many years. We want this to, and hope that it can, continue. The UK judiciary is independent of the Government

and it is therefore for them to make an assessment on this. The Lord Chancellor has, however, discussed with Lord Reed how they may jointly monitor developments to enable the Supreme Court to consider carefully the role of their sitting justices, and to assist other serving judges to determine the propriety of their continued service.

No formal consultation with the President of the UK Supreme Court is taking place.

■ **Lugano Convention**

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[911741\]](#)

What progress the Government has made on the UK's accession to the Lugano Convention 2007.

Alex Chalk:

The UK applied to re-join the Lugano Convention on 8 April 2020. The next steps are for the existing contracting parties to consider the UK's application and to provide their unanimous agreement. Switzerland has already agreed to the UK's accession and Norway and Iceland publicly declared their support over a year ago.

UK participation in Lugano is in the mutual interest of the UK and the EU. It establishes clear rules around which country's courts will hear a case and enables the recognition and enforcement of judgments between different countries' courts in civil commercial and family maintenance cases.

Now that negotiations have successfully concluded, we encourage the EU to approve the UK's application with all appropriate urgency.

■ **Ministry of Justice: UK Relations with EU**

Gavin Newlands: [\[911708\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on his Department's responsibilities.

Alex Chalk:

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) fully delivers on what the British public voted for in the referendum and in last year's General Election. It takes back control of our laws, borders, money and fisheries, and ends any role for the European Court. Our deal is based on friendly cooperation between sovereign equals, centred on free trade and inspired by our shared history and values.

We have successfully negotiated unprecedented provisions for legal services that go beyond what the EU has included in any other FTA. The agreement will improve the clarity and certainty of market access for UK lawyers after the transition period.

■ **Prisoners' Release: Christmas**

Philip Davies: [\[142853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his Department's policy was on temporary release from prison over the Christmas 2020 period.

Chris Philp:

By providing opportunities to work, learn and build family ties, release on temporary licence (ROTL) from prison helps prevent offenders from returning to crime when they leave prison.

Most ROTL has been suspended during the pandemic to help limit the spread of the virus and protect the NHS. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has worked closely with public health authorities to plan when and where to re-introduce ROTL safely. Resumption of the full range of ordinary ROTL activities, including release to domestic addresses, has not been possible to date and temporary release is currently limited to essential work and compassionate reasons, such as accessing medical treatment.

Prisons: Coronavirus**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[142862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent advice he has received from Public Health England on (a) the effectiveness of the Covid-19: National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services for controlling outbreaks of new covid-19 variants in the prison estate and (b) the adequacy of the implementation of that Framework in custodial facilities where outbreak control teams have been put in place.

Lucy Frazer:

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) initially developed the National Framework alongside advice from Public Health England and Wales and so that advice is embedded within it. We are in regular contact with these bodies to seek advice and feedback on the operational management of Covid-19. Inherent within this is a developing understanding of the evidence base behind the virus and how that impacts on operational delivery.

We support local management of Covid-19 outbreaks and incidents through the deployment of headquarters staff to each Outbreak Control Team meeting and daily reporting to national command. This means recommendations and issues arising locally can be considered promptly and that appropriate decisions and responses are acted upon. We continue to work very closely with public health authorities on minimising the spread of Covid-19 in prisons and our outbreak response, and we continue to close down outbreaks.

Prisons: Security**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[142861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's announcement of 25 January 2021, which prisons each of the 24 additional x-ray scanners will be installed in; which prisons will have x-ray scanners installed by 25 January 2021; and how much of the £100 million spend on prison security will be spent on those 24 additional x-ray scanners.

Lucy Frazer:

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is taking decisive action to stop mobile phones and illicit substances entering prison, and investing £100m to bolster prison security and tackle crime behind bars which fuels violence and self-harm. As part of this investment, 51 prisons across England and Wales will receive cutting edge X-ray body scanners which will assist in the detection of illicit articles secreted within prisoners entering establishments.

We have already installed a significant proportion of those planned within this financial year. As of 25 January 2021, we had installed X-ray body Scanners at 40 sites across England and Wales, which are listed below. This includes some not yet announced, which are indicated in bold. We will shortly be announcing which further sites are to be delivered by the end of March 2021.

DURHAM	LIVERPOOL	PRESTON	LINCOLN	BEDFORD	PENTONVILLE
Wandsworth	Norwich	Chelmsford	Birmingham	Hewell	Winchester
Exeter	Elmley	Cardiff	Bristol	Belmarsh	Aylesbury
Bullingdon	Lewes	Swaleside	Brixton	Highdown	Brinsford
Swansea	Garth	Hindley	Gartree	Leicester	Highpoint
Wayland	Erlestoke	Guys Marsh	Wymott	Deerbolt	Featherstone
Risley	Channings Wood	Lowdham Grange	Lancaster Farms		

With regards to the final part of the question 'how much of the £100 million spend on prison security will be spent on those 24 additional x-ray scanners,' due to the commercially sensitive nature of this information, HMPPS is unable to provide this figure.

■ Prisons: Welsh Language

Liz Saville Roberts:[\[145084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment has he made of the compliance of (a) HMP Berwyn (b) other prisons in Wales with Welsh language equality legislation.

Lucy Frazer:

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service's published the new Welsh Language Scheme for 2020-2023 in October 2020. The scheme covers both Wales and England and sets out how, in the conduct of public business and the administration of justice in Wales, it will treat the Welsh and English languages on a basis of equality. Compliance with the Scheme will be monitored throughout the life of the Scheme, with progress reports submitted to the Commissioner annually. The Welsh language

has also been added to the revamped Equality Analysis process, meaning that all matters of policy and procedural change should be considering any impact on the Welsh language.

HMPPS Wales is fully committed to ensuring that the scheme is an intrinsic part of their work. The scheme has been promoted to staff and service users via a series of presentations and briefing sessions. In addition, an Intranet page has been created to provide resources to support implementation.

