



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 5 February 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:41 P.M., 05 February 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[145099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment the Government has made of the effect on independent retailers of the repayment of bounce back loans before the end of the covid-19 lockdown.

Paul Scully:

The Government launched the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) to ensure that the smallest businesses could access loans of up to £50,000 to help businesses through this difficult period. Under BBLs no repayments are due from the borrower for the first 12 months of the loan, giving 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.

We have always been clear that businesses are responsible for repaying any finance they take out. However, we recognise that some borrowers will benefit from flexibility for their repayments. That is why we announced the Pay As You Grow measures.

Pay As You Grow will provide Bounce Back Loan borrowers more time and flexibility over their repayments by giving them the option to:

- Extend the length of the loan from six years to ten.
- Make interest-only payments for six months, with the option to use this up to three times throughout the loan.
- Once six payments have been made, have the option of a six-month repayment holiday.

Businesses will be able to use these options either individually or in combination with each other. In addition, they have the option to fully repay their loan early and will face no early repayment charges for doing so.

Together, the 12-month payment holiday and interest-free period for borrowers, along with the Pay As You Grow measures, provide a generous support package giving businesses the time to get back on their feet.

The Government continues to enhance its engagement with a broad range of trade and representative bodies, in particular SME networks, to continue to understand the impact of Covid-19 on businesses and the concerns they have.

■ Business: Coronavirus**Fleur Anderson:**[\[145159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support he is offering to businesses that have been allowed to remain open but suffered a significant loss in income due to reduced trade and footfall during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Local Authorities have been provided with funding via the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). The ARG is a discretionary scheme aimed to support businesses, including those that have not been mandated to close but have had their trade adversely affected by the nationalised restrictions.

Local Authorities have been allocated a further £500m in discretionary funding via the ARG, in addition to £1.1bn already allocated in November 2020. Local Authorities can use the ARG to support businesses in their local area, as they see fit.

During the period of localised restrictions, Local Authorities were provided with similar discretionary funding via the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) when entering Tier 2 (High) or Tier 3 (Very High) restrictions.

■ Carbon Emissions**Luke Pollard:**[\[145145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the net zero strategy will be published; and whether it will include the emissions reductions required to meet the UK's 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution of reducing emissions by 68 per cent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government will publish a comprehensive Net Zero Strategy this year, ahead of COP26. The strategy will set out our vision for transitioning to a net zero economy so we can make the most of new growth and employment opportunities across the UK.

We have a robust legislative framework in place to ensure that the government is meeting its climate targets. The Climate Change Act 2008 introduced our innovative framework of carbon budgets to ensure continued progress towards our climate targets. The carbon budgets currently set in legislation cover the period between 2008 to 2032 and are among the most stringent in the world, requiring the equivalent of a 57% cut in emissions by 2030 from a 1990 baseline. We will set the sixth carbon budget this year and will set out our plans on continuing to meet our climate targets.

Through my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan and our Energy White Paper, we have set out concrete steps we will take to build back greener from the pandemic and reach net zero emissions by 2050. Over the coming months, in addition to the Net Zero Strategy, we will bring forward further bold proposals to cut emissions and create new jobs and industries across the whole country.

■ Companies: Meetings

Helen Hayes: [\[146962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to review the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 with reference to provisions for virtual company AGMs in light of the third covid-19 lockdown.

Helen Hayes: [\[146963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with (a) representatives of business and (b) other stakeholders on the expiry of provisions for virtual AGMs under the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: The Department keeps under constant review the ongoing need for the range of easements and support mechanisms it has put in place to assist companies in light of the Coronavirus pandemic. Ministerial colleagues, Departmental officials and I have frequent discussions with a broad range of stakeholders on these and other matters.

■ Coronavirus: Research

Lee Anderson: [\[144844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support long term studies into covid-19 immunity.

Nadhim Zahawi:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has invested nearly £500 million towards 2,200 new research and innovation initiatives, both in the UK and globally. These initiatives are diverse and include research into Covid-19 immunity.

UKRI and the National Institute for Health Research have announced a joint £8.4 million investment towards three studies, which investigate major unanswered questions related to Covid-19 immunity.

Led by the University of Birmingham, the UK Coronavirus Immunology Consortium will receive £6.5 million to investigate key questions, such as how long Covid-19 immunity lasts, why some people's immune systems are better able to fight off the virus, and why some immune responses cause damage.

The Humoral Immune Correlates of Covid-19 consortium, led by the University of Cambridge and Royal Papworth Hospital, will receive £1.5 million to study molecules produced by the immune system to fight infection.

A third study, led by the University of Edinburgh, will receive £394,000 to investigate key features of fatal Covid-19 and the impact the virus has on the lungs and other vital organs.

The current overall UKRI portfolio of Covid-19-related grants, including awards supported by Innovate UK, involves vaccine projects that provide greater diversity of

approaches than for the first generation of vaccines developed. More details can be found on the UKRI website.

Lee Anderson:

[\[144847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support research into new SARS-CoV-2 variants.

Nadhim Zahawi:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has invested nearly £500 million towards 2,200 new research and innovation initiatives, both in the UK and globally. These initiatives are diverse and include research into new SARS-CoV-2 variants.

The University of Liverpool is part of a new national research project to study the effects of emerging mutations in SARS-CoV-2. Supported by £2.5 million of funding from UKRI, the G2P-UK National Virology Consortium will study how mutations in the virus affect key outcomes. This includes factors such as how transmissible the virus is, the severity of COVID-19 caused, and the effectiveness of vaccines and treatments.

The Consortium will bring together leading virologists from 10 research institutions including the University of Liverpool. The university will work alongside the COVID-19 Genomics UK (COG-UK) consortium, which plays a world-leading role in virus genome sequencing, as well as Public Health England, to boost the UK's capacity to study newly identified virus variants and rapidly inform the Government's policy.

The current overall UKRI portfolio of COVID-19-related grants, including awards supported by Innovate UK, involves vaccine projects that provide greater diversity of approaches than for the first generation of vaccines developed. More details can be found on the UKRI website.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[144884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support research into new covid-19 variants.

Nadhim Zahawi:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has invested nearly £500 million towards 2,200 new research and innovation initiatives, both in the UK and globally. These initiatives are diverse and include research into new COVID-19 variants.

The University of Liverpool is part of a new national research project to study the effects of emerging mutations in SARS-CoV-2. Supported by £2.5 million of funding from UKRI, the G2P-UK National Virology Consortium will study how mutations in the virus affect key outcomes. This includes factors such as how transmissible the virus is, the severity of COVID-19 caused, and the effectiveness of vaccines and treatments.

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genome sequencing, as well as Public Health England, to boost the UK's capacity to study newly identified virus variants and rapidly inform the Government's policy.

The current overall UKRI portfolio of COVID-19-related grants, including awards supported by Innovate UK, involves vaccine projects that provide greater diversity of approaches than for the first generation of vaccines developed. More details can be found on the UKRI website.

Kim Johnson:

[\[145176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support research into new SARS-CoV-2 variants.

Nadhim Zahawi:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has invested nearly £500 million towards 2,200 new research and innovation initiatives, both in the UK and globally. These initiatives are diverse and include research into new SARS-CoV-2 variants.

The University of Liverpool is part of a new national research project to study the effects of emerging mutations in SARS-CoV-2. Supported by £2.5 million of funding from UKRI, the G2P-UK National Virology Consortium will study how mutations in the virus affect key outcomes. This includes factors such as how transmissible the virus is, the severity of COVID-19 caused, and the effectiveness of vaccines and treatments.

The Consortium will bring together leading virologists from 10 research institutions, including the University of Liverpool. The university will work alongside the COVID-19 Genomics UK (COG-UK) consortium, which plays a world-leading role in virus genome sequencing, as well as Public Health England, to boost the UK's capacity to study newly identified virus variants and rapidly inform the Government's policy.

The current overall UKRI portfolio of COVID-19-related grants, including awards supported by Innovate UK, involves vaccine projects that provide greater diversity of approaches than for the first generation of vaccines developed. More details can be found on the UKRI website.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Marco Longhi:

[\[144864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the capacity of AstraZeneca to deliver sufficient quantities of its covid-19 vaccine to meet the Government target of offering a first vaccine to everyone in the most vulnerable groups by the middle of February 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has procured 100 million doses of the Oxford University/AstraZeneca/ vaccine.

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

We remain in close contact with all our vaccine suppliers. The UK's vaccine supply and scheduled deliveries will fully support vaccination of priority cohorts 1 to 4, as advised by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. We are on track to offer a first vaccine to every person in these cohorts by 15 February 2021.

As of 4 February 2021, nearly 10.5 million people across the UK have been vaccinated with the first dose of the vaccine. The UK COVID-19 Vaccines Delivery Plan sets out how the Government will work with the NHS, devolved administrations, local councils, and the Armed Forces to deliver the largest vaccination programme in British history.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Marketing

Owen Thompson:

[\[144744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much his Department spent on (a) communications, (b) advertising and (c) marketing in (i) the UK, (ii) England, (iii) Northern Ireland, (iv) Scotland and (v) Wales in each month from (A) August 2020 to (B) December 2020.

Amanda Solloway:

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

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Staff

Darren Jones:

[\[144806\]](#)

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

Amanda Solloway:

The total number of dedicated full-time equivalent officials within the Industrial Strategy (IS) Directorate for the following years, is as follows:

2017: 15 *

2018: 21

2019: 41

2020: 51

2021: 50

The Industrial Strategy is a cross-government policy which comprises and drives a significant number of initiatives. These span a wide array of policy areas across 20 government departments and arm's-length bodies.

