HOUSE OF COMMONS

Daily Report **Wednesday, 3 February 2021**

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 3 February 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:33 P.M., 03 February 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/

CONTENTS

ANSWERS **6**

ATTORNEY GENERAL 6

- Crown Prosecution Service: Coronavirus 6

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY 6

- Additional Restrictions Grant 6
- Conditions of Employment: Re-employment 7
- Coronavirus: Vaccination 7
- Foreign Companies: Property 8
- Green Homes Grant Scheme 8
- Motor Vehicles: Sales 10
- Nannies: Coronavirus 11
- Postal Services: Coronavirus 11
- Postal Services: Rural Areas 12
- Retail Trade: Coronavirus 12
- Small Businesses: Coventry 13
- Utilities: Costs 13
- Weddings: Coronavirus 14

CABINET OFFICE 14

- Civil Servants: Veterans 14
- Coronavirus: Disease Control 15
- Elections: Proof of Identity 15
- Local Government: Elections 16
- Population: Coronavirus 16
- UK Trade with EU: Large Goods Vehicles 16

DEFENCE 17

- Armed Forces: Training 17
- Armed Forces: Young People 17
- Armoured Fighting Vehicles 19
- Courts Martial 19
- Joint Exercises: Coronavirus 20
- Medical Records: Veterans 21
- Ministry of Defence: LIBOR 21
- Ministry of Defence: Marketing 21

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT 22

- Broadband: Prices 22
- Electronic Programme Guides: Public Service Broadcasting 22
- Football: Coronavirus 23
- National League: Coronavirus 24
- Youth Services: Coronavirus 24

EDUCATION 25

- Apprentices: Vocational Guidance 25
- Assessments: Coronavirus 26
- Domestic Abuse 26
- Extended Services: Coronavirus 27

- GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments 27
- Institute of Teaching 28
- Outdoor Education: Coronavirus 29
- Performing Arts: Qualifications 29
- Pre-school Education: Coronavirus 30
- Pupils: Hearing Impairment 32
- Remote Education: ICT 34
- Schools: Coronavirus 35
- Skills Toolkit 35
- Skills Toolkit: Equality 36
- Students: Housing 37

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS 38

- Animal Housing: Cats and Dogs 38
- Assistance Animals: Pet Travel Scheme 39
- Chemicals: Regulation 39
- Export Health Certificates: Veterinary Medicine 40
- Fisheries and Meat Products: Sales 40
- Floods: North Yorkshire 42
- Food Poverty: Finance 42
- Land: Contamination 43
- Neonicotinoids 43
- Peat Bogs: Environment Protection 44
- Pets: Theft 45
- Plants: Republic of Ireland 45
- Pollution Control: Standards 46
- Rural Areas 46
- Shops: Rural Areas 47
- Soil and Groundwater Technology Association 47
- UK Trade with EU: Meat 47
- Zoo Animals Fund 48

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE 48

- China: India 48
- China: Taiwan 48
- Coronavirus: Vaccination 49
- Developing Countries: Nutrition 49
- Female Genital Mutilation 50
- Human Rights: Prisoners 50
- Samantha Power 51
- South Africa: Coronavirus 51
- Uganda: Human Rights 51

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE 52

- Accident and Emergency Departments 52
- Addictions: Coronavirus 53
- Babies: Pain 53
- Breast Cancer: Health Services 53
- Cannabis: Medical Treatments 54
- Care Homes: Coronavirus 54
- Care Homes: Finance 56
- Carers: Coronavirus 56
- Contact Tracing: Computer Software 57
- Contraceptives 57
- Coronavirus 58
- Coronavirus: Brighton and Hove 59
- Coronavirus: Disease Control 59
- Coronavirus: Health Services 60

- Coronavirus: Hospitals 60
- Coronavirus: Protective Clothing 61
- Coronavirus: Quarantine 61
- Coronavirus: Schools 61
- Coronavirus: Scotland 62
- Coronavirus: Screening 62
- Coronavirus: Social Distancing 63
- Coronavirus: Vaccination 63
- Coronavirus: Vitamin D 66
- Coronavirus: Wakefield 66
- Coronavirus: Yorkshire and the Humber 66
- Dementia: Drugs 67
- Dementia: Research 67
- Dental Services 67
- Dental Services: Coronavirus 68
- Dietary Supplements: Coronavirus 71
- Disability: Coronavirus 71
- Doctors: Training 72
- Drugs: UK Trade with EU 72
- Epilepsy: Cannabis 73
- Epilepsy: Drugs 73
- Exercise Cygnus 73
- Gambling: Health Services 73
- Health Professions: Regulation and Vacancies 74
- Health Services and Social Services: Birmingham 74
- Health Services: Coronavirus 75
- Health Services: Finance 75
- Health Services: Police 76
- Health: Children 76
- Home Care Services 76
- Home Care Services: Personal Income 77
- Hospices: Coronavirus 77
- Hospitals: Coronavirus 77
- Hospitals: Discharges 78
- Influenza: Vaccination 78
- Learning Disability: Health Services 78
- Leukaemia: Older People 79
- Medicine: Education 79
- Mental Health Services: Children and Young People 80
- Mental Health Services: Health Professions 80
- Mental Health Services: Young People 80
- Mental Health: Coronavirus 81
- NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme 2020 81
- NHS: Migrant Workers 82
- NHS: Nurses 82
- NHS: Protective Clothing 82
- Nurses 83
- Nurses: Coronavirus 83
- Ophthalmic Services: Coronavirus 83
- Paramedical Staff: Students 84
- Pharmacy: Coronavirus 84
- Pre-school Education: Coronavirus 85
- Royal Free Hospital: Nurseries 85

HOME OFFICE 85

- Animal Welfare: Crime 85
- Antisocial Behaviour: Police Cautions 86

- Asylum 86
- Asylum: Napier Barracks 87
- Domestic Abuse: Kingston upon Hull 87
- Gender Based Violence 88
- Immigration: EEA Nationals 88
- Immigration: EU Nationals 88
- Migrant Workers: Young People 89
- Police: Animal Welfare 89
- Repatriation: EU Nationals 90

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT 90

- Civil Partnerships and Weddings: Coronavirus 90
- Estate Agents: Coronavirus 90
- Housing: Construction 91
- Local Government: Meetings 91
- Marriage: Coronavirus 92
- Parish Councils: Freedom of Information 92
- Religious Buildings: Coronavirus 92
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund 93
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Scotland 93
- Weddings: Coronavirus 94

INTERNATIONAL TRADE 94

- Department for International Trade: Expenditure 94
- Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries 94
- UK Trade with EU 95
- UK Trade with EU: Republic of Ireland 96

JUSTICE 96

- Courts: Coronavirus 96
- Prisoners' Release: Females 97
- Prisoners: Parents 98
- Prisons and Young Offender Institutions: Coronavirus 98
- Prisons: Crime 99
- Prisons: Greater London 99
- Public Service: Misconduct 100

LEADER OF THE HOUSE 101

- Virtual Proceedings 101

SCOTLAND 101

- Scotland Office: Marketing 101

TRANSPORT 102

- Bus Services: Subsidies 102
- Department for Transport: Marketing 102
- Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Standards 104
- Driving Tests: Coronavirus 105
- Electric Scooters: Pilot Schemes 105
- Hitachi Rail Europe: Redundancy 106
- Large Goods Vehicles: UK Trade with EU 106
- Motorways: Safety 107
- Park and Ride Schemes 107
- Roads: Noise 108
- School Streets Initiative 108
- Taxis: Coronavirus 108
- Transport: Subsidies 109

TREASURY 109

- Agency Workers: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme 109

- Bounce Back Loan Scheme 110
- Business: Coronavirus 110
- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme 111
- Coronavirus: Disease Control 112
- Coronavirus: Key Workers 112
- Developing Countries: Debts 113
- Employment: Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade 113
- Mortgages: Coronavirus 114
- Mortgages: Interest Rates 115
- Mortgages: Private Rented Housing 115
- Population 116
- Rents: Arrears 116
- Self-Employment Income Support Scheme 117
- Stamp Duty Land Tax: Coronavirus 117
- Stock Market: Internet 118
- Stocks and Shares: Artificial Intelligence 118
- Termination of Employment: Coronavirus 119

WALES 119

- [Subject Heading to be Assigned] 119
- Local Growth Deals: Wales 120
- Manufacturing Industries: Wales 120

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES 120

- Equality 120

WORK AND PENSIONS 121

- Access to Work Programme 121
- Disability: Public Consultation 121
- Employment: Disability 122
- Food Banks: Voucher Schemes 123
- Kickstart Scheme 123
- Kickstart Scheme: North East 123
- Kickstart Scheme: North West 124
- Pneumoconiosis: Grants 124
- Self-employed: Coronavirus 125
- Sick Pay 125
- Universal Credit 126

WRITTEN STATEMENTS 127

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY 127

- Subsidy control – Designing a new approach for the UK 127

CABINET OFFICE 128

- Census 2021, England and Wales 128

TREASURY 129

- Billing Authorities Update 129

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

Crown Prosecution Service: Coronavirus

Ellie Reeves: [143867]

To ask the Attorney General, how many and what proportion of CPS staff have had to self-isolate as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and what the (a) role and (b) staffing grade of those staff is.

Michael Ellis:

THE CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE ('CPS') HOLDS DATA ON STAFF WHO HAVE BEEN ABSENT DUE TO COVID-19 AND RECEIVED SPECIAL LEAVE WITH PAY. THE TABLE BELOW SUMMARISES THAT DATA, WITH THE COLUMN LABELLED 'SPECIAL LEAVE WITH PAY – OTHER REASONS' INCLUDING THOSE WHO HAVE SELF-ISOLATED. THIS COLUMN SHOWS THAT 253 STAFF (APPROXIMATELY 3.8% OF THE WORKFORCE) FALL WITHIN THIS CATEGORY. HOWEVER, IN GENERAL, THOSE WHO HAVE SELF-ISOLATED WILL PREDOMINANTLY HAVE CONTINUED TO WORK REMOTELY AND WILL NOT HAVE NEEDED TO TAKE TIME AWAY FROM THE WORKPLACE.GRADESPECIAL LEAVE WITH PAY-CARING RESPONSIBILITIES (NUMBER OF STAFF)SPECIAL LEAVE WITH PAY-OTHER REASONS (NUMBER OF STAFF)SPECIAL LEAVE WITH PAY-RESPIRATORY (NUMBER OF STAFF)TOTALSHEADCOUNTPERCENTAGE OF GRADEA126191369.23%A25266118113010.44%B22172826010.77%B31882620712.56%CROWN ADVOCATE92111945.67%CROWN PROSECUTOR102122405%LEVEL D122141638.59%LEVEL E11631.59%LEGAL MANAGER 11261192906.55%LEGAL MANAGER 2331003%PARALEGAL ASSISTANT171713526013.46%PARALEGAL BUSINESS MANAGER831110910.09%PARALEGAL OFFICER3623596099.69%SENIOR CROWN PROSECUTOR120533176172610.2%SPECIALIST PROSECUTOR211413621117.06%SENIOR SPECIALIST PROSECUTOR2131618.75%SENIOR LEGAL MANAGER/SCS22812.47%AP94131419.22%B1/LEGAL TRAINEE/EO473938973512.11%402253 10665659410.08%

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Additional Restrictions Grant

Tulip Siddiq: [143857]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support local councils in the distribution of the £500 million top-up to the Additional Restrictions Grant funding.

Paul Scully:
The Additional Restrictions Grant is a discretionary fund which, meaninglocal authorities have the ability to develop support schemes that suit their local economy.

On the 14 th January, the full guidance for local authorities on the Business Support Package for the January Lockdown - including the additional £500m in Additional Restrictions Grant funding - was published. All local authorities have also been issued with a new FAQ pack to assist in the operation of the grant schemes.

We are committed to carrying out a full new burden assessment, recognising that additional requirements have been placed on local authorities to deliver this much needed support to businesses quickly.

Conditions of Employment: Re-employment

Charlotte Nichols: **[143929]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to prevent employers using fire and re-hire tactics when negotiating employee contracts.

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.

The Government is clear that using threats about firing and re-hiring as a negotiating tactic is unacceptable. There are 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. In addition. if the employer changes any of the terms without the employee's agreement, the employee may be entitled to seek legal redress.

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.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Justin Madders: **[143803]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of security procedures around covid-19 vaccine (a) supply chains, (b) storage and (c) transport.

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

Foreign Companies: Property

Dan Carden: [145870]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to create a publicly accessible register of the beneficial owners of overseas companies that own or buy UK property.

Paul Scully:
The Government remains committed to establishing a new beneficial ownership register of overseas entities that own UK property in order to combat money laundering and achieve greater transparency in the UK property market. The Government is mindful that the register is a novel scheme and it is important to get it right. The register requires primary legislation to be established, and the Government will legislate when Parliamentary time allows.

Green Homes Grant Scheme

Jessica Morden: [143722]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the (a) value and (b) duration is of the contract with ICF to administer the Green Homes Grant scheme.

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, which runs from 14 September 2020 until 28 February 2022.

Further details will be published on GOV.UK in due course.

Jessica Morden: [143723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many (a) voucher applications have been received, (b) vouchers approved, (c) installations completed, (d) installations inspected by Trustmark and (e) installations inspected by MCS under the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:
As of 26 January 2021:

(a) 66,902 grant applications have been received, corresponding to 103,833 voucher applications

(b) 17,618 vouchers have been approved and issued to customers, to date.

With regard to (c), (d) and (e), official scheme statistics will be published in due course. BEIS will continue to monitor application data as the scheme progresses.

Jessica Morden: [143724]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many voucher applications have required (a) further identity checks and (b) alternative quotations under the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:
Under the Green Homes Grant, the scheme administrator may seek additional information from customers when processing applications in order to progress their application. This is to ensure applications are compliant with scheme rules, contain sufficient evidence to approve applications and that government funding is spent appropriately.

Jessica Morden: [143725]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the (a) total and (b) average value is of (i) voucher applications, (ii) approved voucher applications and (iii) installations under the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:
As of 26 January, 17,618 vouchers have been approved and issued to customers, to date. The total value of such vouchers is £73.1 million.

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

Jessica Morden: [143726]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the (a) number and (b) the value of (i) primary and (ii) secondary measures installed under the Green Homes Grant scheme to date.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:
Official scheme statistics will be published in due course. BEIS will continue to monitor application data as the scheme progresses.

Jessica Morden: [143727]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, under the Green Homes Grant, what is (a) the number and (b) the value of (i) voucher applications and (ii) installations for (1) low income households as defined by the eligibility criteria, and (2) other households.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:
As of 26 January, 34,795 grant applications have been received from households in receipt or stating in their application that they are in receipt of qualifying benefits. 32,109 applications have been received from households not in receipt of said benefits.

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

Jessica Morden: [143728]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many Trustmark registered installers were registered with the Green Homes Grant scheme in each month since September 2020.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:
The Green Homes Grant scheme opened for installer applications on 30 September. As of 28 January, the total number of installers registered with the scheme was 906.

Official scheme statistics will be published in due course.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [145730]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what fulfilment indicators were agreed in the contract awarded to ICF for administering the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:
The contract has 10 Key Performance Indicators, supported by Service Credits covering the major areas of the contract.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [145731]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what guidelines on payment arrangements for contractor his Department has given to ICF for the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:
The payment process for the Green Homes Grant is a four-step process that requires: the customer to confirm the work has been completed, the installer to record the work on the TrustMark database, the scheme administrator to check the conditions of the voucher issued have been met, and then the scheme administrator to make the payment.

To ensure consumer protection and value for money, the scheme administrator may be required to undertake fraud checks, for example a voucher may be randomly chosen for an on-site audit. The scheme administrator aims to pay as soon as possible after this process is complete.

Motor Vehicles: Sales

Colleen Fletcher: [143780]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on trends in the levels of sales of (a) new cars and (b) electric vehicles.

Nadhim Zahawi:
The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) provide monthly statistics on the registration of new vehicles in the UK. The latest statistics were issued on 6 January 2021 and are summarised as follows:

The SMMT's statistics for new car registrations for 2020 show the UK new car market fell by -29.4% to 1.63m cars compared with 2.31m cars in 2019. This is consistent with the impact of COVID restrictions on sales in other major car markets in Europe. Within the UK market, Electric Vehicle (EV) car sales continue to grow and accounted for 17.5% of the 2020 new car market: Battery Electric Vehicle sales were up 186% to 108,205; Plug in Hybrid Vehicle sales were up 91% to 66,877; and full hybrids were up 12% to 110,117. Mild hybrid sales are also growing, accounting for 13% of petrol and diesel registrations.

The Department understands that these are challenging times for the automotive sector and manufacturers in general. The Government has been working closely with key industry stakeholders throughout the pandemic to understand how we can support the resilience and continued competitiveness of UK automotive manufacturing at this time.

Nannies: Coronavirus

Sarah Olney: **[145830]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to issue written guidance to (a) nannies and (b) their employers on working safely during the covid-19 outbreak and lockdown.

Paul Scully:
As working in other peoples' homes is an essential part of a nanny's work, they need to ensure they follow the Safer Working guidance for people working in, visiting or delivering to other people's homes.

When nannies need to enter their clients' homes, they should take appropriate Covid-19 secure precautions such as socially distancing wherever possible, washing their hands often, using a separate towel to dry their hands or making sure there is appropriate ventilation. If the nanny or anyone in the household has Covid-19 symptoms, they must not go to work and they must self-isolate.

Postal Services: Coronavirus

Hywel Williams: **[143710]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Royal Mail on covid-19 protective measures for workers in delivery offices.

Paul Scully:
Safety of workers is a priority for the Government. It is essential that postal workers are, and feel, safe in their working environment.

Postal operators should put appropriate measures in place to follow the latest public health guidance and legal obligations set out under health and safety legislation to protect their staff at work. Postal workers should continue to follow the advice of their employer and work with them to ensure sensible workplace adjustments are in place.

Postal Services: Rural Areas

Hywel Williams: **[143709]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to (a) protect and (b) enhance the resilience of postal services in rural areas from covid-19-related disruption.

Paul Scully:
Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, postal operators have continued to provide a valuable service to this country, including in rural communities.

The Universal Service Obligation is set out in the Postal Services Act 2011 and ensures a six-day a week, one price goes anywhere, service for the delivery and collection of letters (and five days a week for parcels) throughout the United Kingdom. Royal Mail, a private company, has well-established contingency plans to mitigate disruption to universal postal services, overseen by Ofcom, the UK's designated independent regulator of postal services.

The Government's objective in relation to postal services continues to be to secure a sustainable universal service for users throughout the UK, including those in remote and rural areas.

Retail Trade: Coronavirus

Justin Madders: **[143806]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of queuing measures that retailers have in place due to covid-19 on fair and equitable access for elderly, disabled and priority groups.

Paul Scully:
The Government welcomes efforts by retailers who have implemented dedicated hours and access for the elderly, disabled and priority access groups, as well as prioritising online deliveries for the most vulnerable.

The safer workplaces guidance provides some suggestions to help employers make their workplaces COVID-Secure for their employees, visitors, and customers. The Government took into account people with disabilities when developing the guidance. We expect all businesses to take into account the Government's guidance, discussing with neighbouring businesses and their local authorities where applicable.

The guidance does not replace existing employment, health and safety or equalities legislation. It provides information to employers on how best to meet these responsibilities in the context of COVID-19.

Small Businesses: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher: [143784]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support small business growth in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

Paul Scully:
We aim to make the UK the best place in the world 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 Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) self-reported that in 2019-20, its Growth Hub engaged with 66,452 businesses/individuals (including via digital channels); directly supported 1,798 businesses, of which 77 received over 12 hours of high-level support; and helped 648 individuals start a business.

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.

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 Government has also set out a plan for recovery that focuses on backing business, improving skills, and creating jobs. For example, the Plan for Jobs provides new funding to ensure more people will get tailored support to help them find work. This includes launching the £2 billion Kickstart Scheme fund and investing £2.9 billion, over 3 years, in the Restart programme to support the UK's labour market.

Further measures include committing £8 million for digital skills boot camps, increasing apprenticeship opportunities, expanding sector-based work academies programmes (SWAPs), launching the Job Finding Support Service, and increasing the funding for the Flexible Support Fund by £150 million in Great Britain.

Utilities: Costs

Stuart Anderson: [143909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to help reduce the cost of utility bills for vulnerable people experiencing financial hardship.

Paul Scully:
The Government and regulators have worked with regulated industries to support consumers who are struggling financially.

Examples of the support provided include in the financial services sector, where the FCA advises that consumers can apply, until the end of March, for payment deferrals including on mortgages, loans, credit cards, overdrafts, and motor finance. In the energy sector, BEIS secured a voluntary agreement with energy companies to support their customers impacted by Covid-19 and struggling with energy bills, including taking action to keep households on supply. Ofcom has also recently asked telecoms providers to bring in further support, including proactively engaging with those in debt, and waiving penalty charges.

Details of the support available to consumers struggling to pay their essential bills can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/advice-for-people-who-are-struggling-to-pay-essential-bills-because-of-coronavirus.

The Government has also through the COVID Winter Grant Scheme provided £170m to local authorities in England, to provide support for vulnerable households particularly affected by the pandemic, and help with the cost of food, energy, water bills and other essentials.

Weddings: Coronavirus

Meg Hillier: **[145757]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the planned timescale is for allowing statutory wedding ceremonies to reconvene with a minimum number of participants during the covid-19 outbreak.

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 deaths falling at the pace we would expect as more people are inoculated.

CABINET OFFICE

Civil Servants: Veterans

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: **[145756]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Making the Civil Service a Great Place to Work for Veterans initiative, how many veterans have (a) applied to the Civil Service through that initiative and (b) been successful in securing a job through that initiative to date.

Johnny Mercer:
Since the pilot of ‘Making the Civil Service a Great Place to Work for Veterans’ was launched on 5 October 2020, up to 31 December 2020, unvalidated data shows that

856 veterans have applied for jobs using the scheme (6% of total applicants), with 9 job offers made to veterans (13% of all job offers). This indicates that on participating vacancies, a higher proportion of job offers are held by veterans compared to the proportion of all applicants who are veterans. In addition to this, since the launch of the pilot in four Government departments, the Welsh Government and National Crime Agency have joined the scheme, ensuring a higher number of vacancies are made available to veterans.

Coronavirus: Disease Control

Sir Mark Hendrick: [144609]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether behavioural scientists are involved in implementing national lockdown guidance and messaging.

Sir Mark Hendrick: [144610]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made an assessment of the effectiveness of public health messaging in saving lives during the covid-19 outbreak.

Penny Mordaunt:
Behavioural science has been fully embedded in Covid-19 communications since the start of the pandemic. The evidence-based principles from this field have been applied across all key campaigns, including the decision to enter national lockdown. Behavioural science support during the pandemic has been provided by internal government teams and academic experts, including those who are members of SPI-B.

The Government constantly monitors and gains insight on public awareness. We use regular evaluations to maximise the impact of our campaigns across the UK. Recall of Government communication has remained extremely high.

Elections: Proof of Identity

Cat Smith: [143817]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department plans to take to monitor the potential effects of introducing mandatory voter ID on voting uptake among different demographic groups.

Cat Smith: [143818]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate his Department has made of the cost to the public purse of rolling out mandatory voter ID.

Chloe Smith:
As legislation is brought forward to enable the national roll out of voter ID, appropriate impact assessments will be provided for Parliament in the normal way.

Local Government: Elections

Nick Smith: **[144654]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Local Government Information Unit report entitled Free, fair and safe: 2021 local elections, what assessment he has made of the (a) capacity of councils for managing postal voting, (b) potential for implementing all-out postal voting and (c) the merits of developing a digital postal vote application service in time for the May 2021 elections.

Chloe Smith:
I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to PQ138465 and PQ136458 on 20 January. The House will be kept updated.

Population: Coronavirus

Daniel Zeichner: **[143785]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to mitigate against (a) under-counting of populations in cities with large university populations not residing in that area as a result of the covid-19 outbreak and (b) potential under-funding allocated on that per-capita basis.

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 PQ143785 [Response to PQ143785.pdf]

UK Trade with EU: Large Goods Vehicles

Rachel Reeves: **[143740]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how long it has taken on average for haulage lorries to cross the (a) GB-NI and (b) NI-GB route in each week since 1 January 2021.

Rachel Reeves: **[143741]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many haulage lorries have successfully made the (a) GB-NI and (b) GB-EU crossings each week since 1 January 2021.

Rachel Reeves: **[143742]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many empty haulage lorries have made the (a) GB-NI and (b) GB-EU crossings each week since 1 January 2021.

Rachel Reeves: [143743]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many haulage lorries have been delayed at UK borders as a result of inadequate paperwork each week since 1 January 2021.