Every prison in Wales, including HMP Berwyn, has a Welsh Language Action plan which has been renewed in line with the new requirements and is owned by a member of the prison's Senior Management Team. In addition, HMP Berwyn has a dedicated Welsh Language Lead who provide updates to their Diversity & Inclusion Committee, chaired by the Governor.

■ Remand in Custody: Children

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[142859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effect on children of the extended custody time limits introduced in The Prosecution of Offences (Custody Time Limits) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

The relevant Equalities Impact Statement is publicly available on gov.UK:
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/953/pdfs/uksipes_20200953_en.pdf

As we have announced, a Statutory Instrument to remove children from The Prosecution of Offences (Custody Time Limits) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 will be introduced as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

■ Remand in Custody: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[142863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to address the physical, emotional and psychological effects of custody during Stage 4 restrictions on unconvicted (a) young people, (b) adult women, and (c) adult men held on remand while awaiting trial.

Lucy Frazer:

Stage 4 regimes have been specifically designed on Public Health England (PHE) advice to reduce physical contact to a minimum, and for the primary objective of preserving life. This is important for the safety of both staff and residents. In bringing in these restrictions we are also prioritising activity to safeguard prisoner wellbeing and mental health.

The decision to remand someone is a matter for the independent judiciary. Defendants can be remanded where there is a risk they may abscond or commit offences if released on bail. We also recognise that the remand population is a group known to be at a higher risk of suicide and self-harm, and we have ensured that the processes to identify and support those people at risk have remained in place during

these restrictions. We have taken a number of steps to mitigate the associated risks of the restrictions:

There has also been a focus on delivering essential activities, additional free phone credit and phone lines being opened for longer periods. The youth estate has been prioritised for in-room telephony installation and have used technology to facilitate virtual visits to enable all children and young people to stay in touch with their loved ones. Children and young people also have the opportunity to write and send letters, as well as having access to advocacy services and charities such as Barnardo's and Childline.

For adult men and women, we have tailored guidance for supporting specific groups of people in prison whose wellbeing may be more impacted by Covid-19 measures put in place, including those in their early days of custody. We have put in place measures to enhance prisoners' contact with family and friends, recognising that this is an important source of support and beneficial to wellbeing. This includes providing additional PIN credit and access to PIN phones, video calling and technology for compassionate use. To support wellbeing and address anxiety and boredom, we are providing distraction packs and in cell activities. We have also developed a range of self-help materials for residents, including a Wellbeing Plan created with input from mental health charity Mind. Throughout the pandemic, the Samaritans phone service has remained available and we are working with them to ensure that the Listener scheme continues to facilitate peer support between prisoners. We are supporting establishments to resume regular key work sessions in the adult male closed estate and have also put in place wellbeing checks across the women's estate.

■ **Sexual Offences Act 2003**

Sarah Champion:

[\[911713\]](#)

What the Government's timetable is for the review of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and the definition of positions of trust over children.

Alex Chalk:

We are currently studying the findings of our review on the legislative provisions on positions of trust and considering next steps with both pace and care. I hope and expect to be in a position to update the House on this work shortly.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ **Opposition Days: Government Responses**

Patrick Grady:

[\[145046\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, with reference to the Written Statement of 26 October 2017, HCWS199 on Opposition Day Debates and the Answer of 1 November 2017 to Question 110093, whether the Government remains committed to that convention to respond to the resolution of the House by making a statement no more than 12 weeks after the debate.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

I refer the hon. gentleman to my response during business questions on 28 January (Official Report, col. 570). It is vital that the Government sets out its position on motions tabled by the opposition. In my view that is best done during the debate, in particular in the Minister's closing remarks that respond to the points that have been raised. The Government will always listen carefully to the views of the House and will continue to make regular oral or written statements to announce policy developments, provide updates and respond to events.

NORTHERN IRELAND■ **Exports: Northern Ireland**

Louise Haigh: [\[145073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to Q89 of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee of 20th January 2021, whether the guidance on groupage has been delivered to hauliers.

Mr Robin Walker:

Guidance for haulage and traders in respect of moving agrifood products from Great Britain to Northern Ireland through groupage was issued and communicated to hauliers and Northern Ireland authorised traders on Friday 29 January.

PRIME MINISTER■ **G7: Cornwall**

Luke Pollard: [\[143097\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, whether he plans to appoint a Minister to oversee preparations for the G7 Summit in Cornwall in June 2021.

Boris Johnson:

I am ultimately responsible for leading the G7 Presidency and discussions with other G7 leaders. There are no current plans for a separate Ministerial appointment.

SCOTLAND■ **Local Growth Deals: Ayrshire**

Alan Brown: [\[145055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the request from the three Ayrshire Council Leaders for the Ayrshire Growth Deal spending allocation to be compressed from 15 years to 10 years; and will he make a statement.

Mr Alister Jack:

I can confirm that I have regular discussions with the Chancellor on this matter.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation: Government Assistance

Sir Alan Campbell:

[\[142796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Government recovery package for the aviation industry will include assistance for Concessionaire businesses that do not have rateable value (RV) numbers but provide the same trade association and contribution toward the airports as businesses with RV numbers.

Robert Courts:

The Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme will provide support to eligible commercial airports and ground handler companies up to the equivalent of their business rates liabilities in the 2020/21 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £8m. The scheme is not available to other businesses.

■ Bicycles: Sales

Rachael Maskell:

[\[145057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on the number of (a) bicycles and (b) e-bicycles that were sold in each month of 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department does not hold this information. The Bicycle Association, however, which is the national trade association for the UK cycle industry, collects data from retailers across the country, covering around two-thirds of the cycling market. Its most recent market update suggests that retailers have seen sales growth increase by 60% since March 2020 with sales of e-bikes more than doubling.

■ City Deals: Sheffield City Region

Dan Jarvis:

[R] [\[145023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 15 January 2021 to Question 133858 on City Deals: Sheffield City Region, what proportion of the City Deal allocation he plans to make available in the next financial year.

Rachel Maclean:

The next multi-year Spending Review will consider Sheffield City Region's remaining indicative City Deal funding. The first £600 million funding round of the new £4 billion Levelling Up Fund will be launched later this year and will be open to all local areas.