Given the breadth of the delivery work, it is difficult to obtain accurate figures for resource associated with the Industrial Strategy in other teams within BEIS. This

information is unlikely to be retrievable at this point in time and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees

Dan Carden:

[\[147022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Prime Minister's announcement of 12 December 2020 that the Government was ending all UKEF support for fossil fuel projects overseas and the fact that UKEF continues to consider applications for support in the oil and gas sector, whether he has made an assessment of applying the ban retrospectively from 12 December 2020.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: The date of implementation of the new policy will be determined following the consultation that was launched on the same day. During the consultation period and ahead of the implementation of the new policy, the Government will continue to apply current policy for all in-scope activities including proposals for high carbon projects, with consideration of relevant factors including climate change.

UKEF is already actively seeking to support projects in the clean growth and renewables sectors and will continue to work actively with UK companies on international projects within the clean energy sector.

■ Geothermal Power

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[147099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential of geothermal energy to contribute to the UK's net zero target.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: The most promising use of geothermal energy in the UK is for low temperature applications such as district heating schemes. We have been providing support to the deployment of district heat networks from geothermal through the Heat Networks Delivery Unit (HNDU) and the Heat Networks Investment Project (HNIP).

The £270m Green Network Heat fund is still at an early stage of scheme development, and we will be issuing a consultation response in due course.

The Government has also funded the £31m UK Geoenergy Observatories which will provide a world class infrastructure for a wide range of geoenergy related research including geothermal.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation**Emily Thornberry:** [\[146824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much revenue the Insolvency Service has collected in bankruptcy fees from leaseholders in high-rise private residential properties with defective cladding in each financial year since 2017-18.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: The Insolvency Service reports income from the fees charged on the insolvency cases it handles, in its annual report and accounts. However it does not hold the information to calculate the amount of fees collected in any bankruptcies of leaseholders in a high-rise residential property with defective cladding.

■ Horizon Europe**Lee Anderson:** [\[144845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has for the UK's future association with the Horizon Europe programme.

Lee Anderson: [\[144848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps his Department has taken to prepare for the UK potentially not participating in Horizon Europe.

Amanda Solloway:

As part of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) published on 24 December, the UK has agreed to associate to Horizon Europe which represents a valuable collaboration on science and research to tackle global challenges, and in fields that will benefit the British people. The government is committed to establishing the UK as a science and research global superpower, and this deal fulfils our manifesto commitment to collaborate internationally in this regard. As a responsible government, we were also prepared for a scenario where we did not agree to participate in Horizon Europe and were ready to implement a suite of domestic alternative schemes to support international research and innovation collaboration if required.

Alexander Stafford: [\[144883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the prospects of the UK's negotiations with the EU on the UK's future association with the Horizon Europe programme.

Alexander Stafford: [\[144885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps his Department has taken to prepare for the potential event that the UK does not formally associate to Horizon Europe.

Amanda Solloway:

As part of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) published on 24 December, the UK has agreed to associate to Horizon Europe which represents a valuable collaboration on science and research to tackle global challenges, and in fields that will benefit the British people. The Government is committed to establishing the UK as a science and research global superpower, and this deal fulfils our manifesto commitment to collaborate internationally in this regard. As a responsible government, we were also prepared for a scenario where we did not agree to participate in Horizon Europe and were ready to implement a suite of domestic alternative schemes to support international research and innovation collaboration if required.

Kim Johnson:[\[145175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has for the UK's future association with the Horizon Europe programme.

Kim Johnson:[\[145177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps his Department has taken to prepare for the UK potentially not associating to Horizon Europe.

Amanda Solloway:

As part of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) published on 24 December, the UK has agreed to associate to Horizon Europe which represents a valuable collaboration on science and research to tackle global challenges, and in fields that will benefit the British people. The Government is committed to establishing the UK as a science and research global superpower, and this deal fulfils our manifesto commitment to collaborate internationally in this regard. As a responsible government, we were also prepared for a scenario where we did not agree to participate in Horizon Europe and were ready to implement a suite of domestic alternative schemes to support international research and innovation collaboration if required.

■ Met Office: Computers**Luke Pollard:**[\[145142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had discussions with the Met Office on its plan to locate part of its new super-computer abroad.

Amanda Solloway:

The location of the new Met Office supercomputer is subject to an ongoing procurement exercise. The Met Office Statement of Requirements stated that at least 50% of the solutions capability must be in the UK. The Met Office left the Prime Bidders to propose locations and work with their supply chains on suitable bids. While the procurement is ongoing the integrity of the process must be maintained, in strict

accordance with Government procurement rules. It is not possible to comment further at this stage due to the commercial sensitivity of the procurement process.

Luke Pollard:

[\[145143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect on levels of employment and investment in the South West of the Met Office locating part of its new super-computer overseas.

Amanda Solloway:

The location of the new Met Office supercomputer is subject to an ongoing procurement exercise. The Met Office Statement of Requirements stated that at least 50% of the solutions capability must be in the UK. The Met Office left the Prime Bidders to propose locations and work with their supply chains on suitable bids. While the procurement is ongoing the integrity of the process must be maintained, in strict accordance with Government procurement rules. It is not possible to comment further at this stage due to the commercial sensitivity of the procurement process.

Nevertheless, the capability sustained by the new supercomputer will support many high tech and skilled jobs through Met Office staff, suppliers and partners, primarily in the South West related to the Met Office Headquarters in Exeter.

■ Personal Care Services: Coronavirus

Stephen Morgan:

[\[144829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of financial support available to hairdressers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

I understand these are extremely challenging circumstances for businesses. That is why we have put in place one of the most generous packages of business support in the world, worth £285 billion. This includes a business rates holiday, various loan schemes and the extended furlough scheme. Closed businesses such as hairdressers can also receive a grant of up to £3,000 per month and a one-off payment of up to a maximum £9,000. Government continues to keep under review all the measures needed to control the virus, as well as the appropriate business support.

■ Postal Services

Gareth Thomas:

[\[144589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Royal Mail are pursuing a policy of prioritising the delivery of premium products.

Paul Scully:

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. Ofcom, as the UK's designated independent regulator of postal services, monitors the delivery of the universal postal service standards.

Beyond the Universal Service Obligation, the delivery of premium products is an operational matter for Royal Mail.

■ Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[147098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to replace the non-domestic renewal heat incentive scheme; and when he will publish those plans.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: From April to July 2020, the Department consulted on "Future support for low carbon heat", setting out proposals for future schemes to follow the closure of the Renewable Heat Incentive. A government response to this consultation will be published later this year.

The Government is also planning to publish a *Heat and Buildings Strategy* in due course, which will set out the immediate actions we will take to reduce emissions from buildings.

■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[144952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the evidence base informing the decision to allow click and collect services to continue during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Paul Scully:

Click-and-collect services allow goods to be pre-ordered and collected without customers entering the premises. Customers thus remain in well ventilated spaces - which are, by definition, safer environments and where transmission is less likely to occur.

The safer workplaces [guidance](#) provides information to help employers make their workplaces COVID-Secure for their employees, visitors, and customers.

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.

■ Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund

Tom Tugendhat:

[\[144724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to open a second tranche of applications for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund.

Paul Scully:

The Government has made an unprecedented package of support available to businesses that are required to close or which have been severely affected by the restrictions put in place to tackle Covid-19 and save lives.

Following on from closure of the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund, other grant support measures have been in place to reflect the changing landscape of local and national Covid-19 restrictions. This includes funding for businesses required to close and discretionary funding for Local Authorities to support other businesses that whilst able to remain open may be severely impacted.

In January, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a further package of business grant support. Business premises that are required by law to close – including those businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors – are able to access grants of up to £4,500 per 6-week period of closure and a further one-off Closed Business Lockdown Payment of up to £9,000.

■ Vaccination: Manufacturing Industries**Lee Anderson:**[\[144846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his Department's plans are to increase the UK's vaccine manufacturing capacity to meet future demand.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

a) Facilities that have come online:

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

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

- £93 million to accelerate the completion and expanded role of the Vaccines Manufacturing Innovation Centre in Oxfordshire; and

- £127 million for the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult in Braintree, Essex.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Migrant Workers: EU Nationals

Joanna Cherry:

[\[139040\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the effect on workforce numbers in key occupations of the UK EU Trade and cooperation agreement.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement delivers what the British public voted for in the referendum and at the last General Election. It is the first free trade agreement the EU has ever reached based on zero tariffs and zero quotas.

This Agreement will help unlock investment and protect high value jobs right across the UK. We will now take full advantage of the opportunities created by this deal – helping to boost productivity, unlock investment and safeguard high value jobs in the UK.

We have taken back control of our borders meaning we control who comes into the country, as demonstrated by our new Points Based System which has now gone live. This fairer, firmer and skills-led system will enable companies to attract the best and brightest from around the world.

■ Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration: Correspondence

John Penrose:

[\[144651\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the current response time is for the Parliamentary Ombudsman to respond to correspondence and questions from hon. Members; what assessment he has made of recent trends in those response times; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the current performance of the Ombudsman is replying to those inquiries.

Chloe Smith:

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) is independent of Government and is accountable to Parliament through the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee for its performance. The PHSO will therefore reply separately to this question by letter.

DEFENCE**■ Armed Forces: Northern Ireland**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[146793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on armed forces personnel who served in Northern Ireland.

Johnny Mercer:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: The Government has been clear that it will bring forward legislation to address the legacy of the troubles which focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims, and ends the cycle of investigations - delivering on our commitments to Northern Ireland veterans.