Penny Mordaunt:
Goods are moving effectively between Great Britain and Northern Ireland and there are no significant queues at Northern Ireland ports.

Border Force has put in place additional resource in Northern Ireland to manage any operational requirements following the end of the Transition Period, including under the terms of the Northern Ireland Protocol. The UK Government is working closely with the Northern Ireland Executive on the implementation of the requirements of the Protocol.

Goods also continue to move effectively between Great Britain and the European Union. Compliance with new border requirements continues to improve. The numbers of HGV freight turned back at the Short Straits, either for lack of border readiness or inability to present a negative COVID test has been low and decreasing over time, with an average of less than 5% over the period from 20-26 January. The Government is working with industry to ensure traders understand the new border requirements.

DEFENCE

Armed Forces: Training

Stephen Morgan: [145126]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to protect members of the armed forces travelling abroad for training from covid-19.

James Heappey:
To enable the overseas deployment of Ministry of Defence personnel during the pandemic, Defence established a network of quarantine facilities to enable pre-deployment quarantine and testing to protect the health and operational effectiveness of the deployed force. While overseas, deployed forces seek to comply with UK and Host Nation guidance wherever practicable, including adhering to non-pharmaceutical interventions, increased hygiene regimes, symptomatic testing and isolation of cases and contacts.

Armed Forces: Young People

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [145796]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there any ongoing investigations regarding maltreatment of recruits at any of the army training centres that host under-18s.

James Heappey:
The recruitment of under 18 year olds by the Army meets all legal obligations. Both recruits and instructors are empowered to raise concerns where the maltreatment of an individual is suspected. There are a number of routes of investigations that can be undertaken, these usually interlink and can be captured multiple times when incidents involve more than one individual.

The table below provides the total number of ongoing investigations at Army Training Centres that host under 18's, but does not show the number of investigations involving under 18's rather the whole establishment irrespective of the age of those involved.

TYPE OF INVESTIGATION	NUMBER
RMP Investigation	20
Service Complaint	-
Discipline/Admin Action Service Requests	80

Notes/Caveats

1. This data has been provided from a single service source rather than official statistics produced by Defence Statistics as they do not collate this information.
2. There can be multiple service requests relating to one incident (i.e. one incident may involve two or more perpetrators).
3. Investigation data includes reports of maltreatment by both other recruits and instructors, and other disciplinary matters.
4. Figures show incidents at any Army Training Centre that host under-18s. They include incidents involving recruits over and under 18 years of age.
5. Royal Military Police (RMP) investigations can run alongside Disciplinary Service Requests. Thus incidents in row one may also appear in the figure in row three. The table includes RMP investigations for offences such as Battery, Fighting, Disgraceful Act, Conduct Prejudicial to Good Order, Harassment, actual bodily harm (ABH).
6. Discipline/Service requests will remain open/ongoing until the conclusion of any Court Martial, Summary hearing or Admin Action. This could be several months following the conclusion of an RMP investigation.
7. Discipline/Admin Action Service Requests shown in this table reflect all open/ongoing JPA Discipline Service Law and Warning and Sanction Service Requests, looking at allegations of violence, bullying or other maltreatment/mistreatment towards Junior Soldiers, recruits or trainees.

8. Service Complaints can be made by all Serving or former members of the UK armed forces if they feel they have been wronged on a matter that arises when they are subject to service law.
9. "-" denotes zero or rounded to zero.
10. Figures have been rounded to 10 for presentational purposes. numbers ending in "5" have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent systematic bias.

Armoured Fighting Vehicles

Andrew Selous: **[144960]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps the Army's armoured capability is taking to contribute to (a) enhanced Forward Presence and (b) NATO's other conventional deterrence tasks.

James Heappey:
The UK is firmly committed to the core NATO principles of collective deterrence and defence. Fifth Battalion The Rifles currently lead an Armoured Infantry Battlegroup in Estonia, as a Framework Nation for Enhanced Forward Presence. We currently provide Challenger 2, the Warrior Armoured Fighting Vehicle, and a suite of Armoured capabilities from the UK's Third Division to the multinational presence there. In addition, the UK contributes a Light Cavalry Squadron to the US led Enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup in Poland, currently provided by the Queen's Dragoon Guards and reservists from the Royal Yeomanry.

The UK also makes one of the largest commitments to NATO's high-readiness forces, including the NATO Response Force, the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, and we host the headquarters of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps. NATO's conventional deterrence extends to the enhanced air policing mission and standing maritime groups as well - to which the UK is also a major contributor.

Courts Martial

Stephen Morgan: **[145122]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many cases of (a) murder (b) manslaughter (c) rape and (d) sexual assault were tried through Courts Martial in each of the last five years; and how many convictions were made.

Johnny Mercer:
The requested information is provided in the following table:

	CHARGES HEARD					FOUND GUILTY				
Offence	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**
Murder*includes attempted murder	0	0	1*	1*	0	0	0	1	0	0

	CHARGES HEARD					FOUND GUILTY				
Manslaughter	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
s.1 Rape	31	23	49	10	15	3	2	2	3	3
s.2 Assault by penetration	9	11	4	6	9	5	4	1	0	2
s.3 Sexual Assault	40	30	53	45	57	21	19	16	11	17

Notes:

1. Section 1 (s.1) Sexual Offences Act 2003 (SOA 03) - Rape

2. s.2 SOA 03 - Assault by penetration

3. s.3 SOA 03 - Sexual Assault

4. The term ' *Sexual Assault* ' has been considered to include both s.2 and s.3 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003

5. These figures are for the number of charges heard at Court Martial

6. A defendant may have been charged with more than one count of each offence, or with multiple offences; the number of charges and verdicts may therefore be greater than the number of defendants in any year.

7. Some cases may have been discontinued, and in these cases, the number of guilty / not guilty verdicts may not add up to the number of charges heard.

Court Martial results from the military court centres over the period January 2010 to December 2019 can be found at the following website: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/court-martial-results-from-the-military-court-centres. Information from 2020 will be published in due course.

Joint Exercises: Coronavirus

Stephen Morgan: **[145125]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many positive covid-19 cases there have been among (a) British and (b) other allied forces taking part in training exercises in Norway.

James Heappey:
As at 21 January (latest data available), nine UK Armed Forces personnel had a positive COVID-19 infection test result entered into their medical record whilst on training exercise in Norway. The Ministry of Defence does not hold information on the number of allied forces who may have had a positive test whilst on training exercise in Norway.

Medical Records: Veterans

Stephen Morgan: [145114]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many veterans were provided with a summary of their medical records when they left the armed forces in each of the last five years.

Johnny Mercer:
Primary Care Support England (PCSE) provide support services to primary care contractors on behalf of NHS England and NHS Improvement. When someone leaves the Armed Forces, a summary of their Service medical records (the FMed133) is provided by the Defence Medical Services (DMS) to PCSE. When the individual then registers with an NHS GP in the UK, the FMed133 is automatically provided directly to their new GP practice in England, or to the relevant Home Nation.

While it is not possible to provide data for each of the last five years, PCSE estimate that in this period they received approximately 31,000 FMed133 forms from the DMS. PCSE has recently made changes to ensure these forms can be tracked and reported on in more detail in future.

Ministry of Defence: LIBOR

Stephen Morgan: [144826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information his Department holds on grants made from LIBOR funds awarded through schemes managed by his Department.

Johnny Mercer:
In 2012, Her Majesty's Treasury announced that the proceeds from LIBOR fines would be used to support Armed Forces and Emergency Services charities. From 2012 a total of £973 million of LIBOR grants were committed to a large number of organisations, including the Royal British Legion, SSAFA, CAIS Wales, Poppy Scotland and Help for Heroes. In June 2015, the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust ran the Ministry of Defence (MOD) schemes with senior defence advisors in HM Treasury to support the HMT LIBOR scheme. Through the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund, the MOD has access to accurate and up to date information on grants made from LIBOR funds.

Ministry of Defence: Marketing

Owen Thompson: [144755]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, 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.

Johnny Mercer:
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.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Broadband: Prices

Dan Carden: [145113]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that broadband remains affordable to people in receipt of (a) universal credit and (b) other low-income benefits.

Matt Warman:
The government has worked closely with industry throughout the pandemic and agreed a set of commitments with the UK's major broadband and mobile operators to support vulnerable consumers during the Covid-19 period. Providers committed to working with customers who are finding it difficult to pay their bill as a result of Covid-19 to ensure that they are treated fairly and appropriately supported. This is in addition to lifting all fixed broadband data caps and providing new and generous landline and mobile offers, such as free or low cost mobile data boosts.

There are already social tariffs available which offer low cost landline and broadband services for those on certain means-tested benefits. However, in line with Ofcom's recommendation in their Affordability Report published in December 2020, the government encourages those providers who do not currently offer social tariff packages to do so and we will monitor the situation closely.

Alex Davies-Jones: [145182]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that broadband remains affordable to those on (a) universal credit and (b) other low-income benefits.

Matt Warman:
The Government has worked closely with industry throughout the pandemic and agreed a set of commitments with the UK's major broadband and mobile operators to support vulnerable consumers during the Covid-19 period. Providers committed to working with customers who are finding it difficult to pay their bill as a result of Covid-19 to ensure that they are treated fairly and appropriately supported. Providers also committed to removing fixed broadband data caps, in addition to providing new and generous landline and mobile offers, such as free or low cost mobile data boosts.

There are already social tariffs available which offer low cost landline and broadband services for those on certain means-tested benefits. However, the Government is now encouraging all fixed broadband providers to introduce a social tariff and we will monitor the situation closely.

Electronic Programme Guides: Public Service Broadcasting

Jamie Stone: [145856]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will bring forward legislation to update the prominence regime for public service broadcasters.

Mr John Whittingdale:
We recognise the need to ensure that high quality public service content is made easily accessible to UK audiences. That is why the government asked Ofcom to undertake a review of this area through the Digital Economy Act 2017.

Ofcom published their Prominence recommendations to government in July 2019 and since then we have engaged with Ofcom and industry to fully understand the impact of Ofcom's proposals. This work is ongoing and the government remains committed to act on Ofcom's recommendations and to taking forward legislation as the legislative timetable allows.

Football: Coronavirus

Julie Elliott: **[145789]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what comparative assessment he has made of the level of covid-19-related funding that has been (a) made available to male and women's football clubs and (b) awarded to male and women's football clubs.

Nigel Huddleston:
Football is our national game and it is vital that clubs at all levels are protected.

The Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many football clubs have benefited from. The Treasury estimates that around £1.5 billion of public money has gone into sports.

As part of this, Sport England has provided £220m directly to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through this pandemic, via a range of funds including their £35m Community Emergency Fund. This support is available to both men's and women's clubs with the latest figures showing £10.5m has already been awarded to over 1,500 football clubs. This sector support was recently boosted by an extra £50m to help grassroots sports clubs and organisations as part of Sport England's new strategy Uniting the Movement.

Men's and women's spectator sports, severely impacted by the restrictions around fans over the winter, are also being supported through the £300m Sports Winter Survival Package. This aims to protect the immediate futures of major spectator sports in England over the winter period and includes a provisional allocation of £25m for clubs in the National League System (at steps 1-6) as well as £3m for women's football. Provisional allocations are subject to change based upon a detailed assessment of need, and final funding decisions are still in the process of being made by the Package's Independent Board, supported by Sport England.

National League: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [145866]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent support he has made available to National League football clubs in (a) Slough and (b) England to ensure they can continue playing for the rest of the season.

Nigel Huddleston:
We have introduced a number of measures since the start of the pandemic to support tourism businesses, including those in Suffolk. This includes the extended furlough and self-employed schemes and various government-backed loans, grant schemes, business rates relief and a reduced VAT rate.

To help the sector through the current lockdown, we have announced one-off top up grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses worth up to £9,000 per property. This is in addition to the monthly Local Restrictions Support Grants (Closed). Local Authorities in England have also been given an additional £594 million discretionary funding to support their local businesses. This builds on the £1.1 billion discretionary funding which local authorities in England have already received to support their local economies and help businesses impacted.

Both my Department and VisitEngland remain in regular contact with regional tourism stakeholders to assess the substantial economic effects around the country.

Youth Services: Coronavirus

Vicky Foxcroft: [144765]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much of the Government's £16.5 million youth covid-19 support fund has been allocated to youth services to date.

Vicky Foxcroft: [144766]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many youth services organisations have accessed the Government's £16.5 million youth covid-19 support fund to date.

Mr John Whittingdale:
Government recognises the important role that youth services play in communities, which is why we recently announced the £16.5 million Youth Covid-19 Support Fund (YCSF) that will protect the immediate future of grassroots and national youth organisations across the country.

£1.7m of the YCSF has already been allocated to vital youth work qualifications and training.

The competition for the remainder of the funding opened on Friday 15 January 2021 and will remain open until 19 February. It will help to mitigate the impact of lost income during the winter period due to the coronavirus pandemic, and ensure services providing vital support can remain viable.

To distribute funding as soon as possible, we will make initial awards on a rolling basis, prioritising those deemed to have the greatest need against the stated criteria. The first tranche of applications will be assessed in the coming fortnight.

EDUCATION

Apprentices: Vocational Guidance

Joy Morrissey: [143911]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to to encourage students to take up (a) nursing apprenticeships and (b) other vital vocational apprenticeships following the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:
Apprenticeships will be more important than ever in helping businesses to recruit the right people and develop the skills they need to recover and grow in light of COVID-19.

To help employers offer new apprenticeships, as part of the government's Plan for Jobs, they are now able to claim £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire under the age of 25, and £1,500 for new apprentices aged 25 and over. As set out by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, at Spending Review, we have extended the eligibility period for these incentives until 31 March 2021, continuing our support for employers during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Nursing apprenticeships offer a high-quality work-based route into the profession, in addition to the established higher education route. There is now a complete apprentice pathway from entry-level through to postgraduate-level from Nursing Associate at Level 5 to Registered Nurse at Level 6. Other standards available include District Nurse and Community Public Health Nurse. A full list of apprenticeship standards can be found here: https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/?.

In the first quarter of the 2020/21 academic year, there have been 560 starts on the ‘Registered Nurse – Degree’ apprenticeship standard and 1,660 starts on the ‘Nursing Associate’ apprenticeship standard.

In August 2020, the government announced a new financial package worth £172 million, to support employers to increase participation in nursing degree apprenticeships over the next four years. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) estimate this will enable 2,000 nurse degree apprentice starts in the 2020/21 academic year.

We are working closely with DHSC, employers and stakeholders to make sure the NHS is fully supported to recruit the apprentices it needs to deliver high-quality care.

To encourage students to consider nursing and other vital vocational apprenticeships, we are promoting apprenticeships in schools through our Apprenticeship Support & Knowledge programme. This free service provides schools and teachers with

resources and interventions to help better educate young people about apprenticeships.

Assessments: Coronavirus

Olivia Blake: [143945]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with teaching unions about using teacher assessed grades in place of exams this year.

Nick Gibb:
In light of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, the Government considers that exams cannot be held in a way that is fair. The Department has therefore announced that GCSE, AS and A level exams will not go ahead this summer as planned. The Department and Ofqual launched a two-week consultation on how to fairly award all pupils a grade that supports them to progress to the next stage of their lives.

The Department's ministers and officials regularly engage with the teacher and headteacher unions, including through holding reference groups and individual meetings, around the topic of alternative arrangements to exams in 2021. Meetings have been held with multiple teacher unions, including, but not limited to, NAHT, NEU, ASCL and NASUWT, during the consultation period. We will ensure that the views of the teacher and headteacher unions, along with the views gathered from teachers as part of the consultation and through reference groups, are considered when finalising plans for alternative arrangements to exams in 2021.

The Department will continue to engage with a range of relevant stakeholders following the consultation period, as will Ofqual.

Domestic Abuse

Jane Hunt: [143937]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that school staff receive training on (a) parental alienation and (b) male domestic violence; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of making that training mandatory.

Nick Gibb:
Whilst parental alienation is not an explicit element of training within educational safeguarding practice, all schools and colleges must have regard to statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). KCSIE sets out that all staff should receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training and that all staff should read Part one of KCSIE as part of their induction process. Part one provides all staff with information regarding abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation and domestic violence. KCSIE is clear all staff should be in a position to identify abuse and neglect and should act immediately if they have any concerns about a child. The detail of the safeguarding training that staff receive is rightly a matter for individual schools who will base this on an assessment of the needs of their staff and their pupils.

The Teachers' standards set the minimum requirements for teachers' practice and conduct and make clear that all teachers must have 'regard for the need to safeguard pupils' wellbeing'.

The department's National Professional Qualifications for school leaders includes training for leaders on safeguarding. These qualifications have recently been revised to ensure that safeguarding is a core aspect.

Extended Services: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq: [145826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether (a) wraparound and (b) holiday childcare services can remain open during the February half-term.

Vicky Ford:
For the duration of the national lockdown, announced on 4 January 2020, wraparound childcare, holiday clubs, and out-of-school settings can continue to offer face-to-face provision for:

- children of critical workers, where it is reasonably necessary to support their parents or carers to work, seek work, attend a medical appointment, or undertake education or training; and
- vulnerable children and young people

This continues to remain the case during the February half-term holidays and schools can continue to open up or hire out their premises for use by wraparound childcare providers offering provision for the children of critical workers and/or vulnerable children. Early years settings have remained open to all children for the duration of the current national lockdown.

GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments

Afzal Khan: [143901]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions his Department has had with exam boards on reducing exam fees following the cancellation of 2021 GCSE and A-Level exams.

Afzal Khan: [143902]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential benefits of exam fee rebates for schools following the cancellation of the 2020 GCSE and A-Level exams.

Afzal Khan: [143903]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to compensate (a) examiners, (b) markers and (c) moderators following the cancellation of 2021 (i) GCSE and (ii) A-Level exams.

Nick Gibb:
Exam boards are responsible for setting exam fees. The Department encourages exam boards to set their fees appropriately based on the costs involved with alternative arrangements in 2021 and we are working at pace with Ofqual to provide clarity to exam boards, and the wider sector, on how alternative arrangements to exams in 2021 will work.

Compensation for examiners, markers and moderators is a matter for individual exam boards. Examination boards are independent organisations and are responsible for working through the arrangements for financial support, including how these might apply to markers, examiners, and moderators in a range of different circumstances.

Regarding rebates following the cancellation of exams, it is for the individual awarding organisations to decide on rebate arrangements, reflecting their particular circumstances. Awarding organisations have provided information to schools and colleges on any rebates they can expect in relation to summer 2020 examinations and we would encourage schools to get in contact with awarding organisations if necessary.

Institute of Teaching

Wes Streeting: **[143849]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what service benefits the Institute of Teaching plans to provide which the Initial teacher training provider network does not.

Nick Gibb:
Learning from the best teacher development organisations in the world, the Institute of Teaching will become England's flagship provider, showcasing exemplary delivery of the new Early Career Framework (ECF) and our ambitious reforms to initial teacher training (ITT) and National Professional Qualifications (NPQs).

Unlike many existing ITT providers, the Institute will be explicitly tasked with exemplifying how to deliver ITT, the ECF and the suite of NPQs by building, sequencing and delivering a coherent teacher development pathway from trainee through to executive headship. It will use expert understanding of evidence to inform and implement effective delivery approaches, create a world-leading faculty of subject specialists and expert teacher educators, and develop models of school partnership and placement that maximise the impact of school-based training experiences.

The Institute will also play a key role in developing the evidence base on delivery of teacher development. As part of its role in supporting other organisations to understand best practice in teacher development delivery, the Institute will contribute to the development of the teacher development evidence base by conducting primary research. It will also build upon, synthesise and translate existing evidence, and expertly communicate the practical implications to the sector.

Outdoor Education: Coronavirus

Justin Madders: [143809]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with outdoor education centres on a roadmap to re-opening their industry.

Justin Madders: [143810]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the role of outdoor education centres in a child's development.

Nick Gibb:
Schools are advised against all educational visits at this time: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak. This advice will be reviewed before the end of February 2021 and the findings of this review will help scope the re-opening of the industry.

Officials continue to work across government, with industry bodies and sector representatives to address the issues arising from the COVID-19 outbreak and will help them plan for the safe reintroduction of educational visits, including residential educational visits, when it is safe to do so.

The Department will be convening a task force to look at the effects that COVID-19 has had on the mental well-being of children, young people, and staff in the education system. We will confirm the next steps as soon as possible.

Performing Arts: Qualifications

Vicky Foxcroft: [143842]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people who have successfully completed the BTEC Performing Arts course in each of the last 10 years.

Vicky Foxcroft: [143843]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people who have enrolled on a BTEC Performing Arts course in each of the last 10 years.

Vicky Foxcroft: [143844]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information his Department holds on the destinations of people who have successfully completed a BTEC Performing Arts course in each of the last 10 years.

Gillian Keegan:
The attached file contains further education learning aim enrolments and learning aim achievements, split by learners aged 16 to 18, and 19 and over, along with the total, on BTEC courses in the performing arts from the 2010/11 to 2019/20 academic year.

The department publishes destinations of adult (19+) further education learners in the further education outcome-based success measures publication which can be found

here: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/further-education-outcome-based-success-measures.

The latest data covers adult learners achieving their course in the 2017/18 academic year with destinations in 2018/19 academic year reported, whilst the earliest data represents learners achieving in 2013/14 academic year. Specifically, destination rates of adult learners on BTEC performing arts courses can be found here: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/25a2cc84-5b83-433c-9f01-f516093af57a.

Data on the destinations of learners reaching the end of 16-18 study based upon the learning aim taken is not held.

Attachments:

1. 143842_143843_143844_table [143842143843143844_table_showing_btecenrolments.xls]

Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Luke Pollard: **[143908]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to provide asymptomatic testing in early years settings, in line with the current roll-out in primary schools.

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

The Department is rolling out our asymptomatic testing programme to primary schools with deliveries of test kits which started from the week commencing 18 January 2021.

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

Community testing programmes are currently being rolled out across the country. They are led by local authorities and provide asymptomatic testing through testing sites based in the local community. This testing is primarily focused on those who have to leave home to work during lockdown, with local authorities able to focus on the right people in their areas and decide how the testing is best delivered.

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

The Department is having ongoing discussions about providing testing via the education testing programme as well as encouraging local authorities to consider

prioritising appropriate testing for staff in private, voluntary and independent settings and childminders via the Community Testing Programme, which is being rolled out to all local authorities.

Daisy Cooper: **[145884]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January to Question 134593, when he plans to provide updated modelling for early years settings, in the context of the increased (a) transmissibility and (b) death rates attributed to the new covid-19 variant.

Vicky Ford:
The wider significant restrictions in place as part of the national lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the community enable us to continue prioritising keeping nurseries and childminders open, supporting parents and delivering the crucial care and education needed for our youngest children.

We continue to prioritise keeping early years settings open in full because of the clear benefits to children's education and wellbeing and to support families. Caring for the youngest age group is not something that can be done remotely.

Early years settings remain low risk environments for children and staff. Current evidence suggests that pre-school children (0 to 5 years) are less susceptible to infection and are unlikely to be playing a driving role in transmission.

There is no evidence that the new variant of COVID-19 disproportionately affects young children. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health has recently made clear that the overwhelming majority of children still have no symptoms or very mild illness only.

Modelling carried out by the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling last spring in the context of relaxing school closures following the initial lockdown period suggested that resuming early years provision has a smaller relative impact than primary school, which in turn has a smaller relative impact than resuming secondary schooling. Further information can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/886994/s0257-sage-sub-group-modelling-behavioural-science-relaxing-school-closures-sage30.pdf.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the department has made decisions informed by data, analysis and advice from a number of different sources including the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), Public Health England, the Office for National Statistics, and the Joint Biosecurity Centre to ensure our policies are guided by the most up to date scientific evidence.

The scientific evidence papers from SAGE meetings are published in tranches and are available by following the link: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/scientific-evidence-supporting-the-government-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19.

Pupils: Hearing Impairment

Colleen Fletcher: [143783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has issued to (a) schools and (b) colleges on the use of clear face coverings to aid the learning of deaf students during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Madders: [143807]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with (a) schools, (b) colleges and (c) universities on the effect of face coverings on deaf pupils.

Justin Madders: [144712]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the benefits to pupils with hearing impairments of clear face coverings being used in educational settings during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kate Osamor: [144775]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason he has not updated his guidance for schools and colleges to state that staff and students should wear clear face coverings if needed to meet the needs of pupils and students.

Nick Gibb:
The Department's guidance on face coverings can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education.

As the guidance outlines, during national lockdown, in schools and colleges where Year 7 and above are taught, face coverings should be worn by adults (staff and visitors), pupils and students when moving around indoors, outside of classrooms and other teaching situations, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain.