■ Department for Transport: Staff**Darren Jones:**[\[144811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many officials in their Department were dedicated to their Department's responsibilities associated with the delivery of the Industrial Strategy in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019, (d) 2020 and (e) 2021.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Transport plays an important role in supporting the aims of the 2017 Industrial Strategy; central both to the Infrastructure Foundation and the Future of Mobility Grand Challenge. Key areas of activity span the department, for example in areas such as Transport for the North and Midlands Connect, local transport investment through the Transforming Cities Fund and policies on EV infrastructure and incentives. A cross-Department Future of Transport (FoT) programme has also been established to manage changes in transport technology over the decade, including (1) a regulatory review to address barriers to deployment; (2) Future Transport Zones to enable local authorities to actively engage and shape transport innovations; and (3) sector-specific work in zero emission and connected/automated vehicles to secure UK leadership.

DfT contributions to delivery of the Industrial Strategy are not localised within specific teams across the department, and so we are unable to provide officials numbers as requested. However, for example there has been an increase in officials supporting the Office for Low Emission Vehicles programme, and a further increase for officials supporting electric and autonomous vehicles. These programmes share common outcomes with the Industrial Strategy, particularly in meeting the grand challenge set for the Future of Mobility in the UK.

■ Driving Licences: Foreign Nationals**Peter Grant:**[\[145054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to extend the grace period for non-GB licence holders to allow them to continue to drive in the UK.

Rachel Maclean:

There are no current 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 if they meet the criteria and are nominated by eligible organisations.

■ Driving Tests: Key Workers

Dawn Butler:

[\[144630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will allow driving tests to take place for key workers during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) will respond to requests for practical driving tests in England and Wales 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 subject to examiner resource and is restricted to candidates working in health and social care, and other public bodies involved in work responding to 'threats to life' such as the Environment Agency's flood rescue staff, or local authority gritter truck drivers. The DVSA is contacting relevant bodies to explain how to nominate candidates; candidates cannot apply themselves. Applications from other organisations will be considered if the mobile emergency worker criteria is met.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[145174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what grant funding is available to support the installation of electric car charging points in existing residential properties.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is continuing to provide grants to encourage people to charge at home overnight, and it is our intention that all new homes, where appropriate, should have a chargepoint available. Through the Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme (EVHS) the Government provides a grant of up to £350 towards the installation of domestic chargers. To date over 130,000 domestic chargepoint installations have benefited from HMG grants.

■ Hydrogen: Diesel Vehicles

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[144958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he and his officials have had with stakeholders on encouraging the development and use of hydrogen-injected diesel fuel engines using internal combustion assistance to make engines more efficient and limit air pollution.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has regular engagement with industry on the development of zero emission technologies which can assist our ambitions for zero emission road transport. The Government has adopted a technology neutral approach and welcomes any innovative technology that can play a role in this. But we are not outcome neutral, the end goal must be zero emissions from the tailpipe. The technologies on sale, and the market share of those technologies, must be

compatible with achieving our 2050 net zero climate change target and long-term air quality goals.

■ Port Infrastructure Fund

Anneliese Dodds: [\[145131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of funds have been disbursed from the Port Infrastructure Fund to successful applicants; and what the Government's timescale is for disbursement of remaining funds.

Robert Courts:

Disbursal of funds is set to commence imminently, with several Grant Funding Agreements having been recently finalised following negotiations with awardees, and the remainder being finalised currently.

Funds will be disbursed to each awardee as staged payments, monthly. Following initial payments, the timescales for disbursing remaining funds to any awardee corresponds to that awardee's project delivery timeline.

Projects are scheduled to be delivered in time for the full implementation of the new Border Operating Model.

■ Shipping: Coronavirus

Bob Blackman: [\[143738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with stakeholders on supporting the UK maritime industry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Robert Courts:

Ministers and departmental officials have had very regular discussions and meetings with stakeholders across the whole of the UK Maritime Sector about the challenges the global pandemic has created and the support they need, and will continue to do so.

■ Shipping: Government Assistance

Bob Blackman: [\[143739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department is providing to help maritime businesses adapt to the end of the transition period.

Robert Courts:

We have provided extensive guidance for maritime and other businesses on the Government's www.gov.uk/transition website enabling them to make the necessary preparations to adapt to the new rules following the end of the Transition Period. The Government has engaged closely with stakeholders leading up to and following the end of the Transition Period. The Department for Transport continues to engage frequently with maritime stakeholders, including through workshops and bilateral engagements.

On top of this, the Department has taken a number of steps to assist maritime businesses through transition. This includes playing an important role in delivering £200 million in Government grants to British ports through the Port Infrastructure Fund. The fund will help British ports build and enhance border controls infrastructure, enabling them to receive EU goods effectively and in line with the new Border Operating Model. Government is also spending a further £270 million on inland facilities to benefit those ports which cannot build on-site.

The Department also procured additional freight capacity on a temporary basis to help mitigate any potential disruption to the supply of critical goods due to new border procedures.

■ Transport: Carbon Emissions

Lilian Greenwood: [\[145000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to include in his Transport Decarbonisation Plan (a) targets to halt and reverse the growth of traffic in line with the Government's aim to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and (b) corresponding targets and spending plans to increase cycling, walking and public transport usage.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is developing a Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP) that puts transport on a path to delivering its contributions to carbon budgets and net zero by 2050. The plan will take a holistic and cross-modal approach to decarbonising the entire transport system for the first time, setting out a credible and ambitious pathway to cut emissions. The Plan is will be published in Spring 2021.

We are investing £2bn in cycling and walking over the next 5 years. In July 2020 the Prime Minister launched ambitious plans to boost cycling and walking in England, with a vision for half of all journeys in towns and cities to be cycled or walked by 2030.

TREASURY

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties

Caroline Lucas: [\[142888\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a Small Distillery Relief Scheme, similar to the Small Brewers Relief Scheme, to help support and increase the size of the micro-distilling sector; and whether he will make a statement.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is considering the merits of extending small producer reliefs as part of its alcohol duty review. We are analysing feedback from a call for evidence that ran last year. The Government will provide further updates in due course.