The UK Government remains committed to making progress on legacy issues, and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is working with all parts of the community as part of this process.

■ Armed Forces: Protective Clothing

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[145107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the letter placed in the Library from the hon. Member for Plymouth, Moor View and the Answer of 15 January 2021 to Question 133121, how much his Department has spent on research and development of a beard compatible respirator which would meet the required levels of protection.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[145108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the letter placed in the Library from the hon. Member for Plymouth, Moor View and pursuant to the Answer of 15 January 2021 to Question 133121, whether his Department has made an assessment of whether infection control technologies that protect people with beards in a clinical setting could be further developed to offer effective respirator protection in a defence setting.

Johnny Mercer:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) invested over £80 million in the acquisition of the current General Service Respirator. This included analysis of contributing factors including the ability of a solution that provides protection for individuals with facial hair.

Additionally, MOD conducts research to develop and assess Respiratory Protective Equipment. This includes the assessment of respiratory solutions that may provide suitable levels of protection to individuals with facial hair. This research investment is approximately £0.2 million per annum. The Department continues to monitor developments to identify any credible future opportunities and this work is planned to continue at least until the development of the next generation of military-grade respiratory protection is initiated.

Respiratory protection systems designed for clinical settings are optimised for that environment, but there are limited similarities to the demands emanating from a generalist military setting. As previously highlighted, military respiratory protection must encompass individual and operational considerations to offer optimised levels of protection against a broad spectrum of threats, including beyond those encountered in a clinical setting. This is achieved in conjunction with addressing challenging technical requirements that may not be seen outside of the military scope.

Respirators that require a face seal, such as the General Service Respirator, currently provide the optimal solution to respiratory protection for military users. This does not preclude the continued assessment of respiratory system development nor the reassessment of the military requirement within the Ministry of Defence's routine capability planning.

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles

Andrew Selous: [\[144961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to develop a viable infantry fighting vehicle capability that meets the Army's requirements to allow soldiers safely to enter, operate and be supported directly in close combat and high threat environments.

Andrew Selous: [\[144962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the relative tactical mobility performance of the vehicles to be provided under the (a) Warrior Capability Sustainment and (b) Mechanised Infantry Vehicle programmes in weather and terrain in (i) Eastern Europe and (ii) the Baltics.

Jeremy Quin:

Regular analysis conducted by the Army has confirmed the requirement for a range of armoured vehicles. This analysis includes a review of current and future threats and the environment in which vehicles are required to operate; work continues to focus on these areas to inform the Integrated Review.

■ Veterans: Northern Ireland

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[146794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many ongoing investigations there are involving former serving personnel who served in Northern Ireland.

Johnny Mercer:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: Criminal investigations involving former members of our Armed Forces who served in Northern Ireland are conducted by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and other police forces on behalf of the Chief Constable PSNI.

The Ministry of Defence offers a range of legal, welfare and pastoral support to veterans in such circumstances, but the number and conduct of such investigations

are a matter for the police, and the specific information requested is not held by the Ministry of Defence.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Advertising: Tax Allowances

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[144957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of introducing an advertising tax credit for UK media companies.

Caroline Dinenage:

Supporting our world leading creative industries is a key priority for this Government. Creative businesses and freelancers across the country have now been able to take advantage of the unprecedented set of measures set up to support the economy and our media industry.

We will of course continue to engage with industry, and assess the merits of the government intervening where there is a strong case to do so.

■ Disinformation: Artificial Intelligence

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[144604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to tackle (a) AI-powered misinformation and (b) political deepfakes.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government recognises the potential challenges artificial intelligence and digitally manipulated content such as deepfakes may pose and we are considering these issues carefully as part of work to tackle online manipulation and disinformation.

As set out in the full government response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation, the new regulatory framework will establish a duty of care on companies to improve the safety of their users online, which will be overseen and enforced by an independent regulator.

Where mis- and disinformation presents a significant threat to public safety, public health or national security, Ofcom will be able to take steps to build users' awareness and resilience to disinformation and misinformation and require companies to report on steps they are taking in light of such a situation.

EDUCATION**■ Assessments: Coronavirus****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[145104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps he has taken to ensure examinations for pupils who are currently in Years 10 and 12 will be able to go ahead in 2022.

Nick Gibb:

The Government remains clear that exams are the fairest method to assess students. We know that students and teachers will be working hard in preparation for exams or assessments in 2022, and we will make sure that the interests of students are at the centre of our considerations. It is important that students in this cohort are able to get a grade safely and fairly. We will continue to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 on all students to ensure that those due to take exams in 2022 are supported to move to the next stage of their lives fairly.

To support students to catch up with their education, the Government has announced a catch-up package worth £1 billion to support children and young people. This includes a catch-up premium worth £650 million and a £350 million National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged pupils. We have also announced that we will provide a further programme of catch-up over the next financial year. This will involve a further £300 million for early years, schools and providers of 16-19 further education for tutoring. We will work in collaboration with the education sector to develop, as appropriate, specific initiatives for summer schools and a COVID-19 Premium to support catch up.

■ Department for Education: Marketing**Owen Thompson:**[\[144746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, 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.

Nick Gibb:

From 1 August to 31 December 2020, the Department for Education spent £7.46 million on paid-for communications and campaigns activity, including spend on creative, production, agency fees and paid-for media. Of this, a total of £5.37 million was spent specifically on advertising media buying. It is not possible to break down spend separately by a) communications or c) marketing as these definitions include several areas of overlapping activity. These figures are for spend in England only. The Department does not spend any money on communications, advertising or marketing activity in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Broken down monthly, the spend was:

MONTH	COMMUNICATIONS AND CAMPAIGNS	ADVERTISING MEDIA BUYING
August 2020	£1,440,000	£941,000
September 2020	£392,000	£51,000
October 2020	£2,800,000	£2,380,000
November 2020	£1,900,000	£1,200,000
December 2020	£933,000	£787,000

This activity includes vital work to recruit 30,000 teachers a year and drive the uptake of the new T Level qualification. All our paid-for campaigns are approved and regularly assessed by the Cabinet Office to ensure effectiveness.

■ Further Education: Remote Education

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[144717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 21 January 2021 to Question 137964 on Further Education: Computers, by which date further education providers will have (a) received invitations to order devices for students as part of the Government's Get Help with Technology Programme and (b) received those devices.

Nick Gibb:

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

As of 1 February 2021, this includes over 927,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to schools, academy trusts and local authorities.

Education settings for 16 to 19 year olds, including schools with sixth forms, further education (FE) and sixth form colleges, and other FE institutions will be able to order laptops and tablets to further support disadvantaged students to access remote education. The vast majority of settings with eligible pupils have already been invited to do so. Orders are currently being fulfilled within 5 working days.

■ Higher Education: Greater London

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[144628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to offset the additional cost of educational delivery in Greater London and ensure that London university and college students do not fall behind their counterparts in England, following the withdrawal of the London weighting element of the Teaching Grant.

Michelle Donelan:

The higher education (HE) teaching grant will be reformed for the 2021-22 financial year to ensure that more of taxpayers' money is spent on supporting HE provision which aligns with national priorities, such as healthcare, science, technology, engineering and mathematics and subjects meeting specific labour market needs.

London weighting funding is a small proportion of the overall income of providers and it is right for government to re-allocate public money where it is most needed.

Universities should not receive additional investment for teaching simply because of where they are located: excellent provision can be delivered across the country.

London already has, on average, the highest percentage of good or outstanding schools, the highest progression to HE, and more HE providers than in any other region in England. This government is firmly committed to the levelling up agenda and this reform will invest more money directly into high quality institutions in the Midlands and the North.

The Office for Students will consult on these changes before final allocations for the 2021-22 financial year are confirmed.

■ Non-teaching Staff: Coronavirus**Sir Alan Campbell:****[144939]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has published on support staff attending schools during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Nick Gibb:

During the period of national lockdown, schools remain open to vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers only.

Following the reintroduction of shielding, clinically extremely vulnerable staff are advised that they should not attend the workplace. Staff who are in this group will previously have received a letter from the NHS or their GP telling them this.

All other staff can attend the workplace where it is not possible to work from home. This includes school support staff. It is for school leaders to determine the workforce that is required in school, taking into account the updated guidance for those staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable. The Department's published guidance provides information for school leaders on some of the options for staff deployment to help inform their plans including use of trainee teachers, newly qualified teachers, support staff and supply staff. The expectation is that those staff not attending school will work from home where possible. The guidance is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf.

The Department have worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Public Health England (PHE) to develop specific guidance for schools.

The guidance is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950510/School_national_restrictions_guidance.pdf. Where schools implement the system of controls outlined in the guidance, in line with their own workplace risk assessment, PHE and DHSC confirm that these measures create an inherently safer environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. All staff attending schools should follow these measures to minimise the risks of transmission.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Sir Alan Campbell:

[144938]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to review the criteria for critical workers in order to reduce the number of children attending school during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has made guidance available on children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings. The document sets out the high-level role types, for which the children of critical workers would be considered eligible to continue to attend school. The list in the guidance is not exhaustive, but it should offer sufficient information to help parents and carers to identify if their work falls under one of the umbrella groups. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>.

Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 outbreak and EU transition response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors. Children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school if required. Schools should speak to parents and carers to identify who needs to go to school, and parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.

The Department knows that every school will have a different number of children of critical workers who need to attend. It is important that on-site provision is provided for these pupils. There is no limit to the numbers of these pupils who may attend, and schools should not limit attendance of these groups. We expect schools to work with critical worker parents to ensure their child is given access to a place if it is required, so that parents can continue providing vital services. This is because we are reducing overall social contact across areas and the country rather than individually by each institution.