Based on current evidence and the measures that schools and colleges are already putting in place, such as the system of controls and consistent bubbles, face coverings will not generally be necessary in the classroom.

Children in primary schools do not need to wear a face covering.

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. This includes people who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability, or if you are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate. The same legal exemptions that apply to the wearing of face coverings in shops and on public transport also apply in schools and colleges.

Face coverings can make it more difficult to communicate with pupils and students with additional needs or those who many rely on lip reading or facial expressions for understanding. We expect staff to be sensitive to these needs when teaching and interacting with pupils and students.

We continue to provide information to the sector on our guidance, and any changes to it, through regular departmental communications. We also continue to work with the sector to understand the impact of the system of controls on staff, pupils and parents.

Mr Virendra Sharma: **[145760]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to (a) distribute clear face masks to schools and colleges, and (b) help schools make reasonable adjustments for those children who suffer from hearing loss.

Dr Rupa Huq: **[145822]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will update guidance for schools and colleges to ensure that clear face coverings are worn where necessary to meet the needs of deaf students and staff.

Nick Gibb:
The Department's guidance on face coverings can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education.

As the guidance outlines, during national lockdown, in schools and colleges where Year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by adults (staff and visitors), pupils and students when moving around indoors, outside of classrooms and other teaching environments, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain.

Based on current evidence and the measures that schools and colleges are already putting in place, such as the system of controls and consistent bubbles, face coverings will not generally be necessary in the classroom.

Children in primary schools do not need to wear a face covering.

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. This includes people who cannot put on, wear, or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability, or if you are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate. The same legal exemptions that apply to the wearing of face coverings in shops and on public transport also apply in schools and colleges.

Face coverings can make it more difficult to communicate with pupils and students with additional needs or those who many rely on lip reading or facial expressions for understanding. We expect staff to be sensitive to these needs when teaching and interacting with pupils and students.

Schools can get advice and support for children with hearing impairments from specialist teachers of the deaf. These teachers support children and young people with hearing impairment, and their families, from the point of diagnosis. The Department for Education also funds the whole school special educational needs and disability consortium (£1.9 million per annum), hosted by National Association for

Special Educational Needs, to provide schools with access to resources and tips for the classroom, including for hearing impairment.

We continue to provide information to the sector on our guidance, and any changes to it, through regular departmental communications. We will also continue to work with Public Health England, as well as stakeholders across the sector, to monitor the latest scientific and medical advice and understand the impact of the system of controls on staff, pupils and parents.

Remote Education: ICT

Jane Hunt: **[143942]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the rollout of laptops and other devices to disadvantaged pupils to support remote learning during the covid-19 outbreak; and (b) what further steps he plans to take to ensure that every eligible child has access to their own device.

Nick Gibb:
The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. The Department has now extended the Get Help with Technology scheme to provide disadvantaged 16 to 19 year olds with technological support.

As of Monday 1 February 2021, over 920,000 laptops and tablets had been delivered to schools, academy trusts and local authorities. The Government is providing this significant injection of devices on top of an estimated 2.9 million laptops and tablets already owned by schools before the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The rollout of laptops and tablets through this scheme is being continually reviewed to ensure support is offered in the most effective way.

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

Dame Diana Johnson: **[145759]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many dongles have been provided to secondary school children who are learning from home and require internet access in (a) Kingston upon Hull, (b) Hull City, (c) Yorkshire and the Humber and (d) England.

Nick Gibb:
The Government has provided over 54,000 4G wireless routers across England, with free data for the academic year 2020-21, and continues to provide further 4G wireless routers where children need to access remote education. Data regarding the number of routers delivered will be published shortly.

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

We are grateful to EE, O2, Sky Mobile, Smarty, Tesco Mobile, Three, Virgin Mobile, Vodafone, BT Mobile and Lycamobile for supporting this offer. We are continuing to invite a range of mobile network providers to support the offer.

Schools: Coronavirus

Taiwo Owatemi: [143925]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the factors that would determine the safe reopening of schools after covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Nick Gibb:
On Wednesday 27 January 2021, the Government confirmed that education attendance restrictions should continue post-half term meaning that vulnerable children and the children of critical workers can still attend school or college in person, but all other pupils will continue to learn remotely from home.

This follows my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister's announcement on 4 January 2021 of national restrictions and that the position would be kept under review during January 2021.

Following an in-depth analysis of both the virus prevalence data and the data on NHS capacity, it has been concluded that school and college attendance must continue to be limited to help support the reduction in the overall number of social contacts in communities.

Education attendance restrictions are to be reviewed again in mid-February and will remain in place until 8 March 2021 at the earliest, and the Government has committed to publishing a plan for leaving lockdown by the end of February 2021.

Headteachers, teachers, and staff of schools, colleges and nurseries have been doing an extraordinary job under difficult circumstances. For those still attending school, the system of protective measures means that any risks are well managed and controlled.

Skills Toolkit

Anneliese Dodds: [145872]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many people have (a) started and (b) completed courses available in The Skills Toolkit online learning platform since it was launched on 28 April 2020.

Gillian Keegan:
As of 27 December 2020, there have been an estimated 138,000 course registrations and 25,000 course completions. These are experimental statistics and further information can be found in the official statistical release of 28 January 2021 in the following link: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships/2020-21.

Anneliese Dodds: **[145873]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness of The Skills Toolkit and (b) potential effect of that toolkit on improving the (i) employability, (ii) digital skills and (iii) maths skills of learners.

Gillian Keegan:
The digital, numeracy and work readiness skills we have chosen to focus on are the skills that everyone needs to thrive in the 21st Century and ones that evidence suggests are increasingly in demand across almost all sectors and occupations. In deciding which specific courses to offer we have spoken to a range of employers.[1]

We have prioritised high-quality short courses that are free for learners to access online. The digital and numeracy skills we have chosen to focus on are the skills that everyone needs to thrive in the 21st Century and ones that evidence suggests are increasingly in demand across almost all sectors and occupations.[1]

[1] The Employer Skills Survey 2016 found a third of employers identifying digital skills lacking among applications. Research commissioned by DCMS in June 2019 identified 75% of job openings at each level request digital skills. This is backed up by a report conducted for the Industrial Strategy Council last year, which identified at the current rate there will be 5 million people with an acute basic digital skills need by 2030.

Anneliese Dodds: **[145874]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much money from the public purse has been allocated to The Skills Toolkit online learning platform in each year since its inception.

Gillian Keegan:
The cost allocated to The Skills Toolkit since it was announced in April 2020 is £952,000. This is all within this financial year.

Skills Toolkit: Equality

Anneliese Dodds: **[145875]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department collects data on the protected characteristics of those who have completed courses via The Skills Toolkit online learning platform; and if he will place a copy of an aggregate, non-disclosive summary of this data in the House of Commons Library.

Gillian Keegan:
The department does not collect data on the protected characteristics of those who have completed courses via The Skills Toolkit online learning platform.

Students: Housing

Esther McVey: [141445]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to work with providers of student accommodation to reimburse fees where students have been prohibited from occupying rooms during covid-19 lockdowns.

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

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

Officials speak regularly with representatives of private and university owned accommodation, as well as sector bodies. The government worked closely with universities to ensure they were well prepared for the return of students in the autumn term, and we have published updated guidance to help them keep students and staff as safe as possible.

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

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

We recognise that in these exceptional circumstances some students may face financial hardship. The Department for Education has worked with the Office for Students to clarify that providers are able to draw on existing funds, worth around £256 million for academic year 2020/2021, towards hardship support. 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 is in addition to the £20 million of hardship funding made available in December 2020.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Animal Housing: Cats and Dogs

Alex Cunningham: [145015]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support the Government has made available to kennel and cattery businesses in the context of the re-classification of those services as essential and the implications of that matter for the eligibility of those workers regarding furlough.

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

Local authorities have been allocated £500 million in discretionary funding via the Additional Restrictions Grant to support businesses that are significantly impacted by the restrictions even though not required to close. This is in addition to £1.1 billion already allocated in November 2020. Local authorities have discretion to use this funding to support businesses in the way they see fit. For example, this could include businesses which supply the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors, or businesses in the events sector or businesses outside the business rates system, which are effectively forced to close. Businesses which cannot maintain their workforce because operations have been affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) can furlough employees and apply for a grant to cover a portion of their usual monthly wage costs, more information on eligibility can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme#who-can-claim.

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

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

Assistance Animals: Pet Travel Scheme

Sir Charles Walker: [145755]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to secure guide dogs and other assistance dogs part one listed status under the Pet Passport Scheme to facilitate travel with dogs between Great Britain and Northern Ireland and across the EU; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:
The health and documentary requirements for pet travel to the EU are set out under the EU Pet Travel Regulations. Under the Northern Ireland Protocol, EU rules also apply to the non-commercial movements of pets into Northern Ireland from Great Britain. There are no derogations for assistance dogs under the legal framework of the EU Pet Travel Regulations.

I have previously stated that we will continue to press the EU Commission in relation to securing Part 1 listed status, recognising that achieving this would alleviate some of the new requirements for pet owners and assistance dog users travelling to the EU and to Northern Ireland. We are clear that we meet all the animal health requirements for this and we have one of the most rigorous pet checking regimes in Europe to protect our biosecurity.

Regarding pet travel between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Government is working with the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) on a permanent solution which respects the rights of assistance dog users and pet owners to travel with the minimum of friction. Guidance on pet travel to Northern Ireland is available on the DAERA's NIDirect website.

We are proactively engaging with the assistance dog community and relevant stakeholders on the impacts on dog movements from Great Britain to the EU and to Northern Ireland. We will continue to work closely with assistance dog organisations to share the latest advice and guidance (in accessible formats) with their members on pet travel requirements.

Chemicals: Regulation

Dr Philippa Whitford: [145797]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to circumstances where EU REACH applies, whether UK-based companies purchasing or supplying chemicals to (a) the UK and (b) the EU will be required to access the information on each chemical they use from the original company or carry out duplicate testing if that information is not available.

Rebecca Pow:
Under European Union Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (EU REACH), data is owned by individual businesses and industry consortia. Great Britain (GB) companies who do not own the data they need to support their REACH registration will need to negotiate access to it from existing data

owners. Industry has some time to make these arrangements. This is because we have put in place provisions for the deadlines for the full submission of data to underpin registration dossiers to be staggered, according to the quantity and hazard profile of a substance, over a period of 2, 4 or 6 years from 28 October 2021.

The UK has been at the forefront of opposing animal tests where alternative approaches could be used. Under UK REACH, registrants will submit their testing proposals to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), who can reject them if they contain unnecessary tests on animals. We will encourage the HSE to accept duplicate submissions where possible, recognising the validity of any animal testing that has already been undertaken.

GB is now considered a third country for EU REACH purposes. GB-based EU REACH registrants wanting to maintain access to the EU market needed to transfer their existing registrations to an EU/EEA/NI entity organisation by 31 December 2020. Completing this process removed the need for either purchasing access to testing data or further animal testing.

For GB exporters to the EU that have not completed this process, registration obligations fall to the European Union/European Economic Area/Northern Ireland (EU/EEA/NI) based importer of a substance. It is possible for a GB manufacturer to appoint an Only Representative to fulfil this function and either submit a new registration if one does not exist, or pay existing EU based EU REACH registrants for a letter of access to their data and/or member status of their registration.

Export Health Certificates: Veterinary Medicine

Ben Lake: [143885]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of Official Veterinarians required to meet the demand for Export Health Certificates in the UK; and how many Official Veterinarians the Government employs.

Victoria Prentis:
1633 Official Veterinarians (OVs) are authorised to undertake export health certification of products of animal origin (POAO). A further 197 Government vets have completed training for POAO exports. We estimate there are sufficient OVs to certify exports, although localised shortages may still arise in certain circumstances.

Fisheries and Meat Products: Sales

John Redwood: [142752]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help UK fish and meat producers to sell more of their produce in the UK.

Victoria Prentis:
As a Government, we have a manifesto commitment that we want people at home and abroad to be lining up to buy British. We welcome efforts from all parts of the food chain to promote and source British products, and work closely with industry and

trade associations to engage with and support initiatives that highlight the qualities of British meat and seafood. We will always champion our farmers and producers, supporting them to grow more of our great British food, and to provide a reliable and sustainable food supply to the British public.

We want consumers to have a wide choice of products at prices which reflect the high quality of UK products and great work of our UK producers. Consumer behaviour continues to demonstrate the enduring demand for British produce. AHDB has recently launched a £1.5 million reputational campaign to encourage the role of meat as part of a healthy and balanced diet. AHDB undertakes regular marketing campaigns, including a social media campaign during July to promote lamb and working with Quality Meat Scotland and Meat Promotion Wales on a “Make it Steak” campaign during the spring lockdown.

We are working with the public sector to encourage them to buy seasonal and local produce, encourage variety in diets and support local businesses. This will include promoting the high standards of British produce. Now that we are an independent trading nation, we can align with World Trade Organisation rules which allow promotion of British products based on their own merits. Therefore, we are now working to build greater consumer awareness of the strengths of UK food and drink both internationally and at home. Officials are drilling down into the opportunities and work through the legal and operational constraints, and to make best use of our levers to ensure that more British food is consumed at home, in schools, hospitals and beyond.

Through the Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme, we provided funding for projects that helped to increase the supply of local seafood to domestic markets and help to increase consumption of locally caught seafood in the UK. Additionally, we have worked in partnership with Seafish on the ‘Sea for Yourself’ consumer facing campaign to inspire the UK to eat more locally caught fish and shellfish from UK waters. The launch of their ‘Love Seafood’ brand in October 2020 will help consumers across the UK reconnect with the enjoyment of seafood. ‘Love Seafood’ represents an ambitious long-term initiative to reframe the nation’s view of seafood and encourage consumers in the UK to eat more seafood over the next 20 years.

Alongside domestic consumption, we are also keen to promote the strong global reputation of our food and increase its market access. Defra’s Food is GREAT campaign is raising the international profile and reputation of food and drink from across the UK. It builds global demand, drives awareness and increases positive perceptions of UK food and drink products amongst international trade audiences and consumers. The campaign promotes excellent food and drink products from across the four nations of the UK.

The Government remains committed to developing a food strategy that will support the development of a food system that is sustainable, resilient and affordable, that will support people to live healthy lives, and that will protect animal health and welfare.

Floods: North Yorkshire

Rachael Maskell: [140864]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what additional support he has made available to communities in North Yorkshire and York to deal with the flooding resulting from Storm Christoph.

Rebecca Pow:
As of 18:00 hours on 21 January 2021, the Environment Agency (EA) had 44 Flood warnings and 33 Flood Alerts in force across Yorkshire. These included flood warnings for York and the surrounding area and at multiple other locations throughout North Yorkshire.

The Environment Agency's Yorkshire incident room is open and will continue to monitor rainfall and the corresponding impact on river levels. Flood Alerts and Flood Warnings will continue to be issued as appropriate and the Environment Agency is working closely with partner organisations, at a strategic and tactical level as well as on the ground, to coordinate the response.

The Environment Agency's existing flood defences in York and North Yorkshire have performed as expected although this is a continuing situation and is being closely monitored. Flooding would have been more extensive if these defences had not been in place. In York, the Environment Agency is operating the Foss Barrier to protect properties in the River Foss catchment and to support its flood defences on the River Ouse. Elsewhere in North Yorkshire, the Environment Agency is supporting a multi-agency response, including a major pumping operation, to reduce the risk of flooding in Malton and Norton.

.

Following the flooding in 2015, Government provided £45m to better protect York. A programme of projects is being delivered to improve existing protection, build new defences for undefended areas and install property level resilience. Some of this work is complete, and 3 major schemes will begin construction this year. In addition £37m has been invested in improving the resilience and upgrade of the Foss Barrier. The Environment Agency is modelling the river catchments upstream of York to identify options for future flood investment to further reduce flood risk in the city.

Food Poverty: Finance

Daniel Zeichner: [143788]

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

Victoria Prentis:
Building on the significant support given to the most vulnerable during the initial months of the pandemic, the Government has announced a winter support package of interventions to support the economically vulnerable. This package includes

increasing the value of Healthy Start Vouchers, the national rollout of the Holiday Activities and Food programme, and a £170m Covid Winter Support Grant to local authorities which started in December to support households with food and other essential costs.

The winter package also includes £16m of funding for Defra to support food charities with the purchasing and distribution of food to the vulnerable over a 12-week period starting from the beginning of December. This funding stream is being managed by the food redistributor FareShare.

After 8 weeks of the scheme, FareShare have purchased 4,391 pallets of food which is equivalent to approximately 6.8 million meals. The food has so far been distributed directly to 3,942 charities across England.

3,449 of these are within the FareShare network. These organisations have received 1,762 tonnes of food, which is equivalent to around 4.2 million meals.

493 organisations from outside of FareShare's network have also been supported. These organisations have received 435 tonnes of food, which is equivalent to around 904,000 meals.

Land: Contamination

Mr Virendra Sharma: **[145763]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Category 4 screening levels (C4SL) Phase 2 Project Steering Group last met; and what the names are of the members of that group.

Rebecca Pow:
The Category 4 Screening Levels Phase 2 Project Steering Group last met on Wednesday 27 January 2021.

The members of that group come from local authorities, Government departments and arm’s length bodies, not-for-profit membership organisations and trade organisations. This includes Defra, the Environment Agency and the Welsh Government.

A full list of the attendees for the last meeting has been made available to the hon. Member.

Neonicotinoids

Daniel Zeichner: **[143786]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Questions 137225 and 137226 on Neonicotinoids, whether advice the Government received from the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides on applications for emergency authorisations in (a) 2021, (b) 2018, (c) 2017, (d) 2016 and (e) 2015 has been published.

Victoria Prentis:
It has not been the practice of the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) to publish the exact text of its advice to Ministers, although its published minutes have always provided a clear view of the Committee's conclusions. However, in view of the interest in neonicotinoid pesticides, related advice to Ministers from the ECP was published on a total of seven occasions in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.

As noted in the answer of 18 January 2021 to Questions 137225 and 137226, the ECP's advice on the application for use in 2021 of the neonicotinoid product Cruiser SB is set out in full in the minutes of the ECP's 24 November 2020 meeting.

Daniel Zeichner: **[143787]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether there is a specific document in which the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) sets out its advice and recommendations to Government regarding the 2021 emergency authorisation of neonicotinoid use, in line with previous applications for emergency authorisations in 2018, 2017, 2016 and 2015 whereby a specific document containing the advice from the ECP to ministers has been made available and published on the ECP's website.

Victoria Prentis:
The advice of the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) on the application for use in 2021 of the neonicotinoid product Cruiser SB is set out in full in the minutes of the 24 November 2020 meeting https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/946083/ecp-201124-fullminutes.pdf, which are linked to on the ECP's website https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/expert-committee-on-pesticides. There is no separate document containing the ECP's advice on this application.

Peat Bogs: Environment Protection

Olivia Blake: **[145891]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's press release, England's national rainforests to be protected by new rules, published on 29 January 2021, what assessment he has made of the proportion of UK peatlands that will be covered by those protections.

Rebecca Pow:
The proposed regulation announced on 29 January 2021 will protect an estimated 62% of the blanket bog habitat in England representing all blanket bog that is the subject of statutory protection. There are extensive areas of peatland in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and, taken across the UK, the area of peatland protected is estimated at 5%.

Pets: Theft

Tulip Siddiq: [143851]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will assess the merits of making pet theft a specific criminal offence in response to the rising number of instances of that crime during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:
All reported crimes should be taken seriously, investigated and, where appropriate, taken through the courts and met with tough sentences. The theft of a pet is already a criminal offence under the Theft Act 1968 and the maximum penalty is seven years' imprisonment.

The Government takes the issue of pet theft very seriously and is concerned by suggestions that occurrences are on the rise. We consider that the current offence which relates to cases of pet theft is appropriate.

Sentencing is a matter for the Courts and should take into account the circumstances of each case. When deciding on an appropriate sentence, the Courts may consider aggravating and mitigating factors, in line with sentencing guidelines issued by the Sentencing Council. In February 2016 the Sentencing Council updated its guidelines in relation to sentencing for theft offences. The guidelines take account of the emotional distress, and therefore harm, that theft of a pet can have on the victim, and accordingly the guidelines recommend higher penalties for such offences.

If someone causes an animal to suffer in the course of stealing it, they are also liable to prosecution under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The existing maximum custodial penalty for causing animal cruelty is 6 months' imprisonment. Legislation is currently before Parliament - the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill - which when passed will increase the maximum penalty to 5 years' imprisonment. This will be the highest penalty for animal cruelty in Europe. The Government will support this Bill as it makes its way through Parliament.

As I said at the recent Westminster Hall debate on pet theft, we continue to keep the situation under review and are keen to explore ways to address pet theft that will be effective and have a meaningful impact. That includes working with interested parties, including the police and animal welfare organisations to try and get messages across to pet owners to help them keep their pets safe.

Plants: Republic of Ireland

Justin Madders: [143808]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on UK growers wishing to sell plants to the Republic of Ireland.

Victoria Prentis:
The UK and EU have similar plant health measures and moving forward we are committed to maintaining high biosecurity, food safety and plant health standards.

The EU and UK being geographically close, and close as trading partners, have a number of common pathogens that pose a risk. Building on the existing practice established to maintain the Single Epidemiological Unit on the island of Ireland, both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland will align with EU Sanitary and Phytosanitary rules. Sending regulated plants and plant products from GB to the Republic of Ireland will require a phytosanitary certificate to accompany the goods prior to them departing GB, with sufficient time to allow for inspections and any testing which may be required.

GB plant health authorities have undertaken significant recruitment to increase the number of plant health inspectors in order to service the demand for export checks and certification. We have sufficient resources to meet demand from 1 January 2021 and ensure minimal disruption to trade.

The UK has a long history of compliance and we have a similar health status and biosecurity aims. We will seek to reduce checks safely through the regular dialogue both sides have committed to in the agreement.

Defra has put in place a framework to agree to trade facilitations going forward, including potential reductions in the frequency of import checks, where justified. It's in both Parties interests to pursue this. Defra will also continue to engage with the European Commission to ensure we develop helpful practical arrangements for businesses trading with both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Pollution Control: Standards

Mr Virendra Sharma: **[145761]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which (a) environmental consultants and (b) advisors his Department has consulted in the last year on pollution standards and controls.

Victoria Prentis:
Defra has consulted with the following environmental consultants in the last year on pollution standards and controls:

Ricardo

Enviro Technologies

Air Monitors

Rural Areas

Ben Lake: **[145858]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of rural proofing for Government policies.

Rebecca Pow:
The Government will soon publish its first annual report on rural proofing in England, setting out what departments are doing to address the challenges and opportunities facing rural communities and businesses.

Shops: Rural Areas

Ben Lake: [145859]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the role of rural shops during the covid-19 outbreak; what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on support for those shops during the outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:
Rural shops are an important element of the social and community infrastructure of rural areas and many have played a valuable role in supporting their communities during the outbreak, remaining open to sell essential items. Those required to close by Covid-19 regulations have been able to access Government support schemes.

Soil and Groundwater Technology Association

Mr Virendra Sharma: [145762]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the independence of the Soil and Groundwater Technical Association.

Rebecca Pow:
No assessment has been made of the independence of the Soil and Groundwater Technical Association.

UK Trade with EU: Meat

Ben Lake: [143883]

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

Victoria Prentis:
We speak regularly to EU Member states and the European Commission to ensure we share a common understanding of the rules that apply to exports to the EU, of animals and products of animal origin.

The Chief Veterinary Officer met French counterparts for technical discussions on 20 January.

Zoo Animals Fund

Justin Madders: [143801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 22 January 2021 to Question 137152, how much of that £100 million Zoo Animals Fund has been allocated.

Victoria Prentis:
Under the zoo support schemes we have so far awarded over £6 million and we are currently processing applications of a further £6 million. This money has provided for animal care costs and essential maintenance costs for those zoos experiencing severe financial difficulties due to Covid-19. Only one application to the Zoo Animals Fund has been rejected on the basis that the business in question was ineligible as it did not have the necessary licence or exemption. We have extended the application deadline for the Zoo Animals Fund from 29 January 2021 to 26 February 2021 to allow more zoos to access funding.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

China: India

Paul Girvan: [143888]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to tackle Chinese Government aggression towards India.

Nigel Adams:
We recognise that as neighbours India and China have an important relationship with one another. We welcome discussions between India and China to manage tensions along their disputed border, including the ninth round of Corps Commander-Level talks on 24 January. We continue to support a peaceful resolution between India and China of the border question.

China: Taiwan

Paul Girvan: [143886]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the Government of Taiwan in the face of military threats from China.