■ Buildings: Insulation**Shabana Mahmood:** [\[142879\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of forgoing VAT on remediation of cladding to buildings.

Jesse Norman:

No estimate is currently available.

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

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**Anneliese Dodds:** [\[145128\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether plans in the Winter Economy Plan to give Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans lenders the ability to extend the length of loans from six to ten years (a) have been delivered and (b) are being offered by those lenders.

John Glen:

Following the Chancellor's announcement at the Winter Economy Plan, to help businesses repay their Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans (CBILS) the Government have amended the CBILS rules to allow lenders to extend loan terms from six to a maximum of ten years where the borrower is in difficulty and lenders judge that the extension will help borrowers repay their loan.

The British Business Bank recently issued guidance to all accredited lenders which allows them to extend the term of existing CBILS facilities beyond 6 years up to a maximum of 10 years. Therefore, lenders are now able to extend the term of existing CBILS facilities to SMEs. An extension can be granted at the discretion of the lender and would be given in line with a lender's particular forbearance policies.

CBILS term extensions will be offered at the discretion of lenders, unlike the "Pay As You Grow" options for Bounce Back loans. Extensions will be limited to those borrowers that lenders assess are in difficulty and will benefit from the extension, and only for the duration required, meaning that lenders may offer an extension to 7 years, for example, rather than the maximum 10 years allowed.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**Sir Mark Hendrick:** [\[143700\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that businesses are (a) lawfully claiming and (b) distributing funds received under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme forms part of a wider national effort to protect people's jobs. Fraudulent claims put at risk the provision of public services and the protection of livelihoods. This could include employers claiming on an employee's behalf and not then paying them what they are entitled to, asking employees to do work while on furlough, or making a backdated claim that includes times when workers were working.

As part of HMRC's commitment to transparency and to deter fraudulent claims, they will publish information about employers who claim for periods starting on or after 1 December 2020. This information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employers-who-have-claimed-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>.

Employees can play a vital role by reporting fraudulent claims to HMRC, via their online fraud reporting tool: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/customs-excise-and-vat-fraud-reporting>.

Compliance investigations are now under way, and HMRC are checking claims made through this scheme. Payments may be withheld or need to be repaid in full to HMRC if the claim is based on dishonest or inaccurate information or found to be fraudulent.

HMRC have made clear that they will not hesitate to act on reports of abuse, and the first arrest made in relation to CJRS fraud was on 8 July 2020.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Automation**Sir Mark Hendrick:****[143696]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on the rate of jobs being replaced by automation.

Jesse Norman:

The objective of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is to enable employers to keep people in employment. So far, the CJRS has helped 1.2 million employers to pay the wages of 9.9 million jobs across all sectors of the economy.

Analysis published by HMRC shows that 90 per cent of employees that left the CJRS between April and July were still on their original payroll in August, suggesting they remained working for their original employer. The OBR have also estimated that unemployment would have been higher in the second quarter of 2021 in the absence of the CJRS and other measures.

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.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Minimum Wage

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[143701\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that employees supported through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme are paid the national minimum wage.

Jesse Norman:

Individuals are only entitled to the National Living Wage (NLW)/National Minimum Wage (NMW) for the hours they are working or treated as working under the NLW/NMW rules.

Therefore, under flexible furloughing, furloughed workers will be paid NMW for any hours the individual spends working. For hours not worked, i.e. time furloughed, workers will be paid the lower of 80 per cent of their salary, or £2,500. This amount – for hours not worked – is the amount the employer can claim for through the CJRS.

If they wish, employers can top up these payments voluntarily.

If workers are required to complete training courses during the hours they are furloughed, then they must be paid at least the appropriate 2020/21 NLW/NMW for the time spent training, even if this is more than the 80 per cent of their monthly earnings that will be subsidised. Any training should be carried out in line with the latest public health guidance.

■ Coronavirus: Mental Health

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[142792\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential long-term economic effect of mental health issues as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Steve Barclay:

The Secretary of State for the Department of Health and Social Care has primary responsibility for considering this issue.

However, at the Spending Review 2020, the Chancellor announced that the NHS will receive around an additional £500 million next year to address waiting times for mental health services, give more people the mental health support they need, and invest in the NHS workforce. This builds on the comprehensive expansion of mental health services as part of the NHS Long Term Plan, which commits at least a further £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24.

In addition, DHSC published *'Staying mentally well this winter'* in November 2020, backed by an additional £50 million, which sets out the mental health and support available to people throughout the winter period and beyond.

A cross-Government group of ministers, led by the Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health and the Paymaster General, has been established to

consider and respond to the longer-term impacts of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing and will set out its plans in due course.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[142791\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of the population must be vaccinated for covid-19 before economic support can be lifted.

John Glen:

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

As measures to control the virus change, it is right that government support should also evolve. Because of this, we continue to take a flexible approach and keep all impacts and policies under review.

Vaccines are a foundation of our way out of this pandemic. As of 29 January, over 7.4 million people across the United Kingdom have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

■ **Credit Cards: Fees and Charges**

Grahame Morris:

[\[144991\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will bring forward proposals to cap credit card transaction fees to the level introduced by the EU in 2015.

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 the Interchange Fee (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, made under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. The UK domestic interchange fee caps are at the same levels as before the end of the Transition Period.

■ **Customs Intermediaries**

Rachel Reeves:

[\[145004\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 15 December 2020 to Question 128136 on Customs Intermediaries, how many of the 50,000 customs agents needed to implement the new UK-EU trading arrangements have been (a) hired and (b) trained.

Jesse Norman:

The Government does not employ customs agents/customs intermediaries directly, and the Government does not have a target for numbers of customs agents.

Readiness in the sector relates to the capacity to make declarations, rather than numbers of staff employed. This is because the sector is varied and made up of a number of different business models including specific customs brokers, freight forwarders and fast parcel operators; all of which will require different numbers of staff to complete declarations and to provide their services.