The Department publishes weekly national-level data on pupil attendance. The latest published data (for 28 January 2021) shows that attendance in state primary schools in England was at 22% and at 5% in state secondaries: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>. Where the Department is aware

that schools are facing operational challenges, our regional teams will work with local authorities and schools to help find a solution.

■ Secondary Education: Mental Health Services

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[145103]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to ensure mental health support is available for secondary schools pupils in (a) Slough and (b) England.

Vicky Ford:

We know that the COVID-19 outbreak and the associated measures and restrictions, such as social distancing and school closures, will be impacting on the mental wellbeing of many people, including children and young people. The government has made pupil wellbeing and mental health a central part of our response to the COVID-19 outbreak, and the support we have already put in place for schools will be critical during this time.

We have ensured that schools have the flexibility to offer a place in school as a vulnerable child to any pupils for whom being in school will help them to manage their mental health or to access support more easily. Decisions will be informed by the school's experience of how pupils have been affected so far.

Schools will also continue to offer pastoral support to pupils working remotely at home, informed and supported by training and expert advice that we have made available, including through the £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return scheme. Wellbeing for Education Return is an initiative led by the Department for Education alongside the Department for Health and Social Care, Health Education England, Public Health England and key voluntary sector organisations. Wellbeing for Education Return has trained local experts to provide additional advice and resources for schools and further education (FE) providers to help support the wellbeing, resilience and recovery of pupils, students, parents and carers and staff in light of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown.

Slough Borough Council received Wellbeing for Education Return funding of £22,850 on 30 September 2020 to fund local mental health experts in the 2020-21 financial year. Across the whole of England, over 85% of local authority areas reported that they are delivering additional training and support into local schools and FE providers because of the Wellbeing for Education Return funding.

Nationally, our information indicates that more than 15,000 education settings are being offered this additional training and support. The information and support made available through Wellbeing for Education Return is relevant to remote provision as well as to those attending school.

Schools should make sure that parents and pupils know who to contact if they have new concerns about mental health and wellbeing, and that they understand what pastoral support is available. This is backed up by guidance that the department has issued for schools, which includes information and sources of further advice on supporting mental health and wellbeing:

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

We have also put in place a £1 billion COVID-19 catch-up package, with £650 million shared across early years, schools and 16-19 providers over the 2020-21 academic year to support education settings to put the right catch-up and pastoral support in place. The Education Endowment Foundation have published a COVID-19 support guide to support schools to direct this funding, which includes further information about interventions to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing.

Whole-school approaches will include the new requirement for schools to teach about mental wellbeing as part of relationship, sex and health education (RSHE). The department is committed to supporting all schools in their preparations to teach RSHE, and has developed an online service featuring innovative training materials and an implementation guide. This support will cover all of the teaching requirements in the statutory guidance and will be inclusive of all pupils. We prioritised the production of the training module covering mental wellbeing, so that it was available before the end of the summer term last year: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-mental-wellbeing>.

To expand access to mental health support for children and young people with emerging mental health issues, we have committed to establishing new Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) in 20% to 25% of the country by 2023, as part of the additional support for children and young people's mental health in the NHS Long Term Plan. MHSTs have been created to strengthen existing mental health support in education settings and to provide early intervention on mild to moderate challenges to mental health as well as helping staff within a school or college setting to provide a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing. Where already established, MHSTs are adapting their services to continue supporting children and young people remotely during the COVID-19 outbreak.

For those that need specialist support, the government continues to invest in and prioritise mental health. The NHS will receive around an additional £500 million this year to address waiting times for mental health services, give more people the mental health support they need and invest in the NHS workforce. The department will also be convening a task force to look at the effects on children, young people and staff in the education system and we will confirm the next steps as soon as possible.

■ **Supply Teachers: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[144849]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to compensate education supply staff in England and Wales through the Flexible Furlough Scheme in line with supply staff in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Nick Gibb:

Education is a devolved matter, therefore the following information applies to schools in England.

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

If supply staff employed via employment agencies are unable to work due to COVID-19, their employment agency can place them on furlough and use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) to claim for 80% of their wages, including during school holiday periods, provided that the eligibility criteria are met. Details about the CJRS and eligibility criteria can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-which-employees-you-can-put-on-furlough-to-use-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>.

Employers can now flexibly furlough their employees for the hours the employee would usually have worked in that period, whilst also being able to work outside of the hours they are furloughed, details of which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme#flexible-furlough-agreements>. Employees can work for any amount of time, and any work pattern but they cannot do any work for their employer during hours that employers record them as being on furlough.

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

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Animal Welfare: Domestic Abuse

Alex Davies-Jones:

[144881]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the link between those who commit domestic abuse offences as well as animal welfare offences; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is committed to animal welfare. Whilst the Government has not made a formal assessment of existing research into the link between those who commit domestic abuse offences and those who commit animal welfare offences, as a reflection of the seriousness with which we take cruelty against our animals we are supporting the *Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill*, which seeks to increase the maximum custodial penalty for animal cruelty from six months to five years. Committee stage of the Bill in the House of Commons took place on 3 February.

■ Carbon Capture and Storage: Nature Conservation

Caroline Lucas:

[\[144661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the capacity of natural systems in (a) the UK and (b) globally to deliver the objectives of the Paris Agreement through permanently absorbing CO2 emissions while (i) enhancing biodiversity and (ii) respecting land rights.

Rebecca Pow:

Land use is a devolved matter and the information on nature, land and biodiversity policy relates to England only. Trade and overseas aid are not devolved.

The UK Government's environmental strategy is defined in a set of goals within the 25 Year Environment Plan (YEP). Mitigating and adapting to climate change are one of the ten goals in the 25 YEP, and are embedded into other goals, such as thriving plants and wildlife. The Government also committed to climate change mitigation and adaptation through its 2050 Net Zero Target, Clean Growth strategy, and the National Adaptation Programme within the UK Climate Change Act.

The Convention on Biological Diversity COP15 and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change COP26 provide excellent opportunities to drive ambition on taking an integrated approach to tackling the interlinked crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. This will be hugely important if we are to deliver the step-change needed to tackle these global issues. By making 'nature' a key focus of COP26 in Glasgow, we hope to demonstrate that Nature Based Solutions (NBS) can deliver multiple benefits for climate, biodiversity, and people, and can therefore play a critical role in tackling these interrelated crises in an integrated way.

The UK is also a member of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

Domestic NBS

NBS can also play a role domestically in achieving our carbon reduction targets and in helping us adapt to climate change. Our assessment is that on land: restoring degraded peatlands; appropriately implementing multi-purpose woodlands and protecting them; and restoring or recreating wetland and coastal habitats will offer the greatest benefits for tackling climate change, whilst also benefitting biodiversity and livelihoods. More information can be found in the report titled 'Implementation of an Emissions Inventory for UK Peatlands' (2017) and in the package of measures to protect England's landscapes and nature-based solutions the Government will be setting out this year.

The Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) projections for the UK and England (UK National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory) provide estimates of LULUCF greenhouse gas (GHG) removals to 2050 from existing policy and alternative, stretching scenarios. The assumptions underlying the scenarios were developed by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) with input from the Forestry Commission, the Department for Environment, Food and

Rural Affairs (Defra), the Devolved Administrations (DAs) and LULUCF experts. The scenarios are designed to explore the magnitude of the changes in net emissions that could potentially be produced by LULUCF activities in the future, taking into account current land use policies and/or aspirations.

In December, the Government issued a call for evidence to strengthen the evidence base on the role of greenhouse gas removal (GGR) methods, including NBS, in meeting net zero. This call for evidence closes on 26 February 2021.

NBS globally

NBS offer a mechanism by which biodiversity loss, climate change and poverty can be addressed in a sustainable way and are therefore central to the delivery of the global Sustainable Development Goals.

The UK recognises the crucial role of NBS for climate mitigation and adaptation. They have the potential to cost-effectively deliver up to one third of global climate mitigation required by 2030 to meet the Paris Agreement's goals, while also providing adaptation benefits and delivering wins for biodiversity and sustainable development.

The UK is already contributing to NBS internationally through its Official Development Assistance, including through its International Climate Finance. The Prime Minister committed in 2019 to double the UK's public ICF to at least £11.6 billion between 2021 and 2025 to help developing countries tackle climate change.

The UK committed to spending at least £3bn of our International Climate Finance on climate change solutions that protect and restore nature and biodiversity over the next five years.

The Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Regulation establishes a licensing scheme to improve the supply of legal timber. The regulation is underpinned by Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs), which are bilateral trade agreements between the UK and a timber-exporting country. The benefits of a VPA can include reduced corruption, strengthened forest sector governance, support for forest-dependent people's livelihoods, avoided deforestation and associated greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity loss, and avoided loss of Government revenues through illegal activity. Whilst VPAs are voluntary for timber-exporting countries, a VPA is legally binding on both sides once it has entered into force.

Permanence

Due to the reversibility of carbon stored within growing and harvested biomass, Defra notes that NBS for climate mitigation purposes are not a replacement for reducing carbon emissions at source and that both carbon emissions reductions and nature-based solutions for climate change should be pursued. This is because carbon in natural systems can be released either purposefully or through unplanned disturbances such as fire, flooding and disease. As such, Defra is particularly interested in developing policies which look to protect existing carbon stocks and prevent reversal of stored carbon.