Nigel Adams:
We are concerned by any action which raises tensions in the region and risks destabilising the status quo. Her Majesty's Government considers the Taiwan issue one to be settled peacefully by the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait through constructive dialogue.

Paul Girvan: [143887]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the Government of China's military threats against Taiwan.

Nigel Adams:
We are concerned by any action which raises tensions in the region and risks destabilising the status quo. Her Majesty's Government considers the Taiwan issue one to be settled peacefully by the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait through constructive dialogue.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Preet Kaur Gill: [144799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 142041 on Coronavirus: Vaccination and with reference to the lack of data in Our World In Data as referenced in that Answer, whether his Department has made any estimates of the number of people that have received vaccine doses in countries where there is no data currently available.

Wendy Morton:
The data on global COVID-19 vaccine delivery is rapidly evolving as new vaccines are approved and distributed. This data varies based on national reporting practices. For areas where no data is currently available, we assess that COVID-19 vaccinations have not begun, or are unable to be verified based on public official sources.

The UK is committed to rapid, equitable, and global vaccine access. The COVAX Facility will aim to begin delivery by the end of February 2021, and we are working with international partners to support its rollout.

Developing Countries: Nutrition

Preet Kaur Gill: [145834]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2020 Question 139097 on Developing Countries: Nutrition, on what dates roundtables with Civil Society Organisations (a) are planned and (b) were held; which organisations were (i) in attendance and (ii) invited to those roundtables; and what the agenda for discussion was for each roundtable.

Wendy Morton:
[Holding answer 3 February 2021]: FCDO officials regularly hold roundtables with Civil Society Organisation networks that have an interest in nutrition. In the last 12 months, officials met with members of the International Coalition for Advocacy on Nutrition eleven times and with members of the Action for Global Health network five times. Both networks also met with FCDO Ministers once over that period. Our next meeting with ICAN is planned for 24 February. Invitations to meetings are extended to all members of the respective networks with members themselves agreeing which

representatives will meet with the FCDO. The Action for Global Health network ensures at least one attendee represents the nutrition agenda.

The timing and agendas for these meetings are agreed in discussion between FCDO officials and the respective networks. Topics have included the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit; the World Bank Spring meetings; the Independent Commission for Aid Impact review of the UK's work on nutrition; COVID-19 and the impact on nutrition; UK plans to support ending preventable deaths of mothers newborns and children; and the role of the UK's Special Envoy on Famine.

Female Genital Mutilation

Yasmin Qureshi: [144986]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what targeted support he is providing to potential victims of female genital mutilation.

Wendy Morton:
The UK Government has led international efforts to end female genital mutilation (FGM), including through a partnership with the Africa-led movement to end FGM. Since 2013, UK aid has helped over 10,000 communities, representing over 27 million people, pledge to abandon the practice; and over 4 million girls and women have received health, social and legal services related to FGM.

At the grassroots level, UK aid has supported activists, communities and experts across Africa, in their efforts to end FGM within their local context. We have also funded the United Nations to get laws and policies in place banning FGM in high prevalence countries. Through WHO, we have supported doctors, midwives and nurses to help care for survivors.

Human Rights: Prisoners

Taiwo Owatemi: [143927]

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 covid-19, throughout the world.

Nigel Adams:
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.

Samantha Power

Preet Kaur Gill: [145835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has met with the USAID Administrator nominee Samantha Power.

Wendy Morton:
The Foreign Secretary intends to speak with the new USAID Administrator once their appointment has been confirmed by the US Senate.

South Africa: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill: [145833]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the COVAX commitment, what estimate he has made of the cost to South Africa of purchasing the AstraZenica covid-19 vaccine.

Wendy Morton:
The UK is committed to rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, and is supporting this by committing £548 million to the COVAX Advanced Market Commitment. Our commitment will contribute to the supply of at least 1.3 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021 for up to 92 developing countries.

COVAX has an advance purchase agreement with AstraZeneca for 170 million doses of the AstraZeneca/Oxford candidate at non-profit pricing. This is in addition to an existing agreement with the Serum Institute of India (SII) for 200 million doses, with options for up to 900 million more doses more, of either the AstraZeneca/Oxford or Novavax vaccines. The agreement with SII will see any combination of these vaccines being made available at a price no greater than US$3/dose. South Africa has a bilateral deal with SII outside of COVAX. The terms and conditions of bilateral deals are a matter for individual countries and their suppliers.

Uganda: Human Rights

Carol Monaghan: [145810]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the UK Government is taking to promote adherence to international human rights law and electoral transparency in Uganda with regard to the Presidential elections in that country in 2021.

Carol Monaghan: [145811]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Ugandan counterparts on reports of human rights violations during the recent Presidential elections in that country.

Carol Monaghan: [145812]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the UK Government is taking to help ensure the safety of Ugandan opposition leader Robert Kyagulanyi after being placed under house arrest by Ugandan forces.

James Duddridge:
[Holding answer 3 February 2021]: GROUPED WITH PQS 145811 & 145812.

I [Minister Duddridge] spoke to the Ugandan Foreign Minister, Sam Kutesa, on 26 November 2020 to express concern about the arrest of Robert Kyagulanyi and the violence that followed. I [Minister Duddridge] sought reassurances that Ugandan security forces would show restraint and raised the importance of the rights of Ugandans to freely express their views. Ahead of the elections of 14 January, I [Minister Duddridge] raised the importance of British officials observing the vote in further calls with Foreign Minister Kutesa and with the Ugandan High Commissioner. The UK deployed 51 Election Observers across 120 polling stations in Uganda on election day.

I [Minister Duddridge] also publicly expressed my disappointment about the internet shutdown on 14 January and my concerns at reduced transparency of the elections. I have since set out our concerns, in a statement of 17 January, about the overall political climate surrounding the elections and have urged the Government of Uganda to meet its international human rights commitments. I [Minister Duddridge] welcome the High Court of Uganda's decision of 25 January 2021 lifting restrictions on Robert Kyagulanyi, and that the British High Commissioner was able to meet with him on 27 January 2021. As a long-standing partner to Uganda, the UK will continue to follow post-election developments closely, and engage with the Ugandan Government and Ugandans to advocate for democracy.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Accident and Emergency Departments

Jonathan Ashworth: [141463]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of patients attending A&E booked an appointment through the booking system since that system was launched.

Edward Argar:
The NHS 111 first service model, which enabled the booking of appointments into emergency departments, was tested during the summer. The service was subsequently made available across the whole of England from 1 December 2020.

The number of bookable appointments is therefore expected to increase over time. Data on accident and emergency (A&E) attendances and booked appointments is published on a monthly basis. A comparison of the proportion of booked appointments with total monthly A&E attendances reported since launch will be available when a full month's data is reported by the National Health Service for January. This data will be published on 11 February.

Addictions: Coronavirus

Sir Charles Walker: [145753]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department collects on the effect of covid-19 restrictions on (a) addiction and (b) substance abuse rates.

Jo Churchill:
Recent statistical publications by NHS Digital, the Office of National Statistics and Public Health England covering alcohol and substance misuse do not include the pandemic period, so it is difficult to draw conclusions on the full impact of COVID-19 on addiction and substance misuse rates. Data covering this period will be available in late 2021 and we shall monitor all data as it emerges.

Babies: Pain

Patrick Grady: [143812]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a response to Early Day Motion 1340 on Fetal Pain.

Helen Whately:
[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: The Department does not set clinical practice. To support clinical practice, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has considered the issue of fetal pain and awareness in its guidelines on 'The Care of Women Requesting Induced Abortion' and 'Fetal Awareness: Review of Research and Recommendations for Practice', which are available at the following links:

https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/abortion-guideline_web_1.pdf

https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/rcogfetalawarenesswpr0610.pdf

Breast Cancer: Health Services

Liz Twist: [143866]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to recommendation 65 of the document, Achieving World-Class Cancer Outcomes: A Strategy for Cancer 2015-2020, what progress his Department has made on providing information on potential markers of recurrence and metastatic breast cancer.

Jo Churchill:
The NHS Long Term Plan, which was published in January 2019 and followed on from the Cancer Taskforce Strategy, sets a clear ambition that where appropriate every person diagnosed with cancer should have access to personalised care by 2021. The key signs and symptoms of cancer recurrence are included in an end of treatment summary.

Cannabis: Medical Treatments

Dr Matthew Offord: **[144997]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of patients who have received prescriptions for the use of medicinal cannabis to treat their medical conditions.

Jo Churchill:
For licensed medicinal cannabis products prescribed on the National Health Service and dispensed within a community setting in England, the NHS Business Services Authority can confirm that 413 unique patients have been identified. However, for a significant number of such prescription items the patient could not be uniquely identified This was as a result of these items being prescribed on a hospital form and the low capture rate of patient level information from hospital forms dispensed in the community.

For unlicensed cannabis-based products dispensed in the community in England, the NHS Business Services Authority is unable to provide the number of NHS patients. This information is being withheld in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, due to there being less than five patients and the very high risk of the potential of patients being identified.

No estimate has been made of the overall number of patients that have received licensed or unlicensed cannabis-based medicines. Private prescriptions submitted to the NHS Business Services Authority do not hold information where it can categorically be determined if the patient is unique.

Care Homes: Coronavirus

Jonathan Ashworth: **[141461]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many care homes have registered to become a designated setting to provide care for covid-positive patients discharged from hospital.

Helen Whately:
[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: As of 25 January 2021, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) has inspected and assured 147 care homes as designated settings.

The CQC regularly updates the latest information on designated settings, which is available at the following link:

https://www.cqc.org.uk/news/stories/designated-settings-people-covid-19-leaving-hospital

Philip Davies: **[142854]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2021 to Question 135883 on Care Homes: Coronavirus, in what format his Department holds that information.

Helen Whately:
Information on the number of deaths in care homes involving COVID-19 notified to the Care Quality Commission in England is published by the Office of National Statistics is available at the following link:

https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/numberofdeathsincarehomesnotifiedtothecarequalitycommissionengland

Ellie Reeves: **[143874]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the capacity for regular covid-19 testing for care home employees.

Helen Whately:
Due to the increasing prevalence of the virus, the existing regime of weekly polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing was extended on 23 December 2020 to include two additional weekly lateral flow device (LFD) tests for care home staff. Additionally, the rapid response testing where all staff are tested daily for seven days using LFD test kits in response to a positive test result in tier 4 care homes which was announced on 23 December 2020 was extended to all care homes in England following the national lockdown announcement on 4 January 2021.

Ellie Reeves: **[143875]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the (a) efficiency and (b) availability of PCR covid-19 testing for care home employees and residents.

Helen Whately:
Regular testing is available for all staff, including agency staff, and residents in care homes.

Regular re-testing for all adult care homes has been available since 31 August 2020 through the care home registration portal. The regular re-testing regime in care homes requires staff to be tested once weekly using a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, with two additional weekly lateral flow device (LFD) tests and residents are tested every 28 days using a PCR test.

Mr Barry Sheerman: **[144930]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to increase the resources available to care homes to mitigate the pressures caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:
We have now made £4.6 billion available to local authorities to address pressures on local services caused by the pandemic, including in adult social care. The Infection Control Fund, set up in May 2020, has been extended until March 2021. An extra £546 million has been provided to the care sector to take key steps to improve infection prevention and control. This includes restricting staff movement in care homes and paying the wages of staff who are isolating. We have provided over £1.1 billion of ring-fenced funding for infection control throughout the pandemic.

We have made an extra £149 million available through the Rapid Testing Fund to support the care sector to implement additional lateral flow device testing. On 16 January 2021, the Government announced an additional £120 million to help local authorities to boost staffing levels in the care sector.

Care Homes: Finance

Ellie Reeves: [143877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the funding support available to the care home sector for the long-term financial viability of that sector.

Helen Whately:
As part of the 2020 Spending Review, the Government will provide councils with access to an additional £1 billion for social care next year. In addition, we expect to provide councils with estimated funding of around £3 billion to help manage the impact of COVID-19 across their services, including in adult social care and to compensate for income losses. This funding will support local authorities to maintain care services while keeping up with rising demand and recovering from the impact of COVID-19. Funding decisions on social care beyond 2021/22 will be decided at the next Spending Review. In the longer term, the Government is committed to sustainable improvement of the adult social care system and will bring forward proposals this year.

Carers: Coronavirus

Taiwo Owatemi: [143922]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that care workers in private companies have access to regular covid-19 testing during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:
Regular testing is available for all staff working in registered care homes, including agency staff. Regular testing is also available for domiciliary care staff, and those working in higher risk extra care and supported living settings. Testing on the door is also available for visiting professionals to care homes.

We have now sent out over 20 million test kits to care homes. On 25 January 2021 we announced the approval for care home staff to conduct lateral flow tests at home

before they arrive at the care home to start work and therefore further increasing the capacity for regular COVID-19 testing. We will continue to review our social care testing strategy for adult social care in light of the latest evidence and available capacity.

Contact Tracing: Computer Software

Preet Kaur Gill: [96148]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason results from (a) NHS hospitals and (b) Public Health England laboratories cannot be entered onto the NHS covid-19 app.

Helen Whately:
If a person books a test via the National Health Service COVID-19 app then the result will be automatically recorded in the app. If a person reports symptoms via the app but then chooses to book a test via the official testing website without going via the app, they can log both a positive and a negative test result on the app with the code that will be provided by email or SMS.

If a person has a test in a NHS hospital or as part of surveillance study, it should also be possible to log a positive test result on the app but it will not currently be possible to log a negative result.

Contraceptives

Mrs Pauline Latham: [112027]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report entitled Women's Lives, Women's Rights: Strengthening Access to Contraception Beyond the Covid-19 Pandemic, published by the All-party Parliamentary Group on Sexual and Reproductive Health on 10 September 2020, whether he has plans in place to maintain the level of funding for contraceptive outreach services for marginalised and under-served communities.

Mrs Pauline Latham: [112028]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction in public health grant on access to contraception for (a) women living with an abusive partner, (b) BAME women, (c) women in lower socio-economic groups, (d) women under 18 and (e) other marginalised groups.

Mrs Pauline Latham: [112029]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction in public health grant on women's access to effective and appropriate contraception.

Jo Churchill:
The Government has mandated local authorities in England to commission comprehensive open access sexual health services, including the provision of free contraception. Contraception is also widely available free of charge through general

practice. The Government provides funding to local authorities for their public health responsibilities, including sexual health services, through the public health grant. It is for individual local authorities to decide their spending priorities based on an assessment of local need, including the need for sexual health services taking account of their statutory duties.

The Department secured a Spending Round settlement in 2019 for local government, with the public health grant receiving a welcome increase in real terms in 2020/21. Decisions on future funding will be a matter for the Spending Review.

No specific assessment has been made of the impact of the public health grant on access to contraception.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Sexual and Reproductive Health's report, 'Women's Lives, Women's Rights: Strengthening Access to Contraception Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic', has raised a number of important issues. The recommendations in the report will be considered as part of our upcoming work to develop the sexual and reproductive health strategy.

Coronavirus

Shabana Mahmood: **[142877]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what demographic information is being collated by the Government on (a) new covid-19 infections, (b) deaths where covid-19 is a determinable factor as defined by the Government, (c) people who have received the first dose of the covid-19 vaccine and (d) people who have received both doses of the covid-19 vaccine.

Jo Churchill:
Public Health England (PHE) collects data on new positive COVID-19 cases including age, sex, place of residence and ethnicity. PHE publishes the number of deaths among persons with a laboratory-confirmed positive COVID-19 test who died within 28 days of the first positive specimen date by age and ethnicity in the weekly National Flu and COVID-19 Surveillance report.

The Office for National Statistics publishes deaths involving COVID-19, based on death registrations, by individual occupations for those aged 20-64 years old and also those aged 65 years old and over.

Demographic data including age, sex, ethnicity, general practice (GP) data and employee data for national health service staff, feeds into the national immunisation management service (NIMS) to identify COVID-19 vaccine eligible groups. This data is used to invite eligible people for vaccination and individual vaccination data feeds back into the NIMS. Data from the NIMS also feeds into GP systems to update the individual's electronic health record with their vaccination history.

NHS England collects data and publish weekly data including the count of vaccinations by age band, defined as over 80 years old and under 80 years old, by ethnicity, by National Health Service region and by dose.

Coronavirus: Brighton and Hove

Peter Kyle: [84714]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the residents of Brighton and Hove will have access to a local covid-19 testing site following the closure of the AMEX stadium regional test centre on 25 August 2020.

Helen Whately:
[Holding answer 8 September 2020]: As of 22 January we have opened three local test sites in Brighton at the East Brighton Park Tennis Courts; the disused school site at the junction of Mile Oak Road; and Preston Park on Preston Road

These are part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities including 86 drive-through sites, 458 walk-through sites, 19 satellite test sites, 258 mobile testing units, home testing and satellite kits and six lighthouse laboratories.

Coronavirus: Disease Control

Emma Hardy: [122868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to ensure Directors of Public Health in England follow the same procedures when operating local Coronavirus Incident Management Teams.

Ms Nadine Dorries:
The COVID-19 Contain framework sets out how NHS Test and Trace and the Joint Biosecurity Centre will work with local authorities, Public Health England and the public to contain and manage local COVID-19 outbreaks. This framework will support local decision-makers by clarifying their responsibilities and empowering them to take preventative action and make strong decisions locally, supported by mechanisms that safeguard key national assets and interests.

Well-established local and national arrangements for public health and emergency planning are being used. The decision-making model follows the tried and tested approach to civil emergencies, based on the concept of subsidiarity, which is where decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level, with co-ordination at the highest necessary level.

Alex Sobel: [145133]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason those under the age of 5 do not count in the meet up rules when compared with higher age limits in other home nations.

Ms Nadine Dorries:
[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: We have put in place exemptions to social contact restrictions to facilitate support for those who need it most and to mitigate the greatest risks of isolation. A parent or guardian of a child under five years old is less likely to be able to leave their child in alternative care arrangements whilst they take up outdoor exercise with another person. Exempting children under five years old from the gathering limit thereby ensures that parents and guardians of very young

children are not disproportionately impacted by the restrictions. Further extending any exemptions at this stage would pose a risk to transmission rates. We will continue to keep the restrictions under review.

We continue to work with the devolved administrations to seek a coordinated approach.

Jim Shannon: **[145790]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to protect clinically (a) vulnerable and (b) extremely vulnerable groups over the coming months.

Jo Churchill:
Those considered clinically vulnerable should follow the rules and guidance that are in place for everyone during the current national lockdown. It is particularly important that they follow social distancing advice to reduce their chances of catching the virus. The guidance to clinically extremely vulnerable and clinically vulnerable people is regularly reviewed and the Government will not hesitate to make changes if necessary.

Coronavirus: Health Services

Jonathan Ashworth: **[141460]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS staff have been redeployed to provide care in covid-19 wards since December 2020.

Helen Whately:
[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: The Department does not hold the information requested.

Data on the number of staff redeployed onto COVID-19 wards since December 2020 is not held centrally. The decision to redeploy staff is managed locally at trust or integrated care system level. The levels of redeployment will differ across each individual trust.

Coronavirus: Hospitals

Imran Ahmad Khan: **[138533]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS staff (a) are working primarily in the NHS Nightingale Hospital in Yorkshire and (b) have worked at that site since its inception.

Edward Argar:
Nightingale hospital Yorkshire and the Humber has not been required to open for COVID-19 patients, therefore no National Health Service staff currently working at the site to care for patients with COVID-19. A number of NHS staff worked on-site during the establishment of the hospital and these numbers varied on a day-to-day basis.

However, there is currently a CT scanning service delivered from the site which supports the delivery of medical imaging services for local hospital trusts. This is staffed each day as necessary to run this service.

Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Paul Blomfield: [145787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to launch a public information campaign on the correct use of face masks and face coverings.

Jo Churchill:
The Government continues to run a public health campaign across different media on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This campaign includes alerting the public to where face coverings are required and how to wear one correctly.

Most Government communications efforts surrounding face coverings are now part of the 'Hands, Face, Space' campaign, for which video resources demonstrating correct face covering usage have been produced. These resources have been used on multiple social media channels alongside in person prompts such as in transport hubs and shop windows.

Coronavirus: Quarantine

Rachel Reeves: [145001]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any service level credits have been applied to contracts to run the Isolation Assurance Service.

Rachel Reeves: [145003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much money has been refunded from contracts to run the Isolation Assurance Service as a result of failures to meet Public Health England's target of monitoring one in five arrivals with three daily phone calls.

Ms Nadine Dorries:
[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: There have been no service level credits awarded by Public Health England to the contractor working on the Isolation Assurance Service (IAS) and no refunds have been sought. The IAS contractor has met all obligations under the contract to present.

Coronavirus: Schools

Wes Streeting: [129067]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many schools have been provided with mass testing (a) in total and (b) by constituency; and how many tests have been carried out in schools each day since that service began.

Helen Whately:
[Holding answer 17 December 2020]: The Government does not publish data in the format requested.

Coronavirus: Scotland

John Lamont: [115763]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with the Scottish Government to develop plans for a coordinated rollout of covid-19 vaccines.

Jo Churchill:
The Vaccine Taskforce is procuring vaccines for the whole of the United Kingdom, including Scotland. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care meets weekly with counterparts in the devolved administrations for discussions of key COVID-19 issues across all four nations. Throughout, as health is a devolved matter, the UK Government is working closely with the devolved administrations to ensure successful delivery across the whole of the UK.

Coronavirus: Screening

Jon Trickett: [124116]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with local authorities to help ensure a take-up of mass covid-19 testing in low income Tier 3 areas throughout England.

Helen Whately:
We are working intensively with local authorities to ensure their community testing programmes are appropriately targeted during lockdown to continue to identify more positive cases and break chains of transmission.

The community testing offer is being expanded across all 317 local authorities in England to test people without symptoms. Local authorities are encouraged to target testing at people who are unable to work from home during the national lockdown. We are providing an additional £7 billion for NHS Test and Trace to support increased testing, including community testing and ongoing improvements to contact tracing.

Julian Sturdy: [127541]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons the 119 covid-19 NHS test and trace service is only able to contact testing labs to enquire about progress on returning covid-19 test results five days after those tests have been taken.

Helen Whately:
NHS Test and Trace allow sufficient time to identify samples which exceed the median turnaround time and aim to automatically resolve before a complaint is received. Any referrals are passed on to a dedicated team which specialises in tracking down missing results.

Esther McVey: [128156]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of false positive covid-19 test results on (a) the overall number of covid-19 cases in the UK and (b) subsequent covid-19 policy decisions.

Helen Whately:
The current tests are very specific and the risk of false positives is extremely low. Independent confirmatory testing of positive samples indicates a test specificity that exceeds 99.3%, or a false positive rate of 1% and additional guidance has been provided to laboratories to reduce the rate even further.

Coronavirus: Social Distancing

Justin Madders: [145800]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, to confirm what discussions he has had with the Chief Medical Officer on reintroducing the established relationship exemption from social distancing rules during the covid-19 lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:
Ministers and officials in the Department have regular discussions regarding the COVID-19 restrictions.

There has never been a specific exemption from regulations for people in an established relationship. A previous version of the social distancing guidance advised that people in an established relationship who are not in the same household or support bubble did not need to maintain social distancing. However, the guidance has been amended to outline that these couples should maintain social distancing. The Government keeps all restrictions and guidance under continual review.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Mr Steve Baker: [109318]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that the UK logistics industry is prepared for the mass distribution of a covid-19 vaccine; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:
Work has taken place to ensure we have the logistical expertise, transport and workforce to roll out a vaccine according to clinical priority, at the speed at which it can be manufactured. As part of the extensive planning, the National Health Service has worked with all stakeholders, including the United Kingdom logistics industry, in order to prepare for vaccine deployment. This includes working with partners to ensure effective logistics are in place to make sure consumables, such a syringes and other supplies, are in the right place, at the right time.

Mr Steve Baker: [109319]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to work with international partners to ensure that the international logistics industry

and global supply chain networks are prepared for the global mass distribution of a covid-19 vaccine; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:
The Government's commitment to international collaboration is clear. We are proud to work through multilaterals such as the G7 and G20, and with the World Health Organization and international partners, including industry, to agree collaborative approaches to supporting vaccine development, manufacturing scale-up and future distribution to meet both domestic and international needs, including for the world's poorest countries.

The Government continues monitors plans for the requirements across the supply chain for COVID-19 vaccines and associated material. For each vaccine that is deployed, there are clearly defined supply chain plans for manufacturing, transport, storage and distribution.

Stephen Morgan: **[115010]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the closure of Pfizer's Havant cold storage facility in November 2020 on the delivery of the first wave of vaccinations for covid-19.