Many in the sector have innovated and brought in significant IT solutions to automate processes which have reduced the numbers of staff they require.

The Government has helped them to do this by making over £80 million of support available, including flexible grants that can be used for IT and training as well as recruitment, depending on the needs of the business. There is also support for intermediaries available through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS).

The sector has scaled up significantly, and the Government continues to monitor progress closely and engage with the sector in order to understand the support it needs.

■ Customs: ICT**Anneliese Dodds:****[145127]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what alternative communication channels are available to businesses submitting queries to HMRC regarding the movement of goods internationally via The Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) system.

Jesse Norman:

Businesses can submit queries regarding the movement of goods internationally to the CHIEF operations team by email at chief.operations@hmrc.gov.uk. Businesses are also able to call the Customs and International Trade helpline on 0300 322 9434. There is also a webchat service available on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/customs-international-tradeand-excise-enquiries>. Capacity has been scaled up on both teams following the end of the transition period.

■ Employment: Coronavirus**Afzal Khan:****[143899]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential long-term economic effects of people being unable to work while experiencing symptoms of Long Covid.

John Glen:

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. Research into the long-term impacts of COVID-19 is ongoing across Government.

The Treasury monitors the impact of Covid-19 on the economy on an ongoing basis, although it does not prepare forecasts, which is the responsibility of the independent OBR. The Treasury remains committed to ensuring we take the right action at the right time to support individuals and businesses in every region and nation of the United Kingdom. We have announced considerable and unprecedented support for businesses and individuals throughout the pandemic. We continue to take a flexible approach and keep all impacts and policies under review.

■ Energy: VAT

Robert Halfon: [\[144993\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to cut VAT on energy bills for families across the UK.

Jesse Norman:

In recognition of the fact that families should not have to bear all of the VAT costs they incur to meet their needs, households already benefit from a reduced VAT rate of 5 per cent on domestic supplies of gas and electricity.

Decisions on tax policy are made at fiscal events and the Government keeps all taxes under review.

■ Females: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell: [\[145065\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the economic effect of the covid-19 outbreak on women.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government takes care to pay due regard to the equality impacts of its policy decisions relating to the Covid-19 outbreak, including explicit consideration of impacts related to sex, in line with all legal requirements and the Government's commitment to promoting equality.

We recognise the challenges Covid-19 is having on all groups in society, including the most vulnerable. That is why the Government announced an unprecedented package of support – including boosts to Universal Credit, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme – helping to protect incomes, jobs, and support those most at need.

■ Mortgages: Interest Rates

Gill Furniss: [\[145088\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to cap standard variable mortgage rates for inactive lenders to protect people who cannot move their mortgages.

John Glen:

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”.

The government is working closely with the Financial Conduct Authority and industry to develop switching options for mortgage consumers with inactive lenders.

■ Pollution: Taxation

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[142776\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will include plans to tax higher polluters in the upcoming Budget for 2021-22.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government keeps all tax policy under review. Decisions on tax policy are made the Chancellor as part of the Budget process and announced on Budget day.

■ Public Expenditure

Anneliese Dodds: [\[145130\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether budget representations received by his Department via the budget.representations@hmtreasury.gov.uk email address will be considered as he prepares this year's budget.

Jesse Norman:

HM Treasury is considering all Budget representations submitted ahead of this year's Budget, including those submitted via the budget.representations@hmtreasury.gov.uk email address.

The Government's Budget representations online portal closed on 14 January. This early deadline allows time for representations to be processed and factored into policy-making. Any outstanding representations should be submitted directly to HM Treasury as soon as possible.

■ Retail Trade: Exhaust Emissions

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[142774\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to increase taxes on retailers in response to the pollution levels caused by their vehicle fleets.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[142775\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that delivery organisations pay more tax in response to the effect of their fleets on roadside air pollution.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government uses the tax system to encourage the uptake of vehicles with low carbon dioxide emissions. This is why electric vans are liable to pay no Vehicle Excise Duty (VED), and why the Government announced at Budget 2020 that it will apply a nil rate of tax for zero-emission vans within van benefit charge from April 2021. Motorists also pay fuel duty on the petrol or diesel they purchase so those who complete significant mileage will pay more in fuel duty than those who drive fewer miles.

Air pollution has reduced significantly since 2010, thanks to the Government's £3.8 billion plan to clean up vehicle emissions and its world-leading Clean Air Strategy. The Environment Bill, currently being considered by the House of Commons, will deliver cleaner air for all by requiring the Government to set targets on air quality, including for fine particulate matter. The Government has also committed £880 million to support Local Authorities deliver their Air Quality plans.

Sanitary Products: VAT**James Murray:**[\[145167\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason the zero-rate of value-added tax for women's sanitary products is not applied to period pants.

Jesse Norman:

A zero rate of VAT has applied to women's sanitary products since 1 January 2021. This applies to those products which were previously subject to the reduced rate of 5 per cent, for example, tampons and pads, and to reusable menstrual products, such as keepers.

The relief specifically excludes articles of clothing, such as "period pants". Such exclusions are designed to ensure that the relief is properly targeted, since difficulties in policing the scope of the relief create the potential for litigation, erosion of the tax base and a reduction in revenue. Under existing rules "period pants" may already qualify for the zero rate, if they have been specifically designed to be worn by a child, meet the sizing criteria, and are held out for sale specifically for use by girls under the age of 14 years old.

Details are provided in VAT Notice 714: young children's clothing and footwear:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-notice-714-zero-rating-young-childrens-clothing-and-footwear/vat-notice-714-zero-rating-young-childrens-clothing-and-footwear#items-suitable-only-for-young-children>.

Schools: Coronavirus**Ben Lake:**[\[145101\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what level of Barnett consequential funding the Welsh Government will receive as a result of the £300 million announced for schools in England by the Prime Minister on 27 January 2021.

Steve Barclay:

The Barnett formula will apply in the usual way to additional funding provided to the Department for Education in relation to this announcement.