■ Coronavirus: Fisheries**Luke Pollard:** [\[145140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to require crews of foreign fishing boats landing their catches in English ports to show negative covid-19 tests.

Victoria Prentis:

Fishers, regardless of nationality, are currently exempt from pre-departure testing ahead of landing into an English port. We have no plans to remove that exemption. The Government is continuously reviewing our testing regime and will make changes based on recommendations from the Department of Health and Social Care.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Marketing**Owen Thompson:** [\[144747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 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.

Victoria Prentis:

The Cabinet Office publishes expenditure on COVID-19 and other national campaigns on a rolling monthly basis on GOV.UK as part of routine government transparency arrangements.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Staff**Darren Jones:** [\[144809\]](#)

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

Victoria Prentis:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is responsible for the overall delivery of the Industrial Strategy.

The Industrial Strategy is a cross-Government policy which comprises and drives a significant number of initiatives. These span a wide array of policy areas across 20 Government departments and arm's-length bodies

Given the breadth of the delivery work within Defra, it is difficult to obtain accurate figures for resources associated with the Industrial Strategy in teams within the department. The information requested is not held centrally and to obtain it would incur disproportionate costs.

■ Fisheries: UK Trade with EU

Luke Pollard:

[\[144892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the economic viability of the UK's distant water fleet.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement primarily secures fishing opportunities in UK-EU waters, so predominantly relates to sectors of the UK fleet that fish more local waters.

Our new framework agreements with Norway and the Faroe Islands provide for annual negotiations on access to fishing opportunities in those distant waters. Those negotiations are underway.

We will continue to work with the distant water sector so that it can take advantage of future opportunities.

■ Fishing Vessels: Inspections

Luke Pollard:

[\[145144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many inspections his Department conducted on (a) British fishing boats and (b) overseas fishing boats in (i) each month in 2020 and (ii) January 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

During the period 1 January 2020 to 31 January 2021, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) conducted 122 inspections of non-UK vessels at sea and 176 inspections of UK vessels at sea. The following table provides a breakdown of this total per month:

MONTH:	UK	NON-UK
Jan 2020	49	23
Feb 2020	16	11
Mar 2020	17	13
Apr 2020	0	0
May 2020	0	0
Jun 2020	3	0
Jul 2020	10	8
Aug 2020	17	9
Sep 2020	16	13

MONTH:	UK	Non-UK
Oct 2020	24	14
Nov 2020	32	16
Dec 2020	20	15
Jan 2021	0	0

Covid-19 safety measures introduced in response to high rates of infection impacted the ability to conduct physical at sea inspections during January 2021. The larger proportion of at sea inspections on UK vessels in comparison to non-UK vessels during 2020 is also reflective of a safety first, phased-in approach to safety measures, as boarding English speaking vessels was initially deemed easier for implementing and explaining Covid-19 protocols in response to the first national lockdown. However, an increased at sea enforcement presence remained in place throughout 2020 and in January 2021 to deter illegal activity.

■ Food Supply: Coronavirus

Daniel Zeichner: [\[144699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Food and Other Essential Supplies to the Vulnerable Ministerial Task Force has been disbanded.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[144700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether there is a centralised taskforce working in (a) his Department or (b) across Government departments focussed on food insecurity and vulnerability during the covid-19 outbreak.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[144701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to page 9 of the the National Food Strategy: Part One Report, published in July 2020, what plans the Government has to implement the recommendation of extending the work of the Food to the Vulnerable Ministerial Task Force up until July 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

These three questions seek clarification regarding the Government-wide management of the issue of food insecurity.

In 2019, the Government asked Henry Dimbleby to carry out an independent review of the entire food system. Part One of that review was published in July 2020 and Part Two will be published in 2021. The Government has committed to responding to the review and its recommendations in the form of a Food Strategy White Paper within six months of the release of the second and final report.

The Food to the Vulnerable Ministerial Taskforce was set up in spring 2020 to respond to some of the initial challenges of Covid-19, for a limited time and with a defined remit. The taskforce was instrumental in putting in place support for the most vulnerable individuals. This included £63 million for the Local Authority Grant Scheme, £10.5 million to the food redistributor FareShare, £1.8 million to the Covid-19 emergency food redistribution scheme, and £3.4 million to support individual charities through the Food Charity Grant Scheme.

Since then, ministers across departments have continued to meet to discuss the steps needed to mitigate the impacts of food insecurity. This includes through the newly established Cost of Living roundtable, where food vulnerability is discussed alongside other aspects of poverty. The results of these conversations have led to the government putting in place a winter package of support for the most vulnerable. This package includes a £170 million Covid Winter Support Grant to local authorities to support households with food and other costs and £16 million of funding for Defra to support charities with food distribution to the vulnerable.

Government departments will continue to meet at both official and ministerial level discuss the best ways to support and monitor this important area of work.

■ **Food: Origin Marking**

Alicia Kearns:

[\[145169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to further expand and market the UK's Geographical Indications Scheme, which came into force on 1 January 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

As we develop our plans to expand and market the new UK Geographical Indication (GI) schemes, we look forward to new food and drink products joining the ranks of Scotch whisky and Melton Mowbray pork pies.

Defra has published guidance setting out how the new schemes work, including how to apply for UK GI status. As part of our plans to promote UK food and drink both at home and overseas, we are engaging with businesses across the food and drink sector to see whether GI protection is right for their product.

For existing GIs, Defra is encouraging producers and retailers to adopt the new GI logos as soon as possible to support our efforts to grow consumer recognition of the schemes. We will also be engaging with regional food groups to encourage more local businesses to take advantage of existing GI protection, to improve the benefits of the GI schemes for local communities.

■ **Horse Riding: Coronavirus**

Mike Kane:

[\[145035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to support (a) riding schools and (b) livery yards during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has introduced an unprecedented package of support for businesses that are required to close or which are severely affected by the restrictions put in place to tackle Covid-19, protect the NHS and save lives. The Government is working closely with local authorities in England to ensure that funding can get to the right places as quickly as possible. Business premises that are required by law to close during the current period of national restrictions since 5th January can access grants of up to £4,500 per 6 weeks of closure (Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed)). In addition, each closed business will be eligible for a one-off payment of up to £9,000 to help them through Spring. This is the Closed Business Lockdown Payment.

Local authorities have been allocated a further £500m in discretionary funding via the Additional Restrictions Grant to support businesses that are significantly impacted by the restrictions even though not required to close. This is in addition to £1.1bn already allocated in November 2020. Local authorities have discretion to use this funding to support businesses in the way they see fit. For example, this could include 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 such as market traders.

In addition the British Horse Society has issued advice for equestrian businesses during this time, including setting out loans and grants that businesses may be eligible for (www.bhs.org.uk/advice-and-information/coronavirus-covid-19/business-support-resources).

Whilst riding centres and livery yards are required to close to the general public this does not prevent access to facilities where necessary for animal welfare purposes. Employees may continue to go to work there if they are unable to work from home. Members of the public can continue to visit these establishments if this is where their horse is kept and if this is necessary in order to care for their horse. Further information on this has been distributed to all local authorities via the Office for Product Safety and Standards.

■ Ivory Act 2018**Luke Pollard:****[145146]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to implement the Ivory Act 2018.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is committed to bringing the world leading Ivory Act into force as soon as practicable. We are required to consult on certain, specific matters that will be set out in the secondary legislation and in guidance. These include the commencement arrangements for the ban, implementation of the exemptions, and the information required and fees for registrations of exempt items. We plan to publish this consultation shortly.

■ Pesticides

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[144629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage the use of natural, plant-based pesticides instead of chemical-based products.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is committed to supporting the sustainable control of pests. The consultation on the National Action Plan for Sustainable Use of Pesticides outlines how the Government will support development of nature-based solutions, low toxicity methods, and biopesticides, in line with the principles of Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

Our strict regulation only allows the use of pesticides that are shown to meet high standards for the protection of people and the environment. These standards apply to both chemical and non-chemical pesticides, as it cannot be assumed that non-chemical pesticides are inherently safer.

The Government takes an active role in supporting the development and registration of biopesticides through the Biopesticides Scheme. This includes reduced application fees and a Biopesticides champion who can advise potential applicants. Since the start of the scheme, around 70 new products have been approved for use in the UK.

■ Plastics: Recycling

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[144959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to encourage research into new methods to recycle plastics.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government has put together a package of over £100 million for research and innovation to tackle the issues that arise from plastic waste. £38 million has been set aside through the Plastics Research and Innovation Fund and Resource Action Fund for research and development, including £10 million specifically to pioneer innovative approaches to boosting recycling and reducing litter. The Government has also announced £60 million of funding through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, alongside a £150 million investment from industry, towards the development of smart, sustainable plastic packaging, which will aim to make the UK a world-leader in sustainable packaging for consumer products. Through public-private finance initiatives, the Government is already investing around £2.9 billion to support local infrastructure for waste collection and recycling.

In addition, under Defra Resources and Waste guidance, the recent UKRI SPF2 (Strategic Priority Funding) stream has allocated £3.5 million to leading UK academics to develop advanced techniques that will drive circularity in the plastics sector.

In our 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy, we committed to taking actions which will help stimulate private investment in reprocessing and recycling infrastructure as this will help to meet the target of 65% of household waste and waste produced by businesses that is similar to household waste to be recycled by 2035. The major waste reforms of a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers (DRS), Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging and consistency in recycling which are being legislated for in the Environment Bill, together with HM Treasury's Plastic Packaging Tax on plastic packaging with less than 30% recycled content, will increase demand for secondary material plastic and therefore increase the need for research into recycling infrastructure.