Jo Churchill:
The closure of Pfizer's Havant cold store facility had no effect on the delivery or storage of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine to the United Kingdom. The vaccine is supplied to Public Health England (PHE) directly from Pfizer's manufacturing facility in Belgium. PHE manages the storage and distribution of this vaccine and has developed significant capability to store around five million doses of this vaccine at ultra-low temperature onward distribution to the National Health Service.

Alex Norris: **[120123]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's updated interim advice on priority groups for COVID-19 vaccination, published on 25 September 2020, for what reason all people, regardless of age, considered clinically extremely vulnerable are not categorised as a stand-alone group; what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of people who share a home with people who are clinically extremely vulnerable being considered a higher priority group than the general population; and what plans the Government has to decide which health and social care staff should take priority.

Mr Steve Baker: **[121242]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to prioritise clinically extremely vulnerable under the age of 65 for a covid-19 vaccination.

Caroline Ansell: **[121869]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the clinically extremely vulnerable (a) are a priority for and (b) have safe access to a covid-19 mass vaccination programme; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 1 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems. Therefore, in line with the recommendations of the JCVI, the vaccine will be initially rolled out to the priority groups including care home residents and staff, people over 80 years old and health and care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and individuals aged 16 to 64 years old with certain underlying health conditions. Those conditions are set out in the advice of the JCVI published on 30 December at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-30-december-2020/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation-advice-on-priority-groups-for-covid-19-vaccination-30-december-2020

Consideration has been given to vaccination of household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals. However, at this time there is no data on the size of the effect of COVID-19 vaccines on transmission. Evidence is expected to accrue during the course of the vaccine programme, and until that time the committee is not in a position to advise vaccination solely on the basis of indirect protection.

By 15 February we aim to have offered a first vaccine dose to everyone in the top four priority groups identified by the JCVI:

- all residents in a care home for older adults and their carers;

- all those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers;

- all those 75 years of age and over; and

- all those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals.

Sir Charles Walker: **[145751]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether a Band 4 Immuniser approved to administer the Pfizer vaccine has concurrent approval to administer the Astra-Zeneca vaccine; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England has developed protocols in accordance with Regulation 247A of the Human Medicines Regulations 2012, inserted into Human Medicines (Coronavirus and Influenza) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, for the administration of both the Pfizer BioNtech and AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines.

The protocols do not specify which professional groups, grades or bands may administer COVID-19 vaccines under them. Instead, the protocols state that registered or non-registered persons may administer the vaccines, as long as they

are competent to do so and experienced registered healthcare professionals must adequately supervise any non-professionally qualified persons.

Coronavirus: Vitamin D

Rachael Maskell: [133042]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what studies the Government has undertaken on the effect of vitamin D on covid-19; and what the outcome of those studies was.

Jo Churchill:
Public Health England (PHE), the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) and the National Institute for Health and Care (NICE) have considered emerging evidence on vitamin D and the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 throughout 2020.

NICE, PHE and the SACN published a rapid guideline on vitamin D and COVID-19 in December 2020 which concluded that there is currently not enough evidence to support taking vitamin D solely to prevent or treat COVID-19. The guideline reiterates existing government advice for everyone to take a daily 10 microgram supplement of vitamin D throughout autumn and winter for bone and muscle health. The guideline on vitamin D and COVID-19 is available at the following link:

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

From January 2021, the Government is providing a free four-month supply of daily vitamin D supplements to adults on the clinically extremely vulnerable list that have opted in to receive the supplements and residents in residential and nursing care homes in England.

Coronavirus: Wakefield

Jon Trickett: [110053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 test centres there are within the Wakefield Local Authority area; and what their locations are.

Helen Whately:
There is one testing site in Wakefield located at Waterfront Car Park, Barnsley Road, which has been operating since 18 November 2020.

Coronavirus: Yorkshire and the Humber

Mr David Davis: [102668]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Pillar 2 covid-19 tests have been carried out in (a) Yorkshire and the Humber and (b) Haltemprice and Howden constituency in each month since February 2020.

Helen Whately:
The Government does not publish this data in this format. Weekly data for pillar 2 testing in England is available at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-test-and-trace-statistics-england-weekly-reports

Dementia: Drugs

Helen Hayes: **[143015]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18th January received to Question 134006 on Dementia: Drugs, whether the outcome of NHS England and NHS Improvement's consultation on patterns of anti-psychotic prescribing during the covid-19 outbreak will be placed in the public domain.

Helen Whately:
[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to monitor the monthly data published by NHS Digital on the prescribing of antipsychotic medication for people diagnosed with dementia. No formal public consultation has been undertaken but NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to have regular conversations with regional clinical network leads and local services to understand the patterns in prescribing and potential reasons for trends being seen.

Dementia: Research

Tim Farron: **[144985]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the funding allocated to dementia research.

Helen Whately:
The Government's Challenge on Dementia 2020 contained the commitment to spend £300 million on dementia research over the five years to March 2020. This commitment was delivered a year early with £344 million spent on dementia research over the four years to 31 March 2019. We are currently working on ways to significantly boost further research on dementia at all stages on the translation pathway including medical and care interventions.

Dental Services

Tulip Siddiq: **[134020]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on (a) NHS services and (b) patient care of the introduction of activity targets on NHS dental practices.

Mick Whitley: **[134171]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of increasing the target for units of dental activity to 45 per cent of pre-pandemic levels on waiting times for patients who require complex dental work.

Dan Jarvis: **[135945]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support he is providing to dental practices to ensure they meet the NHS target for contracts announced on 1 January 2021 during the 2021 England national covid-19 lockdown.

Jo Churchill:
[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: A steady increase in dental activity has been made possible following updated Public Health England's Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidance. Dental services however continue to operate at reduced capacity due to the need for social distancing, personal protective equipment and other IPC measures.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have set a 45% dental activity target. This target is based upon clinical advice and modelling from the office of the Chief Dental Officer and has taken into consideration robust adherence to IPC guidance and social distancing requirements. Furthermore, data on the percentages of activity dental practices have achieved to date supports the view that the target can be safely attainable.

National Health Service commissioners have the discretion to make exceptions, for instance in cases where a dental practice has been impacted by staff being required to self-isolate and the reinstatement of shielding during the national lockdown.

The unit of dental activity targets for January to March 2021 are expected to increase available NHS dental care for patients and reduce waiting times for all dental care, including complex care.

Rachael Maskell: **[137242]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure that the Dental Activity Targets for the NHS contract are deliverable.

Jo Churchill:
NHS England and NHS Improvement have set a 45% dental activity target. This target is based upon clinical advice and modelling from the office of the Chief Dental Officer and has taken into consideration robust adherence to Infection Prevention and Control guidance and social distancing requirements. Furthermore, data on the percentages of activity dental practices have achieved to date supports the view that the target can be safely attainable.

National Health Service commissioners have the discretion to make exceptions, for instance in cases where a dental practice has been impacted by staff being required to self-isolate and the reinstatement of shielding during the national lockdown.

Dental Services: Coronavirus

Judith Cummins: **[107015]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide an estimate of the number of units of dental activity that have been performed by dentists in England since the covid-19 lockdown on routine dentistry was lifted on 8 June 2020.

Jo Churchill:

Data on the number of units of dental activity that have been performed by dentists in England since June 2020 is not available at this time. National Health Service dental activity statistics from June to December 2020 will be included in the 'NHS Dental statistics for England 2020-21, Biannual Report', due to be published on 25 February. Dental practices have been able to open for face to face NHS care from 8 June, with urgent provision backed up by over 600 urgent dental care centres across the country. NHS England and NHS Improvement have set out guidance that dentists should focus on care that is urgent, care to vulnerable groups and then overdue routine appointments.

A steady increase in dental activity has been made possible following updated Infection Prevention and Control guidance issued by Public Health England. Contractual arrangements for quarter four have been introduced by NHS England and NHS Improvement requiring dental practices to deliver 45% of contracted units of dental activity from 1 January to 31 March 2021 to be deemed to have delivered the full contractual volume. This is expected to increase available NHS dental care for patients.

The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Chief Dental Officer for England to increase levels of service, as fast as is safely possible.

Andrew Rosindell: **[133734]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of dental practice concerns about the potential for new unit of dental activity (UDA) targets to result in the spread of covid-19 and the prioritisation of routine dental cases over urgent ones.

Bill Esterson: **[133816]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of (a) the potential financial effect on dental practices of the requirement to meet 45 per cent of their NHS target and (b) the effect of that target on the ability of dental practices to safely socially distance patients.

Justin Madders: **[134480]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the return of UDA to dental practices on the transmission of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement have set a 45% dental activity target. This target is based upon clinical advice and modelling from the office of the Chief Dental Officer and has taken into consideration robust adherence to infection prevention and control guidance and social distancing requirements. Furthermore, data on the percentages of activity dental practices have achieved to date supports the view that the target can be safely attainable.

National Health Service commissioners have the discretion to make exceptions, for instance in cases where a dental practice has been impacted by staff being required to self-isolate and the reinstatement of shielding during the national lockdown. There are currently no plans to review or change the unit of dental activity targets for January to March 2021.

A steady increase in dental activity has been made possible following updated Public Health England's Infection Prevention and Control guidance. However, dental services continue to operate at reduced capacity due to the need for social distancing, personal protective equipment and other measures. By following this guidance, the risk of COVID-19 transmission is significantly reduced. Dental practices have a responsibility to ensure that social distancing is always adhered to, irrespective of activity targets.

Peter Kyle: **[133990]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review the Units of Dental Activity Targets for dental practices in response to the January 2021 covid-19 restrictions.

Emma Hardy: **[134078]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ask NHS England to review its unit of dental activity targets for January 1 to March 31 2021 as a result of the latest covid-19 restrictions; and whether he plans to review the methodology of target setting for practices working under the standard operating procedure.

Kim Johnson: **[134236]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the (a) letter of 22 December 2020 from the Chief Dental Officer to Dental Colleagues and (b) recent increases in covid-19 infection rates, if he will review the viability of the increase to the minimum requirement of activity of 45 per cent of contracted units of dental activity.

Alex Sobel: **[134542]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to suspend the Units of Dental Activity targets for dental practices for the duration of the January 2021 covid-19 restrictions.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement have set a 45% dental activity target. This target is based upon clinical advice and modelling from the office of the Chief Dental Officer and has taken into consideration robust adherence to infection prevention and control guidance and social distancing requirements. Furthermore, data on the percentages of activity dental practices have achieved to date supports the view that the target can be safely attainable.

National Health Service commissioners have the discretion to make exceptions, for instance in cases where a dental practice has been impacted by staff being required to self-isolate and the reinstatement of shielding during the national lockdown. There

are currently no plans to review or change the unit of dental activity targets for January to March 2021.

Dietary Supplements: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell: [137891]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of offering free (a) zinc and (b) vitamin D supplements to the general population during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:
The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) carried out a rapid scoping exercise on nutrition and immune function in relation to COVID-19 which included consideration of zinc. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), Public Health England (PHE) and the SACN also carried out assessments of the available evidence on vitamin D and COVID-19. None of the studies found robust evidence to support taking zinc or vitamin D supplements to reduce the risk or severity of COVID-19. NICE, PHE and the SACN are continuing to monitor evidence as it is published and will review and update guidance if necessary.

The longstanding Government advice is that between October and early March everyone is advised to take a supplement containing 10 micrograms (400 international units) of vitamin D a day to protect their bone and muscle health. This is because we cannot make vitamin D from sunlight in the United Kingdom at this time of year. From January, the Government is providing a free four-month supply of daily vitamin D supplements to adults on the clinically extremely vulnerable list that have opted in to receive the supplements and residents in residential and nursing care homes in England. The Government has prioritised groups that were asked to stay indoors more than usual over the spring and summer due to national restrictions.

Disability: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell: [121181]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of moving severely disabled people living in care, who are often high risk and vulnerable, higher up the list of priority groups for covid-19 vaccination.

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

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. Included in this are those with underlying health conditions, including severe and profound learning disability, which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality.

There is clear evidence that certain black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups have higher rates of infection, and higher rates of serious disease and mortality. The reasons are multiple and complex. There is no strong evidence that ethnicity by itself or genetics is the sole explanation for observed differences in rates of severe illness and deaths. What is clear is that certain health conditions are associated with increased risk of serious disease, and these health conditions are often overrepresented in certain BAME groups. Prioritisation of people with underlying health conditions will also provide for greater vaccination of BAME communities who are disproportionately affected by such health conditions.

Doctors: Training

Chi Onwurah: [142922]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure there are sufficient stand alone IMT year 3 posts available for trainee doctors in the North East; and what estimate he has made of the number of those posts that are required.

Helen Whately:
Health Education England (HEE) is working with system partners to establish the number of Internal Medicine Year 3 posts required regionally across England, including in the North East, to meet service needs.

HEE are working locally with trusts to identify the final number of posts required and, if needed, create additional capacity where it is possible to do so.

Drugs: UK Trade with EU

Alan Brown: [133947]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to page 15 of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, published on 24 December 2020, how many (a) EU representatives and (b) UK Government representatives will sit on the Working Group on Medicinal Products.

Jo Churchill:
As the agreement has only just been signed, no decisions have yet been made about the number of members nor the make-up of the working group. We will shortly reach out to the Commission to discuss and agree the overall aims of the group, its attendees and meeting frequency.

Epilepsy: Cannabis

Alberto Costa: [144720]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding support is available for families and children to access medicinal cannabis for the treatment of intractable epilepsy.

Jo Churchill:
Since November 2018, Epidyolex – a cannabis-based prescription medicine for the treatment of seizures associated with two rare forms of epilepsy - has been made available for prescribing on the National Health Service, where clinically appropriate. This follows clear demonstrated evidence of clinical and cost effectiveness.

We continue to work hard with the health system, industry and researchers to improve the evidence base for other unlicensed cannabis-based medicines, and to implement the recommendations of NHS England and NHS Improvement's review on barriers to accessing unlicensed cannabis based medicinal products. This includes the design of clinical trials and the establishment of a national patient registry.

Epilepsy: Drugs

Dr Matthew Offord: [144998]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the affordability of drugs, which contain cannabis, for the treatment of epilepsy.

Jo Churchill:
The Department has made no such assessment.

Exercise Cygnus

Sir Mark Hendrick: [144612]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether vaccine roll-out was a part of Exercise Cygnus.

Jo Churchill:
The aim of Exercise Cygnus was to assess the United Kingdom's preparedness and response to a pandemic influenza as reflected in the UK's worst-case planning scenario. Arrangements to access a pandemic vaccine is one aspect of our 'defence in depth' approach, as set out in the UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011. The exercise was set in week seven of the UK's response to a pandemic influenza. At this point, pandemic vaccine had been ordered but was not yet available.

Gambling: Health Services

Jim Shannon: [145017]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy to treat gambling addiction as a public health matter; and what steps he plans to take with Cabinet colleagues to help tackle the effects of gambling addiction on society.

Jo Churchill:
The Department commissioned Public Health England to undertake the first ever comprehensive evidence review on the public health harms relating to gambling in England. This will inform the Department's future approach to treating gambling related harms. This will be published later this year.

The Department also treats gambling health harms as a health and care issue, including through provision of National Health Service treatment and advice and supporting the development of research and the evidence base. The NHS Long Term Plan made a commitment to expand the geographical coverage of NHS services for people with serious gambling problems.v

Health Professions: Regulation and Vacancies

Damian Green: [144587]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the shortfall in the number of Clinical Technologists needed in UK hospitals and the lack of statutory regulation for the profession.

Helen Whately:
No such assessment has been made. Information on the number of clinical technologists is not held centrally.

The Government has no plans to extend statutory regulation to clinical technologists at this time. The statutory regulation of healthcare professionals should only be used where the risks to public and patient protection cannot be addressed in other ways, such as through employer oversight or accredited voluntary registration.

Health Services and Social Services: Birmingham

Preet Kaur Gill: [143055]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with private healthcare providers in Birmingham to support the (a) social care backlog and (b) response to covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:
A national agreement is in place between NHS England and NHS Improvement in collaboration with the Independent Healthcare Providers Network and independent sector providers to ensure National Health Service patients benefit from an unprecedented partnership with private hospitals during the COVID-19 outbreak.

No social care services are provided through the agreement with the independent providers. Local authorities are best placed to understand and plan for the care needs of their populations and to develop and build local market capacity.

Health Services: Coronavirus

Jane Stevenson: **[143114]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to officially recognise the service of NHS workers and volunteers during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:
[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: National Health Service staff and volunteers have provided world-class care to patients throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and deserve our recognition and support. Health and social care workers accounted for 10% of the recent New Year Honours and 14% of the 2020 Birthday Honours, with over 320 people receiving an award. We are committed to delivering 50,000 more nurses and growing the general practice workforce by 6,000 more doctors and 26,000 primary care professionals. The NHS People Plan, published last July, puts the health and wellbeing of NHS staff at its core with a new support package for staff.

Mr Steve Baker: **[R] [143749]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will collate and publish covid-19 (a) nosocomial patient data and (b) subsequent deaths for (a) definite, (b) probable and (c) indeterminate healthcare-associated covid-19 infections; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:
[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: It is not possible to provide information on the estimated nosocomial infection rate for COVID-19 in England, based on data held.

Since October 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement have published data relating to hospital activity which includes the numbers of people diagnosed in hospital or admitted to hospital with COVID-19. Data relating to the number of patients diagnosed in the community and subsequently admitted to hospital or admitted to hospital and diagnosed with COVID-19 within eight days after admission is also published.

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 COVID-19 while in hospital in England to date. Consequently, it is not possible to determine the number of deaths resulting from nosocomial COVID-19.

Health Services: Finance

Dame Diana Johnson: **[145758]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plan to publish full details on funding allocations from the Spending Review 2020 for the (a) cancer workforce and (b) other workforce budgets.

Helen Whately:
The Spending Review 2020 provides £260 million to continue to grow the National Health Service workforce and support commitments made in the NHS Long Term Plan.

Full details on funding allocations towards NHS workforce budgets, including relating to cancer, in 2021-22 will be subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and finalised in due course.

Health Services: Police

Rebecca Long Bailey: [141498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) support and (b) covid-19 safety guidance his Department has provided to Police Treatment Centres, which operate as healthcare providers to injured and ill police officers, to allow them to remain open during covid-19 lockdown periods.

Jo Churchill:
[Holding answer 27 January 2021]: The Department does not offer specific support to Police Treatment Centres.

Rebecca Long Bailey: [141499]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the security from covid-19 transmission of Police Treatment Centres.

Jo Churchill:
[Holding answer 27 January 2021]: The Department has made no specific assessment.

Health: Children

Sir Mark Hendrick: [144607]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to improve the health and fitness of children from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Jo Churchill:
Department continues to deliver actions set out in the childhood obesity plan including our ambition to halve the number of children living with obesity and significantly reduce the gap in obesity between children from the most and least deprived areas by 2030. We have also confirmed that schools in England will benefit from £320 million from the PE and sport premium during the academic year 2020-21.

Home Care Services

Thangam Debbonaire: [142984]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in England employ their own personal assistants for health and social care at home.

Helen Whately:
[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: Data from Skills for Care's 'Individual Employers and the Personal Assistant Workforce' report estimates that in 2019/20, approximately 70,000 people in England employed their own personal assistant/s (PAs) with funding from social care direct payments, dispersed by local authorities. The Department does not hold data on numbers of individuals who employ PAs outside of social care direct payments.

Home Care Services: Personal Income

Bambos Charalambous: [145095]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to update the minimum income guarantee allowance for people receiving care in non-care home settings.

Helen Whately:
[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: The minimum income guarantee allowance is reviewed on an annual basis. The next review of the allowance is due in January 2022.

Hospices: Coronavirus

Navendu Mishra: [143148]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support he is providing to hospices to allow family members to present at the end of life during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:
[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: In October 2020, NHS England published a new set of visiting guidelines, which aims to ensure that families have more contact with their loved ones towards the end of their lives while also managing infection risks. The new guidelines, 'Visiting healthcare inpatient settings principles during the Covid-19 pandemic', advise the NHS and other healthcare organisations, including hospices, on how to facilitate visiting wherever possible. These guidelines are available at the following link:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/C0751-visiting-healthcare-inpatient-settings-principles-131020 .pdf

Hospitals: Coronavirus

Philip Davies: [142855]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 19 January 2021 to Question 135882 on Hospitals: Coronavirus, in what format his Department holds that information.

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 in England to date. NHS England and NHS Improvement publish daily deaths data, but the number of those who may have caught COVID-19 in hospital is not collected.

Hospitals: Discharges

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [94510]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons NHS Mental Health Trusts are not included in the guidance, Hospital discharge service: policy and operating model; and for what reasons there is no equivalent guidance for those Trusts.

Ms Nadine Dorries:
[Holding answer 29 September 2020]: It is our priority to ensure that people are discharged safely from hospital to the most appropriate place, and that they continue to receive the care and support they need.

Under the Discharge Service Requirements, people who are clinically ready will be supported to return to their place of residence, where an assessment of longer-term needs will take place, using the 'Discharge to Assess (D2A)' HomeFirst model. Mental health inpatient services are not within scope for this guidance.

Influenza: Vaccination

Holly Mumby-Croft: [109761]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure the accessibility of flu vaccines for people who do not belong to an at-risk group.

Jo Churchill:
General practitioners and pharmacists are responsible for ordering flu vaccine from suppliers which are used to deliver the national flu programme to adults, with deliveries phased through the season. The Department has procured additional doses of seasonal flu vaccine to ensure more flu vaccines were available this winter.

The seasonal flu programme has been extended to 50 to 64 year olds who are not in an at-risk group. Vaccination for this cohort began on 1 December, following the prioritisation of those who are most at risk from the effects of flu, and frontline health and social care workers.

On 15 January, the Department made available the additional procured vaccines to other patients under private provision and occupational health schemes.

Learning Disability: Health Services

Helen Hayes: [133996]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle health inequalities for people with learning disabilities.

Helen Whately:
The NHS Long Term Plan sets out our commitments for people with a learning disability to ensure that they can lead longer and healthier lives. Delivering annual health checks for people with a learning disability is a key priority for the National Health Service. A national annual health checks campaign was launched in Autumn 2020 and there has been targeted information to people with a learning disability, family carers, general practices and social care staff to encourage uptake.

In November 2019, we set out plans to introduce the Oliver McGowan mandatory training in learning disability and autism to ensure more people with a learning disability receive safe, compassionate and informed care and in turn reduce health inequalities. Work is already underway with Health Education England and Skills for Care to develop and test a standardised training package backed by £1.4 million of funding.

Leukaemia: Older People

Jim Shannon: [91755]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the appropriateness of virtual consultations for older people with chronic lymphocytic leukaemia during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:
During the COVID-19 pandemic, face to face appointments are being offered if required. All personalised care and support have continued by telephone, video, online or by post if face-to-face appointments and group sessions have not been possible, and in the first instance these are often the appropriate starting point. As set out in the NHS Long Term Plan, these interventions will be implemented where appropriate for every person diagnosed with cancer by 2021.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently carrying out an evaluation of online and video consultations in general practice to understand their impact.

This evaluation and other research work into the significant innovations in how general practitioner practices offer care is an opportunity for the Government, NHS England and NHS Improvement and professional representatives to ensure innovations can be adapted into a sustainable model into the future, to better meet patient needs and provide the best quality of care and ease of access for patients.

Medicine: Education

Thangam Debbonaire: [144718]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there will be an increase in the number of student medicine places in the 2021-22 academic year.

Helen Whately:
The Government temporarily lifted the cap on medical school places for students who completed A-Levels in 2020 and who had an offer from a university in England to study medicine, subject to their grades. This ensured a place in 2020 or 2021 for

every eligible student and meant that the overall number of domestic training places available for those applying to a medical school for the 2021/22 academic year remains unchanged.

The Government currently has no plans to increase the number of places beyond this. However, we are committed to ensuring that the number of medical school places reflect England's workforce requirements and continues to monitor the effectiveness of current arrangements.

Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Kate Osborne: **[145158]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that referrals to children and young people's mental health services are maintained during the 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:
[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: Children and young people's mental health services will continue to remain open over the winter, ensuring children, young people and parents can access appropriate support whether face to face, the telephone or via digital means. We encourage parents and carers worried about their child's mental health to speak with their general practitioner and to continue referring to their local children and young people's mental health service.

Mental Health Services: Health Professions

Charlotte Nichols: **[144868]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to provide mental health support to healthcare staff working in hospital wards dedicated to the treatment of patients with covid-19.

Helen Whately:
NHS England and NHS Improvement have put in place a comprehensive package of health and wellbeing services for National Health Service staff, including counselling helplines, free access to wellbeing apps, virtual staff common rooms and specialist bereavement and psychological support. £15 million has also been invested to strengthen mental health support for NHS staff. This funding is being used to set up mental health hubs that provide outreach and assessment services to help frontline staff receive rapid access to mental health services. Staff referred will be treated by local mental health specialists and those with the most severe needs will be referred to a specialist centre of excellence.