Self-employed: Taxation**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[145156\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of supporting self-employed workers who have had their income affected by the covid-19 pandemic in paying their tax returns for 2019-20.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has taken unprecedented steps to support the self-employed during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme receiving claims from about 2.7 million individuals so far, totalling over £18.9 billion as of 31 December.

The Government recognises that the pandemic may have affected the ability of self-employed individuals to meet their tax obligations. As announced in the Winter Economy Plan, the Government has given the self-employed and other taxpayers more time to pay taxes due in January 2021, building on the self-assessment deferral provided in July 2020.

Taxpayers with up to £30,000 of Self-Assessment liabilities due will be able to use HMRC's self-service Time to Pay facility to secure a plan to pay over an additional 12 months. This means that Self-Assessment liabilities due in July 2020 will not need to be paid in full until January 2022.

If taxpayers or their agents are struggling to obtain the required information in time for their Self-Assessment return to be submitted by the filing date, they can provide provisional figures on their return and then provide HMRC with the actual figures as soon as they can. They must state that provisional figures are being provided by ticking the appropriate data item box on the return.

Self-employment Income Support Scheme**Claire Hanna:**[\[145180\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether people who became self-employed in the tax year 2019-20 will be eligible for the fourth self-employment income support scheme.

Jesse Norman:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given on 25 January 2021 to UIN 139996.

■ Soft Drinks: Taxation

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[145034\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue has been raised by the Soft Drinks Industrial Levy in each year since its inception; and how much of that revenue has been spent in each year.

Kemi Badenoch:

HM Revenue and Custom's January 2021 publication of tax receipts shows that, since its introduction in April 2018, the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) has raised the following amounts during each full financial year:

2018-2019 £240 million

2019-2020 £337 million

The provisional 2020-21 year to date (April to December 2020) total is £224 million.

There is no formal link between SDIL revenues and specific spending programmes. However, the Government will continue to invest in supporting public health.

■ UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Anneliese Dodds: [\[145129\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of whether easements or forbearance are available to businesses as a result of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement; and whether legal provisions have been communicated to businesses to prevent future prosecution as a result of non-compliance in the initial period following the publication of that Agreement.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided extensive guidance to traders to support them, including publishing the detailed Border Operating Model to help traders take the necessary steps. Recognising the impact of coronavirus on businesses' ability to prepare, the UK Government has taken the decision to introduce the new border controls in three stages up until 1 July 2021. From 1 January to 30 June, traders when importing non-controlled EU goods to GB will have the option to make a declaration in their own records at the time of import followed by a supplementary declaration up to 175 days later, which provides traders and intermediaries with more time to prepare.

While HMRC will penalise deliberate non-compliance, they will seek to support those who make genuine errors to get it right. HMRC are carrying out a range of activities to support and educate traders on their obligations during this period, and are promoting the keeping of good records, which will be crucial in minimising losses to error once supplementary declarations are made.

■ VAT: Coronavirus**Claire Hanna:**[\[145179\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the VAT cut for the hospitality sector (a) beyond 31 March 2021 and (b) to other covid-19-affected sectors.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary VAT reduced rate came into effect on 15 July 2020 and was initially scheduled to end on 12 January 2021.

In order to continue supporting the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and to protect 2.4 million jobs, the Government extended the temporary reduced rate of VAT (5 per cent) to goods and services supplied by the tourism and hospitality sectors until 31 March 2021.

The Government keeps all taxes under review; future tax decisions will be made at Budget.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Gay Conversion Therapy****Crispin Blunt:**[\[144922\]](#)

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

Kemi Badenoch:

I refer the hon. Member to my answer to Question [143679](#) on 29 January.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Bereavement Benefits****Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[145157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what changes she plans to make to the rules on bereavement benefits following the verdicts reached in the cases of (a) James Jackson and Kevin Simpson in 2020 and (b) Siobhan McLaughlin in 2018.

Guy Opperman:

We are considering the judgement and will bring forward necessary Orders in due course.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Disability**Kirsten Oswald:** [\[144711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of her Department's staff have declared that they have a disability.

Guy Opperman:

As at 31 December 2020, 92 per cent of 85,041 department colleagues had declared their disability status on our central systems. Of these, 13,894 colleagues had declared themselves to have a disability or long term health condition. This represents 18 per cent of all colleagues who have updated their records to show their disability status.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Marketing**Owen Thompson:** [\[144750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much her 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 August 2020 to December 2020.

Guy Opperman:

The Cabinet Office publishes expenditure on COVID-19 and other national campaigns on a rolling monthly basis on gov.uk as part of routine government transparency arrangements.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Telephone Services**Stephen Timms:** [\[141388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the letter of 15 January 2021 from the Permanent Secretary to the Work and Pensions Committee, how her Department defines the acceptable service level for its telephone lines for (a) attendance allowance, (b) the Child Maintenance Service, (c) personal independence payment and (d) state pension; and in each month from August 2020 to December 2020 what service level was provided on each of those lines.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: An acceptable level of service for all of the department's telephony lines is defined as 80% of calls answered (a common industry standard). This service level indicates that customers are being quickly connected to team members and getting their problems resolved in a timely manner.

A reduced service may be necessary for a period where the balancing of resource (as experienced during this Pandemic) are of high priority within a particular business area.

Table below shows performance for Attendance Allowance (AA), Child Maintenance Service (CMS), Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and State Pension (SP) telephony lines for the period August 2020 to December 2020.

% CALLS ANSWERED (PCA)	AUG-20	SEP-20	OCT-20	Nov-20	DEC-20
AA	61.10%	60.20%	64.40%	62.00%	64.00%
CMS	78.90%	75.60%	74.80%	74.30%	68.40%
PIP	70.60%	70.60%	63.30%	69.60%	69.20%
SP	60.60%	57.90%	52.10%	55.20%	60.30%

■ Health and Safety Executive: Inspections

Stephen Timms:

[\[143682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) Stage 1 phone calls, (b) Stage 2 follow-up calls, (c) Stage 3 site visits and (d) covid support officer site visits have been undertaken by HSE in each month since March 2020 in relation to (i) all employee safety concerns arising from covid-19 and (ii) concerns of inadequate ventilation causing an increased risk of covid-19 transmission.