■ **Plastics: Waste**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[144990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Prime Minister's answer to oral question 911441 on 27 January 2021, what the timetable is for the Government to ban all plastic waste exports to non-OECD countries.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK Government stated its ambition to ban exports of plastic waste to non-OECD countries in its manifesto, published in November 2019. The Government has committed to consult on this measure and work is underway to make this happen. Defra has commissioned research to better understand plastic waste recycling capacity in the UK and OECD member countries and this research will be key to the development of policy options to implement the manifesto commitment. We currently plan to consult before the end of 2022 on options to deliver the proposed ban.

■ **Supermarkets: Coronavirus**

Dr James Davies:

[\[145079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support his Department can make available to vulnerable individuals who are unable to afford minimum spending requirements or delivery charges for priority supermarket home delivery slots.

Victoria Prentis:

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

Alongside encouraging supermarkets to seriously consider the impact delivery charges can have on clinically extremely vulnerable people, the department also

monitors delivery charges and circulates this information to Local Authorities to allow them to advise their residents accordingly.

If a vulnerable customer is struggling to afford the costs associated with online delivery, they could consider using a supermarket's click and collect service. While there is no priority access to click and collect slots, slot availability tends to be much higher than for online deliveries. Vulnerable customers could ask friends, family or a volunteer to visit the store and collect the shopping they ordered online on their behalf. If a vulnerable customer is unable to access food through one of these routes, then they may wish to contact their local council to see what support they are able to offer.

■ Veterinary Services: Regulation

Marco Longhi:

[\[144863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of regulating veterinary services to (a) strengthen animal welfare and (b) ensure affordability for pet owners.

Victoria Prentis:

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), the UK regulatory body for the veterinary profession, is currently undertaking a consultation on potential regulatory reform, including changes to the way vets and the wider veterinary team are regulated. They aim to report the consultation's findings to Defra later in 2021.

The RCVS also advises its members on fees in its Code of Conduct:

<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-surgeons/supporting-guidance/practice-information-and-fees/>.

The fees are generally set by the market between the vet and their clients, but the RCVS could intervene if individual vets charged prices to pet owners that were so disproportionate, they amounted to disgraceful professional conduct.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ BBC World Service: Overseas Aid

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[145836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of reducing ODA and non-ODA funding in 2021 on the BBC World Service programming and reach.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 3 February 2021]: The FCDO strongly values the work of the BBC World Service in promoting our values globally through its independent and impartial broadcasting. We have provided the World Service with over £378m over 5 years (2016-21) through the World2020 programme, in order to fund enhancements to

existing language services and 12 new language services. The remainder of the World Service language services are funded through the licence fee.

The World Service now reaches a record breaking 351 million people weekly, an over 40% increase since the programme began in 2016, demonstrating the impact of FCDO investment. Future funding for the World Service is being considered alongside other FCDO spending priorities at Spending Review 2020 (SR20).

■ China: Human Rights

Rachael Maskell:

[\[145071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government has had discussions with the Chinese Ambassador on sanctioning trade with (a) China and (b) Xinjiang province as a result of recent human rights abuses in China.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: We are deeply concerned about the gross human rights violations in Xinjiang, and continue to raise our concerns publicly and through diplomatic channels. On 12 January, the Foreign Secretary announced a robust package of measures to help ensure that British organisations, whether public or private sector, are not complicit in, nor profiting from, the human rights violations in Xinjiang. These measures target in a forensic way either those profiting from forced labour or those who would financially support it, whether deliberately or otherwise. Officials have updated the Chinese Embassy in London on these measures.

■ China: Uighurs

Rachael Maskell:

[\[145070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Chinese Ambassador on the Uyghur Muslims in the Xinjiang Province of China.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: The Foreign Secretary has raised the situation in Xinjiang with his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi, on a number of occasions in the past year. I [Minister Adams] have also raised the issue with the Chinese Ambassador. Officials regularly underline our concern to the Chinese Embassy in London, most recently on 15 January 2021. Through this bilateral contact, our strong public statements, and action at the UN, the Chinese authorities can be in no doubt about the strength of UK concern.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[145072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what additional steps the (a) UK Government and (b) UN are planning to take in response to the human rights abuses in the Xinjiang Province of China against the Uyghur Muslims.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: The Government will continue to demonstrate international leadership to hold China to account for its gross violations of human rights in Xinjiang, including at the UN. On 6 October 2020, the UK and 38 other countries joined a statement at the UN Third Committee in New York expressing deep concern at the situation in Xinjiang. On 12 January, the Foreign Secretary announced a robust package of measures to help ensure that British organisations, whether public or private sector, are not complicit in, nor profiting from, the human rights violations in Xinjiang. We have also repeatedly urged China to allow the UN Human Rights Commissioner unfettered access to the region.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Marketing**Owen Thompson:**[\[144752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, 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.

Nigel Adams:

The majority of the FCDO's communication activity is delivered by our team in the United Kingdom and at Embassies worldwide through low or no-cost activity rather than advertising or marketing.

From August to December 2020 we helped to deliver cross-government Cabinet Office EU Exit Transition and COVID-19 public information communication campaigns, specifically focusing on those likely to travel or UK nationals living overseas. Cabinet Office publishes expenditure on COVID-19 and other national campaigns on a rolling monthly basis at www.gov.uk/government/collections/cabinet-office-spend-data as part of routine government transparency arrangements.

Iran: Nuclear Reactors**Jack Lopresti:**[\[144665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2021 to Question 136502 on Iran: Nuclear Reactors, what recent discussions he has had with the permanent members of the UN Security Council on Iran's non-compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

James Cleverly:

We continue to engage closely with the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council to address Iran's non-compliance. We strongly urge Iran to halt return to compliance with its JCPoA commitments without delay.

■ Iraq: Kurds**Alicia Kearns:** [\[145172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's technical support to the Peshmerga Ministry in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Alicia Kearns: [\[145173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the purpose is of his Department's technical support to the Peshmerga Ministry in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

James Cleverly:

We continue to provide the Kurdish Peshmerga with technical and military support to enhance their capacity and capability to tackle the threat from Daesh. To date, the UK has trained over 9,100 Peshmerga fighters. During my (Minister Cleverly's) visit to Erbil in December, I discussed the need to continue supporting Peshmerga reform with the Kurdistan Regional Government, in order to ensure a unified and modernised Peshmerga. To this aim, the UK and other multi-national partners are, in concert with the global Coalition and the Kurdistan Regional Government, working closely on a Peshmerga Reform Programme.

■ Overseas Aid**Harriett Baldwin:** [\[144674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Written Statement of 26 January on Development Update, how he plans to allocate the £8 billion of Overseas Development Assistance in 2021/22 between the priorities outlined.

James Cleverly:

ODA budgets will be allocated based on the new strategic approach for aid set out to the House on 26 November. This will also take into account considerations of need, including levels of poverty, ability of countries to fund themselves and to ensure that every pound we spend on ODA goes as far as possible and has greatest impact the UK could help achieve.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[144798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the Official Development Assistance spend was in 2019 for (a) climate and biodiversity, (b) covid and global health security, (c) girls' education, (d) science and research, (e) defending open societies and resolving conflict, (f) humanitarian assistance and (g) promoting trade.

James Cleverly:

The Statistics on International Development (SID) National Statistics, published on GOV.UK, provides an overview of all UK spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA).

The core priorities which the Foreign Secretary has directed ODA to be focused on in the future, currently do not directly correspond to sector groupings reported in the SID.

SID is collected and reported in line with the OECD reporting directives, therefore uses the international OECD sector categories. The SID table "Table C9" presents UK bilateral ODA by sector for 2019:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/920078/Table-C9.ods

Climate is a cross-cutting theme in the OECD sector codes. UK's International Climate Finance (ICF) spend for 2019 was £1,183 million.

■ **Palestinians: Curriculum**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[146854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has received a copy of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency Curriculum Framework in the West Bank and Gaza.

James Cleverly:

As a donor to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), a copy of their Curriculum Framework was shared with the UK. This document is also accessible to the public via UNRWA's website.

■ **Palestinians: Overseas Aid**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[144965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has allocated all of the People for Peaceful Change budget to date.

James Cleverly:

Our people to people programme aimed to bring together Israelis and Palestinians to cooperate on issues which can have a positive impact on both communities and build understanding between people on both sides of the conflict, helping build support for a peaceful, negotiated resolution. This programme ran for three-years and ended in March 2020.

■ **Palestinians: Remote Education**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[146853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his (a) Canadian and (b) Australian counterpart on the investigations those countries are conducting into reports that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency has distributed educational material to Palestinian children reportedly promoting hatred of Israel to aid home-learning during the covid-19 pandemic.

James Cleverly:

I met with the Canadian Minister for International Development to discuss how we can collectively ensure that the educational materials provided to Palestinian children for home-learning continue to remain in line with UN values and promote peace.

UNRWA has reported that these materials are no longer circulated and are not used in current lessons. The issue was rectified by November 2020. We continue to monitor the situation to ensure self-learning materials remain in line with UN values.

Turks and Caicos Islands: Biodiversity**Alicia Kearns:**[\[145170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the UK Government is providing for the protection of (a) biodiversity and (b) aquatic biodiversity in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: Since 2012, the Government's Darwin Plus Programme has committed £22 million towards 122 individual projects across the Overseas Territories, supporting conservation in marine, terrestrial and freshwater environments, this has included funding for 15 projects in the Turks and Caicos Islands. In the most recent round of Darwin Plus, there were three successful projects working exclusively in the Turks and Caicos Islands, totalling over £800,000, including a project to improve the evidence base on marine and coastal assets in the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) has also supported the drafting of territory specific biosecurity legislation, which has included funding for specific legal expertise.