Mental Health Services: Young People

Andrea Jenkyns: **[144760]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional steps he has taken to support young people's mental health since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:
Children and young people's mental health services have remained open throughout the pandemic, offering digital and remote access to maintain support, and accepting new referrals. NHS England asked all mental health trusts to ensure there are 24 hours a day, seven days a week open access telephone lines for urgent National Health Service mental health support, advice and triage for all ages through a single point of access. Crisis lines are an NHS Long Term Plan ambition brought forward from 2023/24.

Mental Health: Coronavirus

Mr Steve Baker: **[R] [142911]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the prevalence among hospital healthcare workers of (a) anxiety, (b) depression and (c) other clinically significant mental health symptoms (i) at the time of and (ii) subsequent to the first peak of the covid-19 outbreak; what steps he is taking to support those healthcare workers; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:
Assessments of staff mental health, which includes anxiety and depression, are routinely undertaken locally through analysis of sickness absence data and proactive engagement with staff to understand what support can be provided. A comprehensive package of health and wellbeing services are in place for National Health Service staff, including helplines for counselling and support and free access to well-being apps. £15 million is being invested to strengthen mental health support for NHS staff. This funding will be used to set up mental health hubs that will provide outreach and assessment services to help frontline staff receive rapid access to mental health services. Staff referred will be treated by local mental health specialists and those with the most severe needs will be referred to a specialist centre of excellence.

NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme 2020

Justin Madders: **[145801]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January 2021 to Question 140829 on the NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme, how many applicants have received payments through that scheme to date.

Helen Whately:
As of 27 January, the NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme (England) has received 307 claims, of which 268 have been accepted. Payment has been made for 175 of these claims, with a further 92 accepted for payment pending proof of probate from the claimant, and one case in the course of payment. Two cases have not been accepted and the rest are under consideration.

NHS: Migrant Workers

Holly Lynch: [140870]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS health and social care workers of non-British nationality were working in the UK as of 20 January 2021; and what proportion of those people had indefinite leave to remain as of that date.

Helen Whately:
As at September 2020 there were 176,965 NHS staff with a non-UK nationality. Information on the proportion of staff who had indefinite leave to remain as at September 2020 is not held centrally.

NHS: Nurses

Jonathan Ashworth: [138988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the 13,000 more nurses in the NHS are (a) new registrants, (b) moving from part time to full time, (c) part of the NHS Bring Back Staff scheme, (d) retained staff and (e) nurses moving from non-NHS employers into the NHS.

Helen Whately:
The information requested is not held centrally.

NHS: Protective Clothing

Catherine West: [145829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether frontline NHS staff are being routinely provided with high quality FFP3 protective masks.

Jo Churchill:
Personal protective equipment (PPE), including FFP3 masks, must be fit for purpose, meeting the necessary safety standards to ensure it provides the required level of protection.

Certification of PPE is supplied by the manufacturer having the product independently tested. Assurance is checked by the regulators, the Health and Safety Executive and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. Evidence of certification is requested for products as part of the due diligence process. Contracts that involve the manufacture of PPE have the appropriate clauses to ensure that testing and certification is undertaken before the goods are accepted.

We now have over twelve models of FFP3s masks available to the National Health Service. In December we established a four-month stockpile of COVID-19 critical PPE, including FFP3s. We are confident that we have secured enough FFP3s for the winter period and that we have the processes and logistics in place to distribute them to where they are required.

Nurses

Charlotte Nichols: [142069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to (a) retain nurses employed in the NHS, (b) encourage nurses who have left the NHS to return to the NHS and (c) attract more students to train in the nursing profession.

Helen Whately:
The latest NHS People Plan published in July 2020 sets out actions to retain staff for longer through a range of measures from flexible working, to improved training for line managers and more comprehensive occupational and mental health support.

Since 2014, Health Education England has supported a national return to practice (RTP) campaign for all branches of nursing, in response to the national shortage of nurses across the National Health Service. Between September 2014 and 30 September 2020, 7,106 returners have accessed RTP programmes.

As part of the new funding package for healthcare students non-repayable, training grants of at least £5,000 per academic year are available to eligible new and continuing pre-registration nursing students, studying at English universities. In 2020, there were 29,740 acceptances to nursing and midwifery courses in England. This is 6,110 more than in 2019 and an increase of 26%.

Nurses: Coronavirus

Joy Morrissey: [143910]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to recognise the work of nursing apprentices in tackling the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:
The National Health Service workforce deserves our recognition and support. We are proud of all staff, including nursing apprentices, who have provided world-class care throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Trainee nursing staff have adapted and developed new skills and practices at pace.

Over 320 health and social care workers were recently recognised in the Birthday Honours and New Year’s honour’s list. We also want to make the NHS the best place to work. The NHS People Plan, published last July, puts the health and wellbeing at its core with a new support package for NHS staff.

Ophthalmic Services: Coronavirus

Rosie Cooper: [141948]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing to primary eye care to ensure effective diagnosis of sight-threatening conditions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:
Optical practices are open for face-to-face consultations with the requirement that Public Health England's Infection Prevention and Control measures are adhered to.

Prevention, early detection and access to timely treatment are all key to improving eye health and anyone with concerns about their vision should not hesitate to seek care. Free National Health Service sight tests, a vital eye health check, continue to be available to all children, those aged 60 and over, individuals on low incomes and those at increased risk of certain eye diseases.

Paramedical Staff: Students

Thangam Debbonaire: [145048]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 January 2021 to Question 137961 on Paramedical Staff: Students, by what date his Department and the Department for Education plan to reach a decision through those discussions.

Helen Whately:
Discussions with the Department for Education on the student finance equivalent or lower qualification rules for paramedicine are ongoing. A decision will be dependent on business planning for the 2021/22 financial year following the outcome of Spending Review 2020.

Pharmacy: Coronavirus

Sir George Howarth: [143708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) risk of the latest wave of covid-19 cases to the health of frontline pharmacy staff and (b) additional support that those staff require to ensure that they remain safe.

Jo Churchill:
Guidance on working safely is available on GOV.UK for people who work in community pharmacies and a COVID-19 standard operating procedure for community pharmacy has been published by NHS England and NHS Improvement.

The first part of this year's Pharmacy Quality Scheme focuses on activities to support the response to COVID-19, including the requirement to complete individual COVID-19 risk assessments for all community pharmacy staff, particularly those already known to be in an 'at risk' group or from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background.

We have supported community pharmacies and their staff in other ways to adopt COVID-19 secure working practices, such as free personal protective equipment (PPE) and reimbursement for PPE previously purchased and £300 towards premises adjustments.

Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Stella Creasy: [144673]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data the Government is collecting which explicitly monitors transmission of covid-19 between (a) children aged 0 to 5 years in education settings and (b) (i) parents, (ii) staff and (iii) other adults who visit those settings; and if he will publish that data in full.

Ms Nadine Dorries:
[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: Public Health England (PHE) does not routinely collect data for COVID-19 transmission rates in education settings between school-aged children and/or adults.

PHE does report on COVID-19 infection rates, by educational aged cohorts in the national flu and COVID-19 surveillance graphs that accompany the National flu and COVID-19 weekly surveillance report. This includes reception, nursery and pre-school aged cohorts. The most recent report is available at the following link:

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

It should be noted that this data includes all cases regardless of whether or not they attended an educational setting or if the educational setting was open during the reporting period.

Royal Free Hospital: Nurseries

Dawn Butler: [143715]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the effect on women working at the Royal Free hospital of that hospital's decision to close its staff nursery; and if he will ensure that an equalities impact assessment of that decision is conducted under the Equalities Act 2010.

Helen Whately:
The hospital has advised that they are consulting with staff and parents to gather feedback and no decision has yet been taken. National Health Service trusts are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty and any final decision must have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equal opportunities and foster good relations between groups.

HOME OFFICE

Animal Welfare: Crime

Alex Davies-Jones: [144880]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, to publish the number of reported (a) animal welfare crimes and (b) pet thefts between February 2020 and December 2020 in (i) England and (ii) Wales.

Kit Malthouse:
The Home Office collects information from police forces in England on Wales on offences covered by the notifiable offence list. This is generally restricted to indictable offences, that are heard before a crown court, and triable either way offences, that commence in a magistrates court but may be heard in a crown court. Animal welfare crimes are not covered by the notifiable offence list.

Whilst pet thefts are covered by the notifiable offence list it is not possible to separately identify these crimes from others in the wider offence category of theft offences.

Antisocial Behaviour: Police Cautions

Alex Davies-Jones: [145888]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police cautions for antisocial behaviour were made in England and Wales in each year since 2010.

Alex Davies-Jones: [145890]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the proportion of police time spent dealing with instances of anti-social behaviour in each month since January 2020.

Kit Malthouse:
The Home office does not collect data on the number of police cautions issued for anti-social behaviour and has not estimated what proportion of time police officers spend dealing with anti-social behaviour incidents

It is for Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners, as operational leaders and elected local representatives, to decide how best to respond to individual crimes and local priorities

To help ensure that the police have the resources they need to do so 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.

Asylum

Mr Clive Betts: [145738]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers have been transferred into each local authority area in England in the last two years.

Chris Philp:
The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area, which includes those in hotel and wider government facilities. These statistics can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#asylum-support

Data is published on a quarterly basis, with the latest information published 26 November 2020. The next quarterly figures are due to be released in February 2021.

Asylum: Napier Barracks

Stephen Morgan: [143892]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to protect the health and wellbeing of asylum seekers at Napier Barracks, Kent.

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

The Home Office has worked closely with the Clinical Commissioning Group in Kent to ensure that arrangements are in place for asylum seekers to access health care as required.

We work closely with our accommodation providers to ensure that all asylum seekers in supported accommodation are aware of, and have access to, Migrant Help's helpline. This service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, if service users need help, advice or guidance, including signposting to relevant mental and medical health services.

Following a fire at Napier Barracks our service providers worked quickly to ensure that the fire damaged area was sealed off the rest of the accommodation was safe and secure for our service providers, that power was provided via generators and meals continued to be provided.

We keep arrangements at Napier Barracks under regular review working in partnership with local and national health and public health officials

Domestic Abuse: Kingston upon Hull

Dame Diana Johnson: [143718]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of the loss of police records on the (a) processing and (b) prosecuting of domestic violence cases in Kingston upon Hull.

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

Gender Based Violence

Jack Lopresti: [143737]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to ensure that the Violence Against Women and Girls strategy 2021-2024 will be embedded in wider Government policy.

Victoria Atkins:
Tackling Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) remains a key priority of this Government and we will be publishing a new Cross-Government Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy in the Spring. To inform the new strategy, we launched a Call for Evidence on 10 December, inviting responses from the public, organisations that provide support to victims and survivors, frontline professionals, and academics.

Tackling VAWG is everyone's business and requires a cross-departmental approach to help prevent these crimes from taking place, support victims, and better target perpetrators. The Government is committed to working across departments to develop the upcoming Tackling VAWG Strategy 2021-2024.

Immigration: EEA Nationals

Hilary Benn: [143693]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the number of EEA citizens with Settled Status and Pre Settled Status who have been refused boarding to an international flight to the UK, because they were unable to provide evidence of residency in the UK, since 1 January 2021.

Kevin Foster:
We do not hold data for commercial carriers' reasons for refusing boarding to passengers and therefore cannot provide this information.

Immigration: EU Nationals

Hilary Benn: [143691]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government has taken to communicate to (a) international airlines and (b) international border authorities that the EU Settlement Scheme operates without physical documentation.

Kevin Foster:
In preparation for delivery of the UK's future border immigration systems regular stakeholder engagement meetings were held with representatives from the maritime, rail and air carrier organisations to consult on the likely shape of new border processes as well as the impact for them of the UK's exit from the EU. Carriers are also engaged at a more local level with Border Force teams based at ports.

An all carrier alert was issued immediately prior to the end of transition through established channels and since January 1 st Carriers have made use of the direct

access they have in the UK and overseas to Home Office officials should they require specific advice on individual passengers.

In addition, the Home Office's overseas liaison network provide support to international border authorities should it be required.

Hilary Benn: [143692]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what written guidance the Government has issued to international (a) airlines and (b) border authorities on how the EU Settlement Scheme operates without physical documentation.

Kevin Foster:
An alert was issued to all carriers responsible for international flights through established channels stating they do not need to request evidence of settled or pre-settled status for eligibility for carriage to the UK.

Internal guidance was also issued to the Home Office's International Liaison Officer network based in the UK and overseas so they can advise carriers correctly should a carrier or local boarder authority overseas refer such a case.

Operational guidance for managing EEA nationals with Settled and Pre-settled status has been issued to Border Force officers

Migrant Workers: Young People

Sir Charles Walker: [145752]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending Tier 5 visas for overseas 18 to 30 year olds; and if she will make statement.

Kevin Foster:
The Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) is a cultural exchange programme, allowing young people aged 18 to 30 from participating countries and territories to experience life in the UK for up to two years.

The UK currently operates nine Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) arrangements with Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Korea, San Marino, Japan, Monaco, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. We have indicated our desire to negotiate further agreements with our international partners.

However, as each YMS is subject to a bilateral, reciprocal agreement which also provides benefit to UK Nationals, the Home Office will not add nations to the scheme unilaterally in the absence of such an agreement.

Police: Animal Welfare

Alex Davies-Jones: [145889]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding has been allocated to police forces to tackle crimes against animal welfare in (a) England and (b) Wales in each year since 2015.

Kit Malthouse:
The Home Office does not hold the requested information.

We have announced a provisional police funding settlement of up to £15.8 billion for 2021/22. This is a total increase of up to £636 million for the policing system which will enable police to cut crime and tackle offences including relating to animal welfare crimes.

Repatriation: EU Nationals

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [146999]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the cost to the public purse is of including EU nationals in the voluntary returns scheme.

Chris Philp:
EEA nationals may qualify for a voluntary return through the Voluntary Returns Service following the ending of free movement on 31 December 2020.

As an entirely voluntary scheme, it is not possible to accurately predict the volume of cases the service will receive. Equally, the cost of a voluntary return depends on the individual circumstances of the case, and therefore we are not able to provide a definitive figure.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Civil Partnerships and Weddings: Coronavirus

Sir Mark Hendrick: [143704]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what consultation his Department had with (a) religious leaders and (b) local authorities prior to the decision to place limitations on (i) weddings and (ii) civil ceremonies during the 2021 national covid-19 lockdown.

Eddie Hughes:
We engage regularly with the Places of Worship Taskforce, faith leaders and local authorities to discuss all aspects of the national restrictions implemented since the beginning of January.

Estate Agents: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq: [143858]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what scientific evidence his Department is using to inform the decision to allow estate agent offices to remain open to staff during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Christopher Pincher:
We have worked with both the estate agency sector and Public Health England to develop our guidance and make sure that agents are operating in a Covid-Secure way, as such businesses are required to do in order to remain open.

Housing: Construction

Jane Hunt: [143941]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that housing developers build on land allocated through local plans.

Christopher Pincher:
The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that strategic policies within local plans should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for housing. Such policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing (and other uses). In addition, local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies. Up to date plans and a five-year supply of housing land provide the best protection for local communities against speculative planning applications. The Government has set a deadline of December 2023 for all authorities to have up-to-date Local Plans in place.

The Government wants to see homes built faster and expects house builders to deliver more homes, more quickly and to a high-quality standard. New homes should be built out as soon as possible once planning permission is granted. We are clear that where sites are stalled or experiencing delays to delivery, it is for local authorities and developers to work closely together at a local level to overcome these barriers. The Planning for the Future White Paper also proposes that growth areas in local plans would benefit from an automatic grant of outline consent. This will ensure that developers, authorities and communities can have greater clarity at an early stage of the process about the expectations for development and reduce unnecessary delays as those developments progress.

Local Government: Meetings

Jane Hunt: [143939]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending the temporary regulations permitting local authorities to hold public meetings virtually beyond 7 May 2021.

Luke Hall:
The Government keeps all policy under review. To extend the facility for councils to continue to meet remotely, or in hybrid form after 7 May 2021 would require primary legislation. We have received representations from local authorities and sector representative organisations making the case for the continuation of remote meetings beyond 7 May 2021 and are carefully considering next steps in this area.

Marriage: Coronavirus

Sir Mark Hendrick: [143707]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the long-term effect on society of fewer marriages taking place during the covid-19 lockdowns.

Luke Hall:
Weddings and civil partnerships hold unique significance in people's lives which is why they have only been suspended when transmission risks from the COVID-19 virus have been particularly high. We are aware that suspension, or restrictions on the number of attendees, may disproportionately affect faith communities where couples cannot start their life together or start a family before they are married. We have worked with the Places of Worship Taskforce to understand the needs of faith and belief wedding ceremonies and factors these into our planning.

Parish Councils: Freedom of Information

Alexander Stafford: [144887]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the cost to parish councils of responding to freedom of information requests on the budgets and resources of such councils.

Luke Hall:
My department has made no assessment of the cost of responding to freedom of information requests by parish councils. It is for each public authority to determine how to resource and budget for information requests.

Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

Sir Mark Hendrick: [143703]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reasons places of worship can remain open during the 2021 covid-19 national lockdown.

Eddie Hughes:
We understand the importance of communal worship, and the positive impact that this has on people's mental and spiritual health during a very difficult time for us all. We have worked hard with faith leaders to produce guidance for the safe use of places of worship. We are grateful for the efforts of Faith Leaders, and their communities, to follow that guidance and to keep worshippers safe. Their efforts mean that all places of worship that comply with COVID-secure guidance, including implementing strict social distancing, wearing face coverings ensuring that worshippers do not mingle with others outside of their households have been able to remain open for communal worship during the latest period of restrictions.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Steve Reed: [145795]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the timetable is for the publication of details on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:
The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK for places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers.

In addition, to help local areas prepare over 2021/22 for the introduction of the UKSPF, we will provide additional UK funding to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches.

The November 2020 Spending Review set out the main strategic elements of the UKSPF in the Heads of Terms. The Government will publish a UK-wide investment framework in Spring 2021 and confirm multi-year funding profiles at the next Spending Review. Further details on the operation of the additional funding in 2021/22 will be published soon.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Scotland

Andrew Bowie: [144790]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when Scottish local authorities will be able to apply for Shared Prosperity Funding for specific projects.

Luke Hall:
The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK. A portion of the UKSPF will target places most in need across the UK, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities.

Places receiving funding will be asked to agree specific outcomes to target within a UK-wide framework. They will then develop investment proposals to be approved by the Government among a representative stakeholder group. A second portion of the Fund will be targeted differently to people most in need through bespoke employment and skills programmes that are tailored to local need.

To help local areas prepare over 2021/22 for the introduction of the UKSPF, we will provide additional UK funding to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches.

Further detail on the additional funding will be published soon and we will publish a UK-wide investment framework in Spring 2021 setting our further information on the UKSPF.

Weddings: Coronavirus

Charlotte Nichols: [143930]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to ensure weddings can recommence once covid-19 infection rates have declined.

Luke Hall:
Weddings by their nature bring lots of people together in a single group and are highly social and therefore particularly vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19. Through vaccination and testing we hope over a period of time to increase the number of attendees when the scientific evidence shows that it is safe to do so.

The Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is planning to meet with the UK Weddings Taskforce.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Department for International Trade: Expenditure

Emily Thornberry: [142839]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to her Department's publication of spending over £500 using an electronic purchasing card in February 2020, how many of the (a) attendees at the dinner at Miller and Carter on 11 February 2020 and (b) people who were provided with hotel accommodation from 5 to 10 February 2020 were (i) not employees of HM Government and (ii) overseas nationals.

Greg Hands:
[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: (a) (i) Of the attendees, 26 were not employees of HM Government.

No Ministers or Special Advisers were present at the dinner.

(ii) Of the attendees, 6 were overseas nationals. The Department does not usually check the nationality of participants for this sort of activity, so it is not clear whether any of the representatives from UK based companies were overseas nationals.

(b) No one was provided with hotel accommodation between 5 to 10 February 2020.

Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Lee Anderson: [145150]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to extend the UK’s steel safeguards; and what assessment she has made of the potential merits of others steps to develop a strong and sustainable steel industry.

Lee Anderson: [145151]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has made an economic impact assessment of the current UK steel safeguards.

Lee Anderson: [145152]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential role of (a) global overcapacity, (b) US 232 tariffs, (c) levels of protectionist sentiment in other economies and (d) other factors in the introduction of EU steel safeguards.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:
Safeguard measures exist under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreements to allow countries to put measures in place to protect domestic industries against serious damage caused or threatened to be caused by unforeseen surges in imports. There are strict evidential requirements and processes that must be followed in order to put safeguard measures in place.

The United Kingdom's steel safeguard measures were established by the EU when the United Kingdom was a member state. They followed the processes and were on the basis of the criteria provided for in the WTO Agreements. The United Kingdom's Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs) reflect the British portion of the original EU safeguard measure, based on British import data from the original period of investigation under which the measure was imposed.

The Department for International Trade did not conduct an economic impact assessment when transitioning the measures as these were established measures already in effect, not new measures being implemented. However, the Trade Remedies Investigations Directorate (TRID) initiated a review of the current safeguard measures on 1 st October 2020. In most circumstances, subject to what it determines as a result of any review, TRID will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State. This specific review will include consideration of the economic impacts of continuation, variation or termination of the measures, except where particular products are not being imported in increased quantities or are not being produced in the United Kingdom. As a part of this evidence-based review, TRID will evaluate the risk of serious injury.

My Hon. Friend is a great champion of British industry, and he will understand that the Secretary of State cannot pre-empt TRID's recommendation by considering the future of the measures before such a review is complete and the recommendation is received.

UK Trade with EU

Mark Tami: [144942]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many businesses in (a) Alyn and Deeside and (b) the UK have been advised by her Department to transfer some

operations to the EU in order to facilitate exports following the UK's departure from the EU.

Graham Stuart:
I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 28 January to Question UIN 143100.

UK Trade with EU: Republic of Ireland

Liz Saville Roberts: **[143860]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions has she had with her Irish counterpart on the operation of new trade arrangements for chemical products to the Republic of Ireland.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:
The Secretary of State has not recently discussed new trading arrangements for chemical products with her counterpart from the Republic of Ireland, as the United Kingdom-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement and the United Kingdom's exit from the Transition Period is a matter led by the Cabinet Office. However, HM Government recognises the importance of the chemicals industry and is working to mitigate issues with regulatory compliance, such as phasing-in compliance with British Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) obligations.

As the Trade and Cooperation Agreement is the first trade deal that the EU has ever reached based on zero tariffs and zero quotas, it is fantastic news for businesses in the chemical sector, who exported £13 billion worth of goods to the EU in 2019. The Department for International Trade is clear that the chemicals sector has a key role to play in helping the United Kingdom achieve her net zero goal, and is exploring ways to support businesses.

JUSTICE

Courts: Coronavirus

Taiwo Owatemi: **[143924]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to safeguard (a) barristers, (b) solicitors, (c) court staff and (d) visitors against covid-19 infection and spread.

Chris Philp:
HM Courts and Tribunals Service has well entrenched safeguards to ensure safety of all people in its buildings. This includes members of the legal profession, HMCTS staff (including agency staff and contractors) and all court users.

The range of safety measures and controls in place have been developed in line with and are validated against, relevant public health standards to ensure court and tribunal buildings are Covid secure. The measures have all been reviewed in light of continually developing circumstances. This has enabled HMCTS to deliver its vital

public services, including jury trials, throughout the period affected by pandemic-related restrictions.

The approach here is set out transparently in the HMCTS Organisational Risk Assessment. Data suggests that the level of Covid infections amongst Court staff has been in line with the national averages. Among the measures embedded across the court and tribunal estate are significantly enhanced cleaning regimes, the provision of washing facilities and sanitiser throughout buildings for users as well as staff and judiciary, social distancing measures implemented, and a requirement for face coverings throughout our buildings. Site-specific assessments are reviewed at least weekly, and are required to be undertaken in collaboration with staff and trade union colleagues. Court and Tribunal users can request copies of these assessments and engage local managers on the detail where appropriate.

HMCTS has published, and regularly updates, a full suite of information on its Covid-secure practices. Weekly updates are now sent direct to a range of key stakeholders, social media tools are routinely used to try to reach ever-wider audiences, and in all court and tribunal venues, clear signage is displayed to promote and explain our safety measures. Our senior team also participate in webinars and other tailored events for staff members, and engages regularly with professional representatives, contractor and system partners to address issues and concerns.