Mims Davies:

The stage 1, 2 & 3 approach you refer to relates specifically to proactive spot check calls and visits to business premises and not to those triggered by workplace concerns.

So far, HSE has proactively carried out a total of 92,566 spot checks, since March 2020, which includes both those passing through the staged process and those carried out separately from this process i.e. as a result of visits carried out by our inspectors. 83,718 went through the staged-process, of which 17,895 were referred to stage 2 and 3,311 of which were then referred to stage 3 for a visit.

With regard specifically to employee safety concerns arising from Covid-19, HSE categorises workplace COVID concerns into green, amber or red. Green concerns are those that can easily be resolved or where HSE is not the enforcing body. Amber and red COVID concerns have, to date, been dealt with by HSE regulatory operational staff.

Of these, HSE's systems do not record the level of detail which would be required to establish how many concerns related to inadequate ventilation.

The table below provides by month the number of completed COVID concerns dealt with, the number of these that were investigated and completed by operational staff and the number that required a site visit. These numbers are additional to those listed in paragraph 2.

MONTH/YEAR	COMPLETED COVID CONCERNS	COVID CONCERNS	
		INVESTIGATED BY REGULATORY STAFF.	REQUIRING A VISIT TO SITE
03-2020	336	-	
04-2020	3749	1715	37
05-2020	2006	982	119
06-2020	1238	548	103
07-2020	1272	393	127
08-2020	1008	295	93
09-2020	1132	399	125
10-2020	1437	473	203
11-2020	2228	462	157
12-2020	1132	195	38
01-2021	2177	178	41
Total	17715	5640	1043

NB the data was extracted from HSE's live operational database on 27th January 2021. The number for completed COVID concerns is reported on a weekly basis and this is as of 24th January 2021.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[145013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many placements have been created under the Kickstart scheme in each (a) region and (b) sector.

Mims Davies:

We are currently not able to publish the number of approved placements by region or sector.

Dave Doogan: [\[145147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to improve the processing time of applications to the Kickstart scheme.

Mims Davies:

We have recently streamlined and improved the assessment process, to take a more nuanced view of applications while maintaining a high standard for Kickstart jobs. These changes mean that more applications are likely to be successful. We have

also continued to improve and expand our guidance to help employers understand what we are looking for when assessing applications.

We aim to process all applications within four weeks, we recognise this may not always have been possible. We have reprioritised staff resources to deliver the DWP's Kickstart Scheme to meet the demand from the large number of supportive employers.

Dave Doogan: [\[145148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to work with Gateway submissions for the Kickstart scheme.

Dave Doogan: [\[145149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to work with organisations such as Gateway to agree a maximum time between submission and approval of applications for the Kickstart scheme.

Mims Davies:

The department has worked with a wide range of stakeholders, including gateway organisations since the scheme was announced and will continue to do so.

We have recently improved the assessment process to allow us to consider an application in full to make a decision. We have also continued to improve and expand our guidance to make sure employers know what we are looking for when assessing applications. Whilst maintaining a high standard for Kickstart jobs, these changes will mean that more applications are likely to be successful.

We aim to make a decision on an application within four weeks of receiving it, although this can take longer if more information needs to be gathered. Approved Gateways can get in touch with their local or national Kickstart scheme contact for information about how to add job placements or employers to their existing grant agreements.

■ Mental Health: Coronavirus

Sir Mark Hendrick: [\[143702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of covid-19 national lockdown restrictions on the mental health of (a) business owners and (b) employees.

Justin Tomlinson:

We recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic, whether directly or indirectly, is having a significant impact on the mental health of individuals. The percentage (and number) of employees with mental health conditions has been going up steadily since 2013, the earliest comparable year. This has continued over the latest year. It is therefore difficult to make a robust assessment of the degree to which this increase is as a direct or indirect result of the pandemic. We will continue to monitor this from the range of data sources available. We do not have data available to assess the mental health conditions amongst business owners.

■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses**Hywel Williams:** [\[144946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to publish her Department's review of the benefits system for terminally ill people.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department is committed to delivering an improved system for claimants that are nearing the end of their lives and is working across Government to bring forward proposals following the evaluation. I remain committed to implementing the key areas identified in the evaluation; the desire to change the six-month rule; improving consistency with other services used by people nearing the end of their lives; and raising awareness of the support that is available.

Hywel Williams: [\[144947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of terminally ill people who have experienced delays in receiving benefit payments when claiming under the Special Rules for Terminal Illness in (a) Wales and (b) the UK over the last five years.

Justin Tomlinson:

No estimate has been made for the number of people who have experienced a delay in receiving benefit payment. The only available information on clearance times is for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) as there are published statistics, but the information is not readily available for other benefits and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

The Special Rules for Terminal Illness (SRTI) provide those with a limited life expectancy, simple and fast access to benefits. The SRTI allow claimants who are unlikely to live longer than 6-months to claim under a fast-tracked process without the requirement for waiting periods or a face-to-face assessment.

In October 2020, the end to end PIP median clearance time for SRTI claims was 5 working days. Data on median PIP clearance times for SRTI claims in Great Britain is published and covers each stage of the customer journey for the period covering April 2013 – October 2020 (the latest available data). This can be found in table 2B in the following published statistical tables:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/944014/tables-pip-statistics-to-october-2020.xlsx

■ Unemployment: Coventry**Colleen Fletcher:** [\[143778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the level of (a) redundancy and (b) unemployment in (i) Coventry North East constituency and (ii) Coventry.

Mims Davies:

The Department regularly publishes statistics on the Alternative Claimant Count, and these are available by local authority and constituency 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>

■ Work Capability Assessment**Hywel Williams:****[144943]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many eligible claimants since March 2020 have had their (a) employment and support allowance or (b) limited capability for work-related activity component of universal credit payments delayed due to being required to attend face-to-face assessments to process their claim.