Western Sahara: Politics and Government**Kim Johnson:**[\[144869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to Answer of 26 January to Question 139168 on Western Sahara: Politics and Government, is Morocco listed by the UN as the Administering Power of Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

The UN's position on the status of Western Sahara is set out on its website:
<https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/nsgt/western-sahara>

Western Sahara: Trade Agreements**Kim Johnson:**[\[144870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to Answer of 26 January to Question 139167 on Western Sahara: Trade Agreements, were the Saharawi people in (a) occupied Western Sahara and (b) the refugee camps consulted on the UK-Morocco association agreement being applied to products from the non-self governing territory of Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

In line with the ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union in 2016, and following the 2018 EU consultation with a wide spectrum of Western Saharan representatives, stakeholders, civil society and other organisations, the EU Agreement grants preferences to products originating in Western Sahara and subject to control by the customs authorities of Morocco. The UK-Morocco Association Agreement replicates the effects of the EU-Morocco Association Agreement, both the trade related aspects and the broad scope of the political and cooperation provisions. The UK continues to regard the status of Western Sahara as undetermined.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE■ **Abortion: Drugs****Sir John Hayes:**[\[146769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department uses methods other than HSA4 forms for collecting data on abortions involving the home use of both sets of abortion pills beyond 10 weeks' gestation.

Helen Whately:

The Department uses no other method than HSA4 forms for collecting this data.

■ **Birth Rate****Sir Mark Hendrick:**[\[144606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) reasons for and (b) implications for his policies of the recent decline in the annual birth rate.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In their 'Births in England and Wales: 2019' report, the Office for National Statistics suggests that possible reasons for decreases in both the annual birth rate and the annual total fertility rate in recent years include improved access to contraception; the reduction in mortality rates of children aged under five years old, resulting in women having fewer babies; and lower levels of fertility or difficulties conceiving because of postponement in childbearing.

The Government's overarching policy is that all women should receive safe, personalised care. Local Maternity Systems bring together providers, commissioners, women and their families to work in partnership to ensure services reflect the needs of their local populations.

■ Brain: Tumours

Seema Malhotra: [\[141987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of research into low-grade gliomas in each of the last five years.

Seema Malhotra: [\[141988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support research into low-grade gliomas.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 27 January 2021]: In 2018 the Government announced £40 million over five years for brain tumour research as part of the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission via the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR).

We are relying on researchers to submit high-quality research proposals in this very difficult area. Workshops for researchers are being booked and we are encouraging more researchers to become involved.

The following table sets out relevant NIHR expenditure on low-grade gliomas over the last five years:

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
£770,000	£577,000	£1.01 million	£866,000	£942,000

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Laura Farris: [\[102953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) allowing self-isolating individuals to visit family members in care homes who are suffering from isolation and (b) facilitating care home residents to visit covid-secure family homes.

Helen Whately:

We recognise how important it is to allow care home residents to meet their loved ones safely, and appreciate the particular challenges visiting restrictions pose for people with dementia, learning disabilities and autistic adults, amongst others and their loved ones.

In the face of a new variant of the virus we have acted to protect those most at risk in care homes and ensure visits can go ahead safely in some form. As set out in national lockdown guidance, visits to care homes can continue to take place with arrangements such as outdoor visiting, substantial screens, visiting pods, or behind windows. Close-contact indoor visits are not currently allowed. Visits in exceptional circumstances including end of life should always be supported and enabled.

We have also published guidance on visits out of care homes such as to the family home during this period of this national lockdown. People, including care home residents, must stay at home and must not gather indoors unless one of the specified exemptions apply. This means that a resident will not in general be able to meet another household indoors, for example, visiting their family in the family's home.

We are keeping all our guidance under regular review, and will seek to provide further opportunities for families to visit and spend time together as it becomes safer to do so.

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[106932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what average length of time is for a care home to receive the results of their covid-19 tests, after they have been received by the courier.

Helen Whately:

Between 14 January and 20 January 2021, the median time taken to receive a test result from satellite test centres has decreased from 41 hours to 38 hours.

■ **Contact Tracing: Computer Software**

Helen Hayes: [\[105476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 12 October to Question 93648, whether any of the 29 companies sub-contracted by Serco to deliver contact tracing services have sub-contracted work.

Helen Hayes: [\[105477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 12 October to Question 93648, whether Serco are obligated to notify the Government if their sub-contractors in turn sub-contract contact tracing work under the terms of his Department's contract with Serco to deliver contact tracing services.

Helen Hayes: [\[105478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average daily rate being paid to employees of (a) Serco and (b) companies subcontracted by Serco to deliver contact tracing services is.

Helen Whately:

Serco currently have 21 sub-contractors supporting this service. Serco can confirm that none of the companies sub-contracted to deliver these services have sub-contracted work.

The pay rates for staff directly employed by Serco and their sub-contractors is commercially confidential information. Serco can confirm that in line with legal requirements, all staff are paid at or above the national minimum wage or the national living wage, as appropriate.

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[106447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to stop the appearance of incorrect or phantom notifications from the NHS covid-19 app.

Helen Whately:

The version 3.9 update to the COVID-19 app deployed on 29 October 2020 removed the exposure notifications generated automatically from the Apple and Google Application Programming Interface. Users needed to update their app to version 3.9 for this to take effect. For those who have not yet done this the app will continue to send a follow up message to confirm when no action needs to be taken.

Emma Hardy:

[\[98749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether covid-19 test results from testing facilities being set up and run by universities can be entered on the Government track and trace app.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 October 2020]: Users with a confirmed positive PCR result following testing completed in facilities set up and run by universities in England can enter their result in the app using a token that can be provided following result confirmation.

■ Coronavirus Self-isolation Payment Scheme

Karin Smyth:

[\[141519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the level of shortfall in funding to local councils to meet demand for discretionary self isolation payments in areas where covid-19 rates are categorised as very high.

Helen Whately:

The Government keeps all elements of its COVID-19 response under review, including the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. An initial £50 million was made available to local authorities following the launch of the scheme in September 2020, including £15 million for discretionary payments. In January 2021, in response to rising incidence levels, the Government made a further £20 million available, including another £10 million to cover the cost of discretionary payments. We will continue to work closely with all 314 local authorities in England to monitor the delivery of the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Rachael Maskell:

[\[136565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason there is a delay in data being inputted onto the national covid-19 contact tracing database.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: Laboratory reporting and data flow issues and cases not providing contacts in a timely manner have caused some delays. Files exceeding the maximum file size allowed when transferring data into central systems has also led to delays in the past. However, this issue has now been addressed and a number of automated and manual checks are in place.

Sir Charles Walker:[\[84163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the established contact tracing expertise in (a) sexual health services, (b) TB clinics and (c) environmental health services is being used as part of the covid-19 response; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 September 2020]: There are currently approximately 1,300 staff working within Public Health England's (PHE) contact tracing cell, health protection teams and field services across the country, with more recruitment underway to further strengthen support to local outbreaks and incident responses, including COVID-19 contact tracing. New staff come from a range of backgrounds including retired medical personnel, local authority staff, environmental health advisors, sexual health advisors and agency nurses. PHE staff work closely with local authority and National Health Service teams to follow up contacts and manage complex settings.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[97001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people contacted through the NHS Test and Trace service have been asked to self-isolate to a date that has already passed from the date on which they were contacted through that service.

Helen Whately:

As of 20 January 2021, 95.3% of people who tested positive for COVID-19 and were reached by the service were contacted within 72 hours of their case being transferred to the contact tracing system.

For the same period, 99.4% of people identified as recent close contacts of positive cases who were reached by the service were contacted within 72 hours of the case being transferred to the contact tracing system.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[127472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that blood (a) tests and (b) donations remain safe from the transmission of covid-19.

Helen Whately:

COVID-19 is a respiratory virus and there is no published evidence that this virus can transmit through blood transfusion. However, all donors are reminded about symptoms and asked to self-defer if they have any COVID-19 symptoms or are

contacts of a case. Donors are also reminded to contact NHS Blood and Transplant if they become unwell post-donation.

In addition, NHS Blood and Transplant has asked blood donors to wear face coverings and donation staff are wearing personal protective equipment at donation sessions. NHS England and NHS Improvement have also published guidance to health care workers, including to those administering blood tests, to wear reusable non-invasive equipment, which must be decontaminated between each patient, after blood and body fluid contamination and at regular intervals as part of routine equipment cleaning.

■ **Coronavirus: Kingston upon Hull**

Emma Hardy:

[\[117356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the letter of 13 November 2020 from the Leader of Kingston upon Hull City Council, Stephen Brady OBE, on the levels of covid-19 infection in that city, what plans he has to ensure (a) Public Health England and (b) the Joint Biosecurity Centre provide additional support to the appropriate area agencies.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: Public Health England (PHE) meets with the Chief Executive of Hull City Council on a weekly basis to provide direct support and updates. PHE now has an established mechanism in place in Hull to escalate concerns as required. PHE also meets regularly with the Director of Public Health for Hull and attends the Humber local resilience forum.

The Yorkshire and Humber Regional Partnership Team, which includes PHE and the Joint Biosecurity Centre, has continued to provide support to all local authorities and increased their engagement with Hull City Council.