We have invested considerable effort to assure ourselves as to compliance on the ground, through management systems and independent audits. We also have responsive complaints and escalation procedures in case they are necessary. We ask all users of the courts and tribunals – including but not limited to jurors – to take personal responsibility, for adhering to the simple and well-understood hands/face/space protocols prevalent across society generally.

Prisoners' Release: Females

Carolyn Harris: **[911712]**

What assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on support for women leaving prison.

Lucy Frazer:
We have taken quick and decisive action, backed by Public Health England and Wales, to limit the spread of the virus across all prison establishments, including the women’s estate. This has included restricting regimes, minimising inter-prison transfers and compartmentalising prisons into different units to isolate the sick, shield the vulnerable and quarantine new arrivals. A comprehensive regular testing regime of both staff and prisoners is in place and is key in helping to prevent the spread of the virus. Our evidence gathering indicates these measures have had a positive impact on limiting deaths and the transmission of the virus in prisons. We are now working closely with the NHS to support the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccinations for eligible groups in custody.

On 31 March 2020 the Government announced that it would be considering pregnant women and women on Mother and Baby Units for early release from prison, as part of a wider plan to protect the NHS and save lives during the Covid-19 pandemic. Prison Governors/Directors are able to consider eligible women for early release based on thorough risk assessment, and subject to secure healthcare pathways and appropriate accommodation, in consultation with partners in community support services. This scheme remains active, and the most recent release was in January 2021.

To support its COVID-19 response, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has set up Homelessness Prevention Taskforces (HPT) in all probation regions to help find accommodation for offenders upon release. These have been very successful in securing improved accommodation outcomes. We are exploring how the regional HPTs might be a feature of the future probation landscape, ensuring that the specific needs of women are fully considered.

In addition, measures have been put in place across the women's estate to help reduce the impact of COVID-19 for women in custody and to help plan for their release. Some of these measures, include; additional phone credit per week, enabling contact with their support networks, Through the Gate providers are working to Exceptional Delivery Models offering phone support to all prisoners pre-release.

Prisoners: Parents

Andrea Leadsom: [911701]

What support his Department is providing to new parents who are in the prison system.

Lucy Frazer:
We know that there is an impact on families and children when a parent is imprisoned. Prisons run a variety of parenting courses that are commissioned by individual establishments to suit the needs of their particular population.

Mother and Baby Units have operated in women's prisons for a number of years, they enable mothers to have their children with them in prison during an important period of bonding. The units are often praised in HMIP reports.

There are also many ad hoc provisions such as Storybook Dads which help to maintain contact with younger children.

Prisons and Young Offender Institutions: Coronavirus

Michael Fabricant: [911707]

What steps his Department has taken to control the spread of covid-19 in (a) prisons and (b) young offenders institutions; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:
Since March, we have acted decisively to protect our staff, prisoners and the wider community from outbreaks in prisons and the youth estate. Our compartmentalisation

strategy allows us to quarantine new arrivals, isolate those with symptoms, and shield vulnerable prisoners.

We have introduced routine testing of staff, and testing of prisoners on reception and transfer, in all prisons and YOIs. Whilst every death is a tragedy, thanks to the hard work of our dedicated prison staff, we have managed to limit deaths from Covid in the prison estate to far below PHE predictions.

Prisons: Crime

Alexander Stafford: [911699]

What steps his Department is taking to reduce crime in prisons.

Lucy Frazer:
Reducing crime in prisons remains a key priority. HMPPS works closely with law enforcement agencies so that crimes committed in prison are dealt with effectively. We are delivering on our commitment to invest £100m in prison security.

This includes X-ray body scanners that have been installed at 40 prisons across England and Wales. These detect drugs and contraband that fuel crime in prisons, with over 2,300 illegal items observed and prevented from entering our estate.

This investment will also strengthen staff resilience to corruption and target organised criminals who exploit prisons as a lucrative market.

Prisons: Greater London

Fleur Anderson: [145160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many London prison staff have died from covid-19.

Fleur Anderson: [145163]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisons in London are experiencing a covid-19 outbreak.

Lucy Frazer:
The safety of our staff and those under our supervision remains a top priority. We have taken quick and decisive action – backed by Public Health England and Wales – to limit the spread of the virus across all prison establishments.

Due to the current risk level posed by Covid-19, all adult prisons are currently operating a Stage Four regime, as outlined in our National Framework (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-national-framework-for-prison-regimes-and-services). This involves restrictions to reduce contact between people and therefore reduce the chance of transmission. We are keeping the level of restriction necessary under close review. We must continue to respond in a measured way in line with public health advice to ensure our approach is proportionate and legitimate, as we have done throughout.

Staff deaths in London prisons related to COVID-19 up until 31 st October, includes deaths where HMPPS staff have died having tested positive for COVID-19 or where there was a clinical assessment that COVID-19 was a contributory factor in their death. These figures include both directly and non-directly employed staff. This information is published on a quarterly basis and the next publication is scheduled for 18 February 2021.

The prisons listed are those within the London Prison Group.

BELMARSH	-
Brixton	-
Feltham	-
Highdown	-
Isis	-
Pentonville	2
Thameside	1
Wandsworth	-
Wormwood Scrubs	-
Total	**3**

As of Friday 29 January, all establishments listed, with the exception of Feltham, currently have a declared Covid-19 outbreak. An outbreak is defined as two or more prisoners or detainees or staff in the prescribed place of detention who meet the case definition for COVID-19 or have a positive test result and among whom transmission was likely to have occurred within a 14-day period.

Public Service: Misconduct

Dan Carden: **[145867]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to his Answer of 10 December 2020 to Question 126115 on Public Service: Misconduct, what the Government's timescale is for publish its response to the Law Commission’s report into Misconduct in Public Office; and what plans his Department has to bring forward legislative proposals to introduce statutory offences for misconduct in public office.

Alex Chalk:
The Law Commission published their report on Misconduct in Public Office in December last year. We are currently carefully considering the Law Commission’s report. The Government’s response, together with confirmation of any next steps will be issued within the timeframes outlined in the Joint Protocol between the Law Commission and the Government.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Virtual Proceedings

Sir Mark Hendrick: [145747]

To ask the Leader of the House, whether he plans to (a) make an assessment of the effect on the climate of and (b) estimate the savings accruing to the public purse from virtual participation in proceedings by Members of Parliament.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:
No. The Government firmly believes that our constituents are best served when Parliament meets physically to the fullest extent possible. The cost associated with virtual participation is not a matter for the Government but one for the House.

SCOTLAND

Scotland Office: Marketing

Owen Thompson: [144741]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to Answer of 26 January to Question 141530, how much his Department has spent on (a) communications, (b) advertising and (c) marketing in each month since 1 August 2020.

Mr Alister Jack:
Following best practice set out in the Government Communications Service (GCS) Modern Communications Operating Model (MCOM), the Office is resourced to deliver all of the communications functions and activities expected and required of a government department in its own right and on behalf of the UK Government in Scotland.

(a) Total Office expenditure in each month from August 2020 to December 2020, including staffing, on delivering all of these functions was:

AUGUST 2020	£146,065
September 2020	£124,003
October 2020	£172,091
November 2020	£144,723
December 2020	£101,043

(b) & (c) The Office delivers public information campaigns in Scotland to communicate important messages to the public, such as national awareness campaigns and policy initiatives. Total Office expenditure in each month from August 2020 to December 2020, promoting public information was:

AUGUST 2020	£3,342
September 2020	£11,577
October 2020	£4,244
November 2020	£8,164
December 2020	£7,266

TRANSPORT

Bus Services: Subsidies

Paula Barker: [144874]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to provide emergency bus funding directly to local transport authorities rather than to bus operators.

Rachel Maclean:
Local transport authorities do receive some Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) funding for tendered services. However, to ensure consistency with Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG), the majority of CBSSG funding is paid directly to operators. The Government needs to be confident that the public transport system can restart swiftly as required. We do not believe that now is the right time to change our funding models.

We are also keen to avoid a situation where different funding models are operating in different parts of the country, which would cause additional challenges for cross-border services or operators whose businesses span multiple urban areas.

The allocation of CBSSG funding reflects the structure of the bus market and ensures that both Local Transport Authorities and operators have the funding they need to support up to 100% of pre-pandemic service levels, where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Department for Transport: Marketing

Owen Thompson: [144749]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, 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.

Chris Heaton-Harris:
Please see below estimates of spend by month and territory for the Department for Transport, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. There is no recorded spend for the Vehicle Certification Agency or for the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency during this period.

Department for Transport

England Only

	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
Communications/ marketing spend	£102,389.00	£276,496.00	£286,563.00	£100,628.96	£44,619.00	£810,695.96
Of which Advertising	£0.00	£178,537.00	£192,409.00	£100,039.00	£24,122.00	£495,107.00

England and Wales Only

	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
Communications/ marketing spend	£186,035.45	£287,500.00	£137,352.00	£50,922.00	£177,135.00	£838,944.00
Of which Advertising	£12,819.45	£138,287.00	£71,988.00	£0.00	£0.00	£223,094.45

UK – England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
Communications/ marketing spend	£107.81	£346.92	£25,719.97	£51,271.40	£1,382.59	£78,828.69
Of which Advertising	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency

UK – England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
Communications/ marketing spend	£1,453.00	£1,500.00	£63,226.05	£451,930.082	£256,588.49	£774,668.46

Maritime and Coastguard Agency

England, Wales and Scotland only

	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
Communications/	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£32,000.00	£32,000.00

	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
marketing spend						
Of which Advertising	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£32,000.00	£32,000.00

UK – England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
Communications/ marketing spend	£70,706.00	£16,235.00	£4,726.00	£3,321.00	£1,770.00	£96,758.00
Of which Advertising	£63,000.00	£9,000.00	£1,150.00	£0.00	£0.00	£73,150.00

To note:

- Not all costs for activity in the period stated have been processed yet.
- Where possible advertising costs have been split out. Additional detail can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Standards

Sir Greg Knight: **[145749]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will bring forward proposals to improve the transparency and accountability of the DVLA; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Greg Knight: **[145750]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the level of public satisfaction with the performance and operation of the DVLA; what plans he has to improve that level of satisfaction level; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:
The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s performance measures and achievements against targets are published in its annual report and accounts along with relevant explanations. The latest report is online at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dvla-annual-reports-and-accounts

The 2019-20 version of the document contains the DVLA's governance statement. This ensures DVLA is delivering transparency and accountability and providing the best value for money.

The DVLA carries out regular surveys to measure the level of customer satisfaction. The last report, which covers the period October 2020 to January 2021, showed that 93.05% of customers were satisfied with the service provided to them by the DVLA.

Driving Tests: Coronavirus

Matthew Pennycook: [144779]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of (a) extending driving theory certificates that will expire or have expired before individuals have had the opportunity to take a driving test due to covid-19 restrictions and (b) offering (i) monetary compensation and (ii) free driving theory tests to those individuals.

Rachel Maclean:
There are no plans to make compensation available to those whose theory test certificates have expired. The cost of paying any compensation would fall to the DVSA, and to the feepayer, were the DVSA to put in place arrangements to pay it. This would be unfair to other fee payers who would not benefit from such an arrangement.

In addition, applications for a re-test would need to be validated and systems amended to remove the requirement for payment in these cases. The DVSA's focus should rightly be on developing solutions to address the backlog of practical driving tests that has arisen as a result of the pandemic.

Patricia Gibson: [145802]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what arrangements are in place to ensure that theory driving tests for critical workers can take place during covid-19 restrictions.

Rachel Maclean:
In Scotland, The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 require the suspension of all driving tests and lessons in areas under protection level 4. Currently this includes all of mainland Scotland and the Western Isles. Therefore, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is not able to offer key worker tests in Scotland.

The DVSA is working with its theory test contract provider, Pearson VUE, to respond to requests for theory tests in England and Wales from organisations such as Ambulance Authorities on behalf of frontline mobile emergency workers who require a driving licence to carry out duties in their employment role.

The DVSA is in the process of planning for the resumption of services and increasing test capacity when it is safe to do so. Arrangements will be announced in due course.

Electric Scooters: Pilot Schemes

Rachael Maskell: [145058]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many people have used e-scooters in the e-scooter pilot in (a) York and (b) other cities taking part in that pilot.

Rachel Maclean:
The Department does not currently hold this information. We are working closely with all e-scooter operators and our research contractor to build an e-scooter trials

database for monitoring and evaluation purposes. This will include information on how many people have used e-scooters in each trial area. We are due to start populating this with both historical and real-time data later in February.

Hitachi Rail Europe: Redundancy

Grahame Morris: [145775]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the cost to the public purse of potential redundancies at Hitachi Rail UK Ltd's Bounds Green and Craigentinny Train Maintenance Centres on LNER; and what steps he is taking to reduce those costs.

Chris Heaton-Harris:
LNER directs the day to day operation of their railway services and as a result they are responsible for the management of their contract with Hitachi Rail. However, as LNER is owned and overseen by the Department for Transport's (DfT) Public Sector Operator, DfT OLR Holdings Ltd the Government ultimately holds full cost and revenue risk.

The negotiations between Hitachi Rail and LNER are currently ongoing. The final cost to the taxpayer has not been confirmed at this stage of the negotiations and will depend on a number of factors under discussion, including final agreement on the number of redundancies.

We are in regular contact with both Hitachi Rail and LNER and are monitoring their ongoing discussions with regards to this matter closely. However, these discussions are ultimately a commercial and contractual matter for both parties to negotiate. LNER and Hitachi will need to work together to resolve this issue in a manner that ensures the best outcome for passengers, employees and the taxpayer.

Large Goods Vehicles: UK Trade with EU

Hilary Benn: [144601]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of lorries that have left the UK via (a) the Port of Dover and (b) Eurotunnel from 1 Jan 2021 to the latest date for which information is available.

Rachel Maclean:
The Department for Transport (DfT) does hold estimates of the number of lorries that have left the UK via the Short Strait crossings since the start of the year. However some the data used to estimate this is provided by transport operators on a commercially confidential basis. Whilst these operators may give permission for this data to be shared during periods of specific disruption, the DfT does not have permission to share this information during times of normal running. As such it is not possible to provide this information at this time.

Motorways: Safety

Daniel Kawczynski: [144641]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure all-lane running motorways are safe for drivers.

Rachel Maclean:
On 25 January 2021, the Secretary of State held a meeting with Highways England to discuss progress on the *Smart Motorway Safety Evidence Stocktake and Action Plan*. He has asked for a report setting out progress in delivering the 18-point Action Plan and identifying actions that can be delivered early by 12 March 2021, so any accelerated works can be rapidly put in place.

Park and Ride Schemes

Wera Hobhouse: [144792]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the findings of Transport Focus' report entitled Park and ride for Highways England's roads: a solution to congestion?, published on 30 November 2020, what discussions he has had with Highways England on the steps they are taking to raise awareness of existing park and ride locations among potential users.

Wera Hobhouse: [144793]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to findings of Transport Focus' report entitled Park and ride for Highways England's roads: a solution to congestion?, published on 30 November 2020, what discussions he has had with Highways England on the adequacy of signage from the strategic road network to existing park and rides.

Wera Hobhouse: [144794]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the recommendations of Transport Focus' report entitled Park and ride for Highways England's roads: a solution to congestion?, published on 30 November 2020, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential (a) merits of the making improvements to signage from the strategic road network to existing park and ride locations and (b) effect of making such improvements on contributing towards (i) reductions in nitrogen dioxide emissions levels and (ii) improvements in public health as a result of reducing those nitrogen dioxide emissions.

Rachel Maclean:
Highways England commissioned Transport Focus to produce this report to improve its understanding of road user needs for park and ride facilities, and to identify steps which would help improve journeys.

Highways England is currently considering how to apply the report's recommendations across its network, and how benefits, such as improved air quality will be realised.

Highways England will start the review of park and ride locations in 2021/22.

Roads: Noise

Dr Luke Evans: [144856]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has been made on trialling noise emission cameras on public highways; and what steps he is taking to enable local authorities to engage in trial schemes.

Rachel Maclean:
The Department's initial trials of a prototype acoustic camera have concluded. The Government anticipates the results will be published in the spring following a re-phasing of the work due to pressures arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Options for future work are still under consideration and so the Government cannot commit to trials with any local authorities at this point. Nonetheless, if future research involves road trials, then we would welcome involvement of local authorities to help ensure that any new system is robust.

School Streets Initiative

Ruth Cadbury: [144702]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2020 to Question 116618, what his current estimate is of the timescale for bringing into effect Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 so that local authorities outside London can enforce school streets schemes and other moving traffic offences.

Rachel Maclean:
Work is underway on drafting the regulations needed to bring the Part 6 powers into force. It is not possible at this stage to say exactly when in 2021 the powers will be available to local authorities, but as set out in the previous answer, we expect it will take several months to complete the process.

Taxis: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell: [143832]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the disproportionate covid-19 infection rate in taxis; and what steps he is taking to tackle that issue.

Rachel Maclean:
The impact of COVID-19 on all workers in the transport sector is continually monitored and assessed. In November, the government published guidance regarding actions that drivers, operators and owners of taxis or private hire vehicles (PHVs) can take to protect against coronavirus (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-taxis-and-phvs). The Government will shortly be publishing additional guidance on the use of screens to further improve safety for passengers and drivers.

Transport: Subsidies

Paula Barker: [144872]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to provide covid-19 funding support for (a) light rail (b) buses and (c) active travel.

Rachel Maclean:
To date the Government has announced over £1 billion in emergency grant funding to support the bus sector in England, alongside over £150 million to support light rail. This funding has helped keep services running throughout the pandemic

Over £200 million has been made available to authorities during the current financial year, via the Active Travel Fund, to support an active and green recovery from Covid-19. This will enable them to deliver safe and direct cycling and walking measures in their areas, such as protected cycle lanes, widened pavements, safer junctions and cycle and bus-only corridors.

This is in addition to the issuing of over 100,000 £50 bike repair vouchers to encourage more people to embrace cycling as a means of travel during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond.

Paula Barker: [144873]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with (a) the Urban Transport Group and (b) city region transport authorities on covid-19 funding support.

Rachel Maclean:
Government officials and Ministers are in regular conversation with members of the Urban Transport Group and local transport authorities to understand the challenges faced by city region transport authorities in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. This engagement informs a range of Departmental policies, including the development and administration of Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) funding and Light Rail support funding.

TREASURY

Agency Workers: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Mrs Pauline Latham: [145779]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support he is making available to agency workers who cannot find work and whose agencies will not furlough those workers because they are unwilling or unable to pay national insurance contributions and pension costs.

Paul Blomfield: [145786]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to introduce a redress scheme for people who have been refused furlough by employers during the

covid-19 outbreak because of claims that their employer is unable to afford national insurance and pension contributions.

Jesse Norman:
Since November, employers are only asked to cover National Insurance and employer pension contributions for hours not worked under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). This is lower than the previous level in September and October, and for an average claim accounts for just 5 per cent of total employment costs, or £70 per employee per month. Furthermore, many small employers can benefit from the Employment Allowance for support with their NICs bill, and, since March, businesses have received billions in loans, tax deferrals, Business Rate reliefs, and general and sector-specific grants. This support can be used by businesses to cover the costs of NICs and pension contributions, ensuring that they can continue to furlough their employees.

Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Emma Hardy: **[143889]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to extend the deadline for the first repayment under the Bounce Back Loan scheme until after the January 2021 covid-19 national lockdown is lifted.

John Glen:
Under the Bounce Back Loan scheme, borrowers do not have to make any repayments for the first 12 months of the loan, giving the smallest businesses the breathing space they need during this difficult time. In addition, the Government covers the first 12 months of interest payments charged to the business by the lender.

In order to give businesses further support and flexibility in making their repayments, the Chancellor has announced “Pay as You Grow” (PAYG) options. PAYG will give businesses the option to repay their Bounce Back loan over ten years, reducing their average monthly repayments on the loan by almost half. Furthermore, businesses will also have the option to move temporarily to interest-only payments for periods of up to six months (an option which they can use up to three times), or to pause their repayments entirely for up to six months (an option they can use once and only after having made six payments).

Taken together, the 12-month payment holiday and interest-free period for borrowers, along with the PAYG options, provide a generous support package, giving businesses the time to get back on their feet.

Business: Coronavirus

Sir Mark Hendrick: **[143695]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department takes to consider the mental health of (a) business owners and (b) employees when providing financial support during the covid-19 outbreak.

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

To support business owners, the government has implemented a package of support, including the Local Restrictions Support Grant, providing closed businesses with a grant of up to £3,000 per month. Local authorities have also recently received an additional £500 million, to a total of £1.6 billion, of discretionary funding to allow them to support their local businesses.

To support employees, The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has been extended until the end of April. This provides a substantial grant for employers to cover 80% of the wages of their employees.

At the Spending Review 2020, the Chancellor announced an additional £500 million 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 23/24.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme

Caroline Lucas: [143731]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which companies with 250 or more employees have (a) received funding from the Large Business Interruption Scheme and (b) made use of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to cover the pay of their employees; how much each company has received from each scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:
As of 24 January 2021, 696 loans have been approved under the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme, with a total value of £5.14 billion.

In total, the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme has received 1,091 applications. The applications figure includes approved applications; applications that are still to be processed; applications that have been declined; and applications that may turn out not to be eligible or cases where customers have decided not to proceed.

The department does not hold data on the number of people employed by each business.

On 26 January HMRC published a list of employers that claimed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) in respect of December claim periods. This will be followed in February by an indication of the amount claimed for the same

period. HMRC's obligation is set out in the direction that extended the scheme in November.

HMRC release official CJRS statistics monthly which break down claims using various categories, including employer size.

HMRC are unable to provide details of claims relating to specific employers for claim periods before December 2020.

Coronavirus: Disease Control

Sir Mark Hendrick: [143699]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he is putting contingency plans in place in the event that the covid-19 lockdown continues until (a) summer and (b) autumn 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:
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.

Coronavirus: Key Workers

Afzal Khan: [143900]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to provide financial support to frontline key workers who are at high risk of exposure to (a) covid-19 and (b) Long Covid.

Steve Barclay:
Throughout this crisis, the government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK. To support public services in responding to COVID-19, the government announced a further £55 billion of new funding for public services in 2021-22 in the 2020 Spending Review.

Workers who are clinically extremely vulnerable and advised to shield, but unable to work from home, can access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, if they meet the wider eligibility criteria.

In cases where their employer chooses not to furlough them under the CJRS and does not have other suitable policies in place (e.g. the ability to work from home, or the provision of special leave), Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is available. Those who receive a notification that they need to shield from going to work if they cannot work from home, will be eligible for SSP from their employer, or new style Employment and

Support Allowance, subject to the wider eligibility criteria. Where an individual's income is reduced while off work sick and they require further financial support, for example where they are not eligible for SSP, they may be able to claim Universal Credit, depending on their personal circumstances.

Developing Countries: Debts

Preet Kaur Gill: [145837]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the amount of (a) interest and (b) principal on debt paid by low income countries to private creditors in 2020.

Preet Kaur Gill: [145838]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January 2021 to Question 133105, whether it is his policy that paying interest or principal on debt to private creditors represents funds being spent responsibly.

John Glen:
The UK, alongside the G20 and the Paris Club of official creditors has committed to a temporary suspension of debt payments for any country that is IDA-eligible or on the UN's list of Least Developed Countries. As of 13 November 2020, 46 countries have requested to benefit from the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), amounting to an estimated USD 5.7bn of 2020 debt service deferral.

Beneficiary countries commit to use the freed-up resources to increase social, health or economic spending in response to the Covid-19 crisis. This will be monitored by the IMF and World Bank.

Where requested by the borrowing government, we strongly encourage private creditors to suspend debt service payments, in line with the Terms of Reference for Voluntary Private Sector Participation developed by the Institute of International Finance (IIF).

Beyond the DSSI, the UK is strongly supportive of the implementation of the Common Framework for future debt treatments which will facilitate quicker and simpler restructurings where required, with fair burden sharing between all official and private sector creditors.

Employment: Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade

Sir Mark Hendrick: [143697]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his Department's long-term strategy is on protecting jobs in the (a) hospitality, (b) leisure and (c) retail sector.

Kemi Badenoch:
Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic the Government has worked closely with the hospitality, leisure, and retail sector to understand the impact the pandemic has had, and how to protect jobs in these sectors.

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

The wholesale and retail sector are responsible for the greatest total value of claims up to the end of October at £8 billion, supporting over 1.8 million jobs. In addition, by the end of October, the accommodation and food services sector had claimed £6.9 billion supporting over 1.6 million jobs, and the arts entertainment and recreation sector £2 billion supporting over 450,000 jobs. The Government continue to take a flexible approach and extended the CJRS to support jobs and provide businesses with certainty over the coming months.