Justin Tomlinson:

Claimants do not have to wait for a Work Capability Assessment (WCA) before they can be awarded Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or awarded Universal Credit (UC) on the grounds of having a health condition or disability, as they receive an assessment rate for ESA or Standard Allowance of UC while their claim is being assessed. Depending on the outcome of the WCA, some claimants may then be entitled to an additional amount.

For both ESA and UC, claimants will remain on their current award until we gather the evidence needed to make a recommendation or are able to conduct a face to face assessment (or until their benefit is due to end in contributory ESA). Any additional amounts the claimant may qualify for after their assessment will be backdated to ensure no long-term loss.

Hywel Williams:**[144944]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether eligible claimants of (a) employment and support allowance and (b) the Limited Capability for Work-Related Activity component of universal credit are potentially being required to attend face-to-face assessments to process a claim despite the suspension of such assessments for sickness and disability benefits since March 2020.

Hywel Williams:**[144945]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the use of only non face-to-face forms of assessments for (a) employment and support allowance and (b) the Limited Capability for Work-Related Activity component of universal credit are viable methods for all eligible claimants to have their claims processed given the suspension of face-to-face assessments for sickness and disability benefits since March 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

The department's key priorities are the health and safety of our claimants and our staff and that claimants receive the support they are entitled to as soon as possible.

As a result, all face to face assessments for health and disability benefits have remained suspended since March 2020. During the pandemic we have continued to assess claimants based on paper evidence where we can, using this route as often as we are able to. We have introduced telephone assessments and are working hard to increase the number of these assessments so that we can make the right decision for as many claimants as possible, while keeping them safe. We are currently in the early stages of testing Work Capability Assessment (WCA) video assessments.

Telephone assessments will not be appropriate for all claimants. We are aware that some claimants, particularly those with certain health conditions or disabilities, will have difficulty being assessed over the telephone. We are currently developing ways in which we can safely assess these claimants. For both Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Universal Credit (UC), claimants will remain on their current award until we gather the evidence needed to make a recommendation or are able to conduct a face to face assessment, (or until their benefit is due to end in contributory ESA). Any additional amounts the claimant may qualify for after their assessment will be backdated to ensure no long-term loss.

The suspension of face to face assessments is regularly reviewed in line with the latest public health guidance and will recommence as soon as it is safe to do so. The department remains committed to increasing the number of claimants able to participate in a non-face to face assessment by moving towards a wider range of channels. We are closely monitoring all new assessment processes and are working with our supplier to ensure claimants are assessed as quickly as possible.

■ Work Capability Assessments: Surveys

Navendu Mishra:

[\[143934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will undertake to change the timing of Maximus' Customer Satisfaction Survey for claimants undergoing Work Capability Assessments to after they have completed the process.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave to his previous question [142087](#), that there are currently no plans to change the timing of the customer satisfaction survey.

Maximus' Customer Satisfaction Survey is focused on the assessment service provided by Maximus. The survey is to help identify how the service can be improved whilst helping to understand the experience of those undergoing an assessment. The survey has no connection with the claims process or the outcome of a customer's benefit claim.

The department also undertakes its own survey which is designed to monitor customer satisfaction with the services offered by the department and to enable customer views to inform improvements to the delivery of benefits and services.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

EDUCATION

■ Higher Education Update

The Minister of State for Universities (Michelle Donelan):

[\[HCWS753\]](#)

The government recognises that this academic year has been incredibly difficult for students. We asked most students not to return to campus at the beginning of this term because of the need to reduce the transmission of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and because of concern about the effect of the coronavirus variant. This has prevented many students from reoccupying their term-time accommodation following the Christmas break. Many students remain at their non-term-time locations and are accessing their teaching online at present. As a result of these exceptional circumstances, some students are facing financial hardship, with some now incurring additional costs at their alternative address. These challenges were acknowledged by the Prime Minister on 7 January.

I have now announced that we will be making available an additional £50m of hardship funding this financial year. In total we have made £70m of funding available for student hardship given the £20m made available to higher education providers in December. The funding will be distributed by the Office for Students to universities, who will have flexibility in how they award the funding to students, including international students, in a way that will best prioritise those in greatest need. Providers are best placed to assess student hardship locally. As an example, support might include assistance for students facing additional costs arising from having to maintain accommodation in more than one location, or an inability to maintain their employment – potentially in a job based close to their term-time accommodation – if they are not able to access the Coronavirus Job Retention Support Scheme (CJRS). Alternatively, support may include help for students to access teaching remotely, or for students who have already applied for hardship funding previously but now need additional support. We are working with the Office for Students to allocate these funds and further detail will be set out in due course.

I am extremely grateful for the work universities and other higher education providers are doing to support students during these unprecedented times. This funding will allow providers to build on measures that are already in place.

I welcome the news that a number of universities and large accommodation providers have already offered rent refunds for students who have been asked to stay away from their accommodation. Whilst universities and private accommodation providers are autonomous and responsible for setting their own rental agreements, the government is encouraging universities and large-scale private accommodation providers that have not yet done so to offer refunds or other financial compensation. The government is also encouraging all providers of student accommodation to make sure their accommodation policies have students' best interests at heart. We also urge them to communicate their policies clearly and to be fair.

I realise that this year has been incredibly difficult for students, staff and their families, and I want to assure them that their welfare is our top priority. The measures set out here aim to target support at those students with the greatest need and we will continue to monitor the situation to look at what impact this funding is having. I want to thank universities for their tireless work to ensure that students do not have to put their lives or academic journeys on hold.

TREASURY

■ Publication of ‘The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review’

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Kemi Badenoch): [\[HCWS752\]](#)

At Spring Statement 2019, the government commissioned an independent, global review on the economics of biodiversity. Today, *The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review*, has been published.

At the start of an important year for global action to tackle biodiversity loss and climate change, the government thanks Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta for his independent Review and welcomes its publication as a strong example of UK thought leadership on an important environmental issue with clear – but often overlooked – economic consequences. The government will examine the Review’s findings and respond formally in due course.

The Review is published on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review> and a copy will be placed in the House Libraries.