In line with the extension to the CJRS, the Government also recently announced an extension to the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) until April 2021, to support self-employed individuals, across the UK, whose businesses have been adversely impacted by Covid-19, which is particularly important for the leisure sector.

The job support schemes come in addition to the wide-ranging package of business support available that will indirectly support jobs in these sectors, including protecting businesses with cash grants, Government backed finance through loan schemes, ‘Pay as You Grow’ long-term repayments options, a VAT deferral for up to 12 months, a 12-month business rates holiday; and a moratorium on evictions to protect commercial tenants.

The Government keeps all available business support under review and is continuing to collect evidence on the impact of the pandemic on these industries.

Mortgages: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas: **[143729]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January 2021 to Question 134541, if he will make it his policy to (a) increase the permitted length of mortgage payment holidays for borrowers in financial distress and (b) extend the current payment holiday period end date beyond 31 July 2021; what estimate he has made of the number of homes likely to be repossessed after 31 July 2021 under the Government's plans to end mortgage payment holidays after that date; whether he has held discussions with the FCA on extending mortgage holiday support beyond 31 July 2021; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:
For borrowers that have already taken a full six months payment holiday, the Financial Conduct Authority’s guidance sets out that firms should continue to provide support through tailored forbearance options for those borrowers that are facing ongoing financial difficulties. This could include granting new mortgage payment holidays beyond 31 July. As part of this guidance any forbearance granted beyond six months of payment holidays will be reflected on the consumer’s credit file in the

usual manner. As borrowers still requiring assistance after that point could be in serious financial distress the FCA believe it is right that lenders are able to understand their financial position in order to lend responsibly.

The Government is continuing to work with the FCA, UK Finance and mortgage lenders to review the support available for mortgage consumers throughout the pandemic.

Caroline Lucas: [143730]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many new mortgage payment holidays have been offered by lenders to borrowers that have already taken a full six months payment holiday; what information he holds on the duration of mortgage payment holidays agreed under the current scheme; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:
Published figures from UK mortgage lenders show the number of consumers who have taken a mortgage payment holiday. As at the end of December 2020, this data showed approximately 2.75 million mortgage payment deferrals had been provided to UK borrowers.

Mortgage holidays have provided support for households to manage their finances during a period of hardship and uncertainty.

Mortgages: Interest Rates

Stephanie Peacock: [145841]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government has taken to ensure that base rate cuts are passed on by lenders to mortgage prisoners.

John Glen:
The Financial Conduct Authority have written to all closed-book firms following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, encouraging them to pass on base rate reductions in accordance with their fair treatment guidelines.

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. The Government is committed to helping mortgage prisoners where they will see genuine benefit and will continue to work with the Financial Conduct Authority and industry to provide switching options for borrowers with an inactive lender.

Mortgages: Private Rented Housing

Mike Kane: [145037]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether landlords securing a buy-to-let mortgage holiday in response to the covid-19 outbreak are required to pay back suspended payments on the remainder of the term of their mortgage.

John Glen:
Mortgage holidays have provided support for borrowers to manage their finances during a period of uncertainty. Borrowers will still need to repay the full balance of their loan, and will continue to accrue interest during the payment holiday, unless the lender has indicated otherwise. There are various options for managing this, for example, by increasing their remaining monthly payments, or by adding an extension to the term. Borrowers should talk to their lender to understand the options they offer.

Population

Sir Mark Hendrick: [143698]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the (a) UK's ageing population and (b) recent reduction in annual birth rate.

Kemi Badenoch:
It is the responsibility of the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) to publish analysis of the sustainability of the public finances. The OBR published its latest projections in its July 2020 Fiscal Sustainability Report. This incorporated its assessment of the effect of changing demographics on the public finances. The OBR expects demographic change and other cost pressures in health spending to put upward pressure on public spending while leaving revenues broadly unchanged.

The government is committed to fiscal sustainability and ensuring the long-term health of the public finances, and HM Treasury continues to review the UK's fiscal framework to ensure it remains appropriate for both the macroeconomic context and the longer-term pressures related to demographic change. The government will set out further details on its plans to put the public finances back on a sustainable footing when the economic uncertainty surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic recedes. The OBR's FSR provides important analysis and scenarios which will be used to inform this review, alongside a consideration of the regularly updated population projections provided by the ONS.

Rents: Arrears

Mike Kane: [145036]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on tenant credit scores of rent arrears that have accumulated since covid- 19 lockdown measures started in March 2020.

John Glen:
Rental payments are not typically recorded on an individual's credit file.

However, the Government identified that rental data could be used to contribute to the overall picture of a tenant's financial position if it were recorded and shared in the same way as other credit payments.

That is why in 2018 the Government launched the Rent Recognition Challenge. This £2 million prize fund challenged firms to develop applications that enable rental

tenants to record and share their rental payment data with lenders and credit reference agencies (CRAs) with the aim to help them boost their credit scores, access credit and get on the housing ladder.

The three winners of the challenge, CreditLadder, Bud and RentalStep, are now all using technology to verify and record tenants' rental payments, which includes apps for borrowers to download and use. Since launching their rent recognition service, CreditLadder has recorded more than £250 million in users' rental payments and Bud continue to work with large lenders such as HSBC.

Where a tenant who has chosen to have their rental payment data shared with a credit reference agency is in arrears, it could have a negative impact on their credit history and may restrict them from gaining access to credit in the future.

To ensure renters can continue to afford their housing costs during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has put in place an unprecedented package of support. These measures include increasing Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit and a significant investment in the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) of nearly £1 billion this financial year. For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments funding is available.

Self-Employment Income Support Scheme

John Healey: [145739]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to provide self-employed workers with 80 per cent of their profits prior to the start of the covid-19 outbreak in the fourth Self-Employed Income Support Scheme grant.

Sir Charles Walker: [145754]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish details on the level of the next Self-Employment Income Support Scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:
The Government recognises the importance of supporting the self-employed during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) provides generous support to self-employed people who meet the eligibility criteria.

There will be a fourth SEISS grant covering February to April 2021. Further details on the SEISS, including the fourth grant, will be announced on 3 March.

Stamp Duty Land Tax: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper: [145885]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 21 December 2020 to Question 129164, if he will extend the stamp duty holiday as a result of the extended period of lockdown causing unavoidable delays to the completion of house sales.

Kemi Badenoch:
The temporary increase in the Stamp Duty Land Tax nil rate band was designed to create immediate momentum within the property market, where property transactions fell by as much as 50 per cent during the COVID-19 lockdown in March.

The Government is closely monitoring delays in the buying process. As the relief was to provide an immediate stimulus to the property market, the Government does not plan to extend this relief.

Stock Market: Internet

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [145860]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of online trading platforms and commonly used phone-based trading apps on levels of manipulation of (a) stock markets and (b) stock prices through decisions to pause the buying of stocks while continuing to allow the selling of those same stocks.

John Glen:
The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is responsible for monitoring UK financial markets for market manipulation. The FCA does not differentiate between trading on smartphone ‘apps’ or online platforms, and more traditional methods, when it comes to monitoring and enforcing market conduct rules.

As set out in the FCA’s statement of 29 January, broking firms are not obliged to offer trading facilities to clients and may withdraw or suspend services if it is necessary or prudent to do so. The FCA statement also said that they would take appropriate action wherever they see evidence of UK firms or individuals causing harm to UK consumers or markets.

The Government recognises that the pace and creativity of innovation in UK financial services creates new opportunities for businesses and consumers to participate in markets through technologies such as app-based platforms. However, investors should be aware that investing in securities comes with risks. The FCA’s statement of 29 January noted that any losses that result from such investments are unlikely to be covered under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

Stocks and Shares: Artificial Intelligence

Chi Onwurah: [145016]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the ability of the financial regulatory framework to respond to the effect of artificial intelligence on the trading of equities, bonds and derivatives.

John Glen:
On 9 November 2020, the Chancellor set out in his speech to the House on the Future of Financial Services his commitment to ensuring that innovative technology delivers better outcomes for both consumers and businesses, and that the UK’s regulatory environment is ready to manage the implications of technological change.

The regulators regularly consider the impact of technological change on financial markets, working closely with the sector. As an example, on 12 October 2020, the Bank of England and the Financial Conduct Authority co-chaired the first Artificial Intelligence Public Private Forum, bringing together financial services firms, tech firms, regulators, and industry standards bodies to collectively investigate how developments in artificial intelligence are driving change in financial markets. The Forum will conduct an ongoing assessment of the practical challenges AI presents to the financial services industry, and collate views on potential areas where principles, guidance, regulation or examples of best practices could help to ensure the safe adoption of these technologies.

Termination of Employment: Coronavirus

Jamie Stone: [145857]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that people who have been refused furlough by their employer during the covid-19 outbreak have been issued with a P45.

Jesse Norman:
It is for an employer to decide whether to offer furlough to their employees; employers are under no obligation to participate in the scheme.

Under the Income Tax (Pay As You Earn) Regulations 2003, employers must issue a P45 when an employee stops working for them.

If HMRC were made aware that a P45 had not been provided, HMRC may attempt to contact the employer. Consideration could also be given as to whether HMRC's Employer Compliance staff should intervene to obtain the P45.

WALES

[Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Stephen Doughty: [911558]

What recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on financial support for people in Wales affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Simon Hart:
I have regular discussions with my Rt. Hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on our financial support to people affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. The Government has provided £9.3bn of additional support UK-wide through the welfare system for people affected by COVID-19 including a £20 per week increase to Universal Credit.

Carolyn Harris: [911560]

What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on support for Welsh businesses affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Simon Hart:
I have regular discussions with my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on support for Welsh businesses. Wales is benefitting directly from UK Government support to enable businesses and employees to get through Covid. This support already amounts to over two billion pounds for businesses across Wales.

Local Growth Deals: Wales

Marco Longhi: [911557]

What progress his Department has made on signing new Growth Deals in Wales.

Rob Roberts: [911559]

What progress his Department has made on signing new Growth Deals in Wales.

David T C Davies:
It gives me great pleasure to announce that we signed a Final Deal Agreement for the North Wales Growth Deal on 17 December 2020.

We also successfully agreed Heads of Terms for a Mid Wales Growth Deal on 22 December with a view to negotiating a Final Deal Agreement at pace.

When this is signed, it will mean that the whole of Wales will be covered by £790m of UK Government City and Growth Deal funding.

Manufacturing Industries: Wales

Tony Lloyd: [911554]

What steps the Government is taking to support the manufacturing industry in Wales.

David T C Davies:
We have provided over 2.7 billion pounds in direct support to businesses in Wales, and our Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution will mobilise 12 billion pounds of government investment to stimulate manufacturing across the UK. We have also extended the 1 million pounds annual investment allowance to stimulate investment in UK manufacturing.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

Equality

Marsha De Cordova: [143906]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 137304 on Equality, what the evidential basis is for her assessment in that Answer that the socio-economic duty provided for by the Equality Act 2010 could become a general due regard duty with the potential to become a tick-box exercise, complied with to minimise the risk of legal challenge rather than to promote real change in social mobility.

Kemi Badenoch:
The socio-economic duty in the Equality Act is, as the legislation stands, a "due regard" duty, and therefore similar in form to the public sector equality duty, which is also a "due regard" duty.

The way that the public sector equality duty is used by some public authorities, as a tick-box exercise, has been criticised on various occasions, including in the 2013 Hayward Review of the Duty; by the 2015-16 House of Lords Committee on the Equality Act 2010 and Disability; and in a number of court judgments, for instance London and Quadrant Housing Trust v Patrick (2019).

For these reasons this Government, like its Conservative predecessors, thinks that it is better to focus on specific policies and practical actions that will deliver real change in tackling poverty and promoting social mobility – for example in education, through a reformed welfare system, and in following through on our manifesto commitment to greater developmental devolution in England and rebalancing the economy with the introduction of schemes such as the Towns Fund.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Access to Work Programme

Marion Fellows: [145807]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the (a) average and (b) median response time is for disabled workers to receive a decision on their Access to Work application.

Justin Tomlinson:
The information requested about average and median waiting times for decisions on applications for people who have applied for support from Access to Work is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

Disability: Public Consultation

Marion Fellows: [145806]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she plans to consult on the National Strategy for Disabled People.

Justin Tomlinson:
The Government is committed to transforming the lives of disabled people, and will publish the National Strategy for Disabled People this year.

It will be informed by insights from the lived experience of disabled people, and will focus on the issues that disabled people say are most important across all aspects of life, from transport to education, and housing to employment. On Friday 15th January, we launched the online UK Disability Survey, which complements the range of engagement already undertaken and ongoing, including lived experience research with disabled people, discussions with the Disabled Charities Consortium, the

Regional Stakeholder Networks and others. Contributions to the survey will feed not only into the development of the strategy but also its delivery.

Employment: Disability

Marion Fellows: [145803]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will collect data on the percentage of applicants who have reported that their employer refused to make reasonable adjustments for their disabilty to inform the proposed National Strategy for Disabled People.

Marion Fellows: [145804]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the percentage of employers that (a) have a disability leave policy, and (b) allow homeworking to their staff as a reasonable adjustment to inform the proposed National Strategy for Disabled People.

Justin Tomlinson:
The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for an employer or potential employer to discriminate against a disabled employee or job applicant because of their disability. Specifically, the Equality Act requires employers to make reasonable adjustments in relation to the disabled employee's job or application for a job.

The Government plans to publish a National Strategy for Disabled People this year to ensure that all disabled people can play a full role in society. The strategy will focus on the issues that disabled people say affect them the most in all aspects of life, including employment.

Marion Fellows: [145805]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her department make an assessment of the percentage of employers who publish the percentage of disabled staff (a) they employ, and (b) they employ by pay grade.

Justin Tomlinson:
Government has worked with large employers and expert partners to develop a voluntary reporting framework (VRF) to support organisations to record and voluntarily report information on disability, mental health and wellbeing in the workplace; thereby encouraging employers to be more transparent and start having open conversations about disability and health at work. We continue to work with employers and expert partners to promote its usage, including requiring new and renewing Disability Confident Leaders (Level 3) to use it. However, there is no requirement for companies to notify Government if they have signed up to the framework and are publishing this data.

Food Banks: Voucher Schemes

Paula Barker: [144875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many foodbank vouchers have been provided to claimants of all types by her Department in (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21 to date.

Will Quince:
This information is not available. The Department for Work and Pensions does not make direct referrals to food banks or issue claimants with food bank vouchers. Jobcentre staff can signpost customers in writing to a food bank where they have asked for details, and if all sources of statutory support have been exhausted.

Throughout the pandemic, this Government has delivered an unprecedented package of support to protect jobs and businesses and, for those in most need, injected billions into the welfare system. The new Covid Winter Grant Scheme builds on that support with an additional £170m for local authorities in England, to support families with children and other vulnerable people with the cost of food and essential utilities this winter.

Kickstart Scheme

Sir Mike Penning: [141414]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of successful applications to the Kickstart Scheme were from (a) companies applying individually for over 30 applicants and (b) companies applying for less than 30 applicants through a Gateway scheme; and if she will make a statement.

Mims Davies:
[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: The Kickstart scheme has seen high interest from applicants seeking to offer young people job placements. As such, the numbers of applications are fast-moving. As of 21/01/2021 there have been over 6,500 applications for funding from the Department for Work and Pensions' Kickstart Scheme, some 6,000 of these having had final decisions made with over 2,000 of them being approved.

(a) Of the 2,000, there have been around 500 approved applications from employers applying directly with 30 or more jobs, representing 25% of all approved applications so far.

(b) Of the 2,000, there have been over 1,500 approved applications from prospective gateway organisations, representing 75% of all approved applications so far.

Kickstart Scheme: North East

Cat Smith: [140161]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Kickstart Scheme, how many and what proprotion of Kickstart work placements have been created in the North East.

Mims Davies:
The location of Kickstart jobs is not known until bidders have signed their grant agreement and provided full details of the role in the format which enables us to make it available for work coaches to refer suitable young people. We are not currently able to provide regional breakdowns of data.

Kickstart Scheme: North West

Cat Smith: [140160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Kickstart Scheme, how many and what proportion of Kickstart work placements have been created in the North West.

Mims Davies:
[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The location of Kickstart jobs is not known until bidders have signed their grant agreement and provided full details of the role in the format which enables us to make it available for work coaches to refer suitable young people. We are not currently able to provide regional breakdowns of data.

Pneumoconiosis: Grants

Stephanie Peacock: [145089]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of including pneumoconiosis in the D1 category in assessments on miners' ability to claim pneumoconiosis support grants.

Stephanie Peacock: [145090]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of including industrial diseases such as pneumoconiosis in the D1 category in assessments on the ability of miners to claim compensation.

Stephanie Peacock: [145840]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which diseases are included in the D1 category her Department uses for assessments for industrial injuries disablement benefits.

Justin Tomlinson:
Due to COVID-19, face-to-face assessments for all disability benefits including the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) have been suspended since March 2020.

We have continued to process IIDB claims and lump sum payments for those individuals with terminal illnesses, and those for Fast Track prescribed diseases. These claims have continued to be assessed as usual without the need for a face to face assessment.

Eligibility to the Pneumoconiosis Etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979 ('1979 Act') is dependent on an individual having an IIDB assessment and their age at the time of

this assessment. However, they will not be entitled to '1979 Act' compensation payment if they have already had a payment from the Coal Workers Compensation Scheme.

We have now begun some paper based assessments for certain prescribed diseases. This allows a decision on such claims and will enable claimants to determine their eligibility to the '1979 Act'. At present the paper based approach includes claims for pneumoconiosis (D1) disease and miners with exposure to coal dust are potentially eligible for the '1979 Act'.

Assessing these cases on paper means that we can reduce the overall backlog and give some claimants the awards they are entitled to.

Disease number D1 covers pneumoconiosis which includes silicosis and asbestosis.

More information, including a list of diseases which are covered by IIDB and the kinds of jobs which are included can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-injuries-disablement-benefits-technical-guidance/industrial-injuries-disablement-benefits-technical-guidance#:~:text=Industrial%20Injuries%20Disablement%20Benefit%20is,a%20list%20of%20prescribed%20diseases.

Self-employed: Coronavirus

Dame Diana Johnson: **[144632]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support her Department is providing for self-employed parents not able to work whilst schools are closed during covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Mims Davies:
[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: The government have provided more than £280 billion of support to protect jobs and livelihoods. We have delivered extensive support packages for businesses and the self-employed, including SEISS, bounce back loans, and business interruption loans. In addition to this for self-employed people claiming Universal Credit, we have suspended the application of the Minimum Income Floor (MIF) until April 2021. This means that that a drop in earnings due to sickness or self-isolation, or as a result of the impact of the outbreak, will be reflected in a claimant's award.

Sick Pay

Dame Diana Johnson: **[144966]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to improve guidance on claiming statutory sick pay.

Justin Tomlinson:
Employers are legally required to pay Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) to employees who are sick or incapable of work, where employees meet the qualifying conditions. It is paid in the same way as an employee's salary.

Throughout the pandemic we have ensured the pages on Gov.UK relating to SSP have been regularly updated in line with changes affecting eligibility for SSP.

The pages on Gov.UK provide extensive information and support to employees regarding the circumstances in which they may be eligible for SSP and what evidence they need to provide to their employer. Additionally there is specific guidance for employers explaining which employees may be eligible for SSP and when employers should start paying SSP. There is a calculator to support employers to understand how much SSP to pay. There is also clear guidance on how small and medium employers can reclaim up to two weeks of coronavirus-related SSP.

If individuals think their employer's decision not to pay SSP is wrong, or that they're not getting the right amount of SSP, they can raise a dispute with HMRC.

Background

To be eligible for SSP, you must:

- be classed as an employee and have done some work for your employer;
- earn an average of at least £120 per week;
- have been ill, self-isolating or 'shielding' for at least 4 days in a row (including non-working days).

To receive SSP employees must tell their employer that they are off sick before the deadline the employer has set (or within 7 days if they have not set one).

Universal Credit

Ian Murray: **[145774]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant of the Answer of 28 January 2021 to Question 142894 on Universal Credit, for what reason her Department will not publish that data.

Will Quince:
The Department does not currently make estimates of UC take-up rates.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Subsidy control – Designing a new approach for the UK

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng):

[HCWS754]

The Government is today publishing a consultation on 'Subsidy control – Designing a new approach for the UK". The consultation period will last for 8 weeks.

Now that we have left the European Union (EU), the UK has the freedom to design our own subsidy control regime that is tailored to the UK's national interests. The new system, which will be the long-term replacement for the EU's prescriptive State aid regime, will be designed to be more flexible, agile and tailored to support business growth and innovation as well as maintain a competitive market economy and protect the UK internal market. It will better enable the Government to deliver on key priorities such as levelling up economic growth in the regions, tackling climate change, as well as supporting our economic recovery as we build back better from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Unlike the EU's State aid rules, which were designed for the particular circumstances of the EU, our own bespoke regime should work for the specific needs of the UK economy whilst also meeting our international commitments. Under the proposed UK system, local authorities, public bodies and the devolved administrations in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast will be empowered to design taxpayer subsidies by following a set of UK-wide principles. These principles will ensure subsidies are designed to deliver strong benefits and good value for money for the UK taxpayer, while being awarded in a timely and effective way.

This consultation invites views from businesses, civil society, think tanks, academics, public authorities, and the devolved administrations to ensure our new approach works for the UK economy and supports businesses and jobs in every part of the country. The Government is seeking views on any additions to the subsidy control principles that will underpin the regime, the appropriate role for an independent body within the new system and how best to ensure that subsidies deliver strong benefits, whilst minimising the risk from potentially harmful and distortive subsidies.

Subject to the outcomes of this consultation, the Government will bring forward primary legislation to establish in domestic law a system of subsidy control that works throughout the UK.

I will place copies of the Consultation in the Libraries of the House, and it can also be found on Gov.uk.

CABINET OFFICE

Census 2021, England and Wales

Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith): [HCWS755]

The census for England and Wales is scheduled to take place on 21 March 2021. The census is delivered for the UK Government and the Welsh Government by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), based on its recommendations published in the December 2018 White Paper 'Help Shape Our Future' [CM 9745].

The information the census provides on the population, their characteristics, education, religion, ethnicity, working life and health, ensures that decisions made by national and local government, community groups, charities and business, are based on the best information possible. This enables a wide range of services and future planning to better serve communities and individuals across England and Wales.

This will be a digital-first census answered primarily online. The ONS has a target for online completion of 75 per cent. People will be encouraged to respond online if they can on their mobile phones, laptops, PCs or tablets. Help will be available for those who need assistance and members of the public who prefer to complete a paper form will be able to do so.

In the context of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the safety of the public and the census field force is of the utmost importance to the Government and the ONS. The ONS has designed Census 2021 to be simple, straightforward and safe to complete, to ensure that everyone can be safely counted. Its assessment is that Census 2021 can be carried out safely and securely with the flexibility built into their operation to respond to any changes in risk levels or guidance. The main census field operation will begin only after Census Day. Field staff will never enter people's houses; they will be supplied with PPE, will always be socially distanced and will work in line with all government guidance.

The ONS has already launched its schools campaign; its national media campaign will be launched in the coming weeks telling people that Census 2021 is coming and the benefits of the census. On 22 January, the ONS published a statement on the importance of going ahead with the Census in March 2021 and how they plan to do this safely for the public and census staff. This statement is available on the ONS website: https://www.ons.gov.uk/news/statementsandletters/census2021andcoronavirus

Census plans have often had to anticipate and respond to events; for example, twenty years ago the census was delivered effectively during the foot and mouth crisis.

Other countries have been able to carry out their census activities during the pandemic, for example, the USA. The ONS have learnt valuable lessons from these experiences.

Following the ONS's advice, the Government is confident that Census 2021 will be successful and provide a wealth of data reflecting the society we live in today, enabling national and local government, community groups, charities and businesses to better serve communities and individuals across England and Wales.

The census in Northern Ireland will take place at the same time as England and Wales; the census in Scotland will take place in March 2022 following the decision taken by the Scottish Government last year.

TREASURY

Billing Authorities Update

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman): **[HCWS756]**

Local Government is responsible for the administration of non-domestic rates in England. As part of this function, billing authorities will shortly begin preparing to issue annual rates bills to businesses. Nevertheless, as authorities will be aware, my right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will make the Budget Statement on 3 March 2021. The Budget will set out the next phase of the Government's plans to tackle the virus, protect jobs and support business. Billing authorities in England should therefore consider issuing business rates bills after the Chancellor has set out his plan at the Budget.

The Government recognises the crucial work local authorities continue to do to support the pandemic response; by their taking this action, it believes it is in the public interest to avoid any potential confusion for businesses and to avoid the cost of having to re-bill businesses in light of any measures that may be included in the Budget.