■ **Coronavirus: Liverpool**

Hilary Benn:

[\[113494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of tests in the Liverpool mass covid-19 testing programme have returned positive results; and how that rate compares with the positive test rate found by national pillar 1 and pillar 2 testing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: In the first phase of the community testing pilot from 6 November to 9 December 2020, 25% of 498,000 residents took up lateral flow tests (LFTs) and 36% took up LFT or polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests. 897 individuals were identified as positive via LFT and 2,902 via PCR. Comparable national testing data is not available.

■ Coronavirus: Lone Parents

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[131513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to expand eligibility for the Test and Trace Support Payment to working single parents who do not have alternative childcare options in the event that their children must self-isolate as a result of exposure to covid-19.

Helen Whately:

The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is for people who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for COVID-19 or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive. If a child is self-isolating because they have tested positive, other household members will also need to self-isolate and will be able to claim under the scheme, provided they meet the other eligibility criteria.

Parents or guardians of children who have to self-isolate because of contact with someone outside their household who has tested positive are not eligible. If a parent and/or guardian needs support because a child has to self-isolate, the NHS Test and Trace service can provide guidance on how to access local support provided by their local authority or by NHS Volunteer Responders. The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is being kept under review.

■ Coronavirus: Newcastle upon Tyne

Chi Onwurah:

[\[126867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November 2020 to Question 102801 on Disease Control: Newcastle upon Tyne, where the data for confirmed cases in (a) hospitality venues and (b) households is published.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: We do not publish data for confirmed cases by hospitality venues and households. Weekly data as of 21 January on the number of incidents for each setting with at least one laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/954669/Weekly_Flu_and_COVID-19_report_w3.pdf

■ Coronavirus: Research

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[110215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to assess the effect of new research into the range and frequency of covid-19 symptoms on the adequacy of his guidance on the main symptoms of covid-19 which are used to recommend that individuals book a test for the virus; and how often that assessment takes place.

Helen Whately:

We will continue to review the evidence available to us through the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, the Office for National Statistics and other sources and we continue to be guided by the science on our approach.

■ Coronavirus: Schools**Wes Streeting:****[129066]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the covid-19 mobile testing unit for Oaks Park High School in the Ilford North constituency did not arrive on Sunday 13 December 2020; and whether other schools have experienced delayed or missed visits from mobile testing units.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 December 2020]: The mobile testing unit (MTU) for Oaks Park High School was delayed due to human error. The MTU was available for the full day on the following day. We are not aware of other problems.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Drew Hendry:****[109479]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the help available on the gov.uk website for people having difficulty accessing covid-19 antibody testing via that website.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: Free antibody tests are currently only available for certain people who work in health and adult social care in England. These tests are to help the National Health Service and scientists learn more about who has already had the virus and how it has spread in the United Kingdom. Guidance on who is eligible for antibody testing and details of how to register for a test is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/antibody-test-to-check-if-youve-had-coronavirus/>

Rachel Reeves:**[110787]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to protect covid-19 testing site workers on outsourced contracts carrying out aerosol generating procedures.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: A COVID-19 test is not an aerosol generating procedure, nor is processing of lateral flow devices. We have a number of measures in place to maintain health and safety at sites. These include strict social distancing, sites are cleaned multiple times a day to ensure very high standards of hygiene and the use of personal protective equipment in line with the latest guidance.

Emma Hardy:

[\[116632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 17 November 2020 to Question 106468 on Coronavirus: Screening, if he will issue advice to people unable to obtain a covid-19 test while symptomatic but who subsequently test positive for covid-19 antibodies.

Helen Whately:

There is currently limited scientific evidence to link the presence of antibodies to immunity. In the event that a person received a positive antibody test, they must continue to take the necessary precautions and follow the local restrictions in their area to protect themselves and others from the virus.

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[122822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to allow people without covid-19 symptoms to get a rapid covid-19 lateral flow test in the run up to Christmas 2020.

Helen Whately:

Asymptomatic testing is provided only in specific circumstances and on the recommendation of public health experts, for instance, in areas of high prevalence or high risk or where there is a local outbreak. People without symptoms should not order tests except where instructed to do so through being enrolled in a pilot scheme or at the direct request of their local public health team or director of public health.

Neale Hanvey:

[\[122899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Innova lateral flow studies conducted in Liverpool, how many participants were double tested at the site with Innova lateral flow assay and PCR; how many participants were PCR positive; of those how many were Innova positive; how many participants were PCR negative; of those how many were Innova positive; how many participants were sent a PCR home testing kit when they were found to be Innova positive; how many of those test kits were returned; and how many of those tests were PCR negative.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 December 2020]: We do not publish the information in the format requested.

Jon Trickett:

[\[124117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the Government's operational plans for the roll-out of mass testing throughout areas that are placed into Tier 3 covid-19 restrictions.

Helen Whately:

Our community testing programme will empower local authorities to offer a six week testing surge to drive down prevalence with the aim of moving to a lower tier. This will enable local authorities to offer tests to the general population as well as targeting high-risk workplaces and industries, hard-to-reach communities and schools in a

coordinated effort to drive prevalence down. It will be delivered in partnership with local authorities to ensure it is tailored to local circumstances and need. The Government is also working with the devolved administrations to coordinate on testing plans and deliver additional testing capability in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Esther McVey: [\[130048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress has been made in the Cambridge University and AstraZ lighthouse Laboratory PCR testing.

Helen Whately:

The Cambridge University and AstraZeneca Lighthouse Laboratory's most recent innovation of heat inactivation of samples and the direct to polymerase chain reaction (PCR) process, in conjunction with GSK, accelerates PCR testing and thereby increases the laboratory's potential capacity whilst reducing processing times. They have also developed novel solutions to some of the logistical challenges faced by the network including the development of a system that allows samples to be delivered in racks direct to the laboratory and data monitoring software to reduce the risks to data uploads.

Esther McVey: [\[130049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made in the Cambridge University and AstraZ lighthouse Laboratory PCR testing on the proportion of (a) false positives and (b) false negatives over an accompanying timeline since testing began.

Helen Whately:

We do not hold data in the format requested.

Esther McVey: [\[130052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to release an updated version of the Impact of false-positives and false-negatives in the UK's COVID-19 RT-PCR testing programme.

Helen Whately:

There are currently no plans to do so.

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[131165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the answer of 8 December 2020 to Question 119973 on Coronavirus: Screening, what the (a) total number and (b) proportion of reinfections is to date; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Department does not currently hold this data.

Rachael Maskell: [89783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when laboratory covid-19 testing capacity will be able to meet demand.

Helen Whately:

NHS Test and Trace has capacity in place to respond to increases in demand and we have built our capacity from 2,000 tests a day in March 2020 to our current capacity of more than half a million. We will open an additional new laboratory in 2021, which will add another 300,000 tests to our daily capacity.

■ **Coronavirus: Suffolk**

Dr Dan Poulter: [90999]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure key workers in Suffolk receive same day testing for covid-19.

Dr Dan Poulter: [91000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure NHS and social care staff in Suffolk receive same day testing for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: All essential workers, including National Health Service and social care staff are eligible for priority testing for COVID-19. A number of tests are reserved for essential workers and they can book a visit to a test site, or order a home test kit if they cannot get to a site, through GOV.UK at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

■ **Coronavirus: Travel**

Giles Watling: [147048]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced in January 2021, what the maximum distance is that people are permitted to travel for exercise.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There is no specific distance applicable to all circumstances. However, the advice is that to meet the legal requirement not to leave home to travel unless for work or other legally permitted reasons. To reduce the risk of transmission, people should stay local and avoid travelling outside of the village, town or the part of a city where they live and look to reduce the number of journeys made overall.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Rachael Maskell:

[\[140183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to ensure that the roll-out of the covid-19 vaccine does not have a negative effect on clinical trials for other diseases.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has provided advice to clinical trial sponsors to conduct a specific risk assessment for concomitant use of a COVID-19 vaccine in their trial, taking into consideration each investigational medicinal product used in the trial and with specific consideration for the trial population. If a trial needs to be amended to facilitate continuation, then the MHRA will consider any application and advise as necessary.

■ Coronavirus: Yorkshire and the Humber

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[111444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the four covid-19 mobile testing units operating in the Humber, how many members of staff working in those units have received contractual sick pay for having tested positive for covid-19 or for having to self-isolate since those units began operating in April 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: This information is not held centrally. Test sites have clear guidance for treating suspected COVID-19 cases to ensure individuals are self-isolating whenever it is necessary to do so. Our commercial partners have their own measures in place to support staff members who are ill or otherwise unable to work.

■ Dentistry: Coronavirus

Alex Norris:

[\[116624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) private general dental practitioners, (b) general dental practitioners offering a mix of NHS and private treatment, (c) NHS general dental practitioners and (d) community dentists employed by non-NHS organisations are considered essential workers during the November 2020 covid-19 restrictions for the purposes of (i) attending work and (ii) accessing covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: All health and social care front line staff, including dentists and their staff, are considered essential workers for the purpose of attending work and accessing testing. This has applied since the first COVID-19 restrictions and continues to apply to date. This includes those providing private dental treatment as well as those providing National Health Service care.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Members' Constituency Work**Alex Cunningham:** [\[133841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to increase capacity within the contact tracing policy team responsible for answering enquiries from hon. Members; and if he will introduce a telephone helpline for hon. Members and their staff to contact that team.

Alex Cunningham: [\[133842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the time taken to respond to enquiries by hon. Members on behalf of constituents by his contact tracing policy team.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The NHS Test and Trace service seeks to respond to enquiries from hon. Members as quickly and efficiently as possible. NHS Test and Trace is currently developing an enhanced response service, which will be fully operational in February 2021. This will provide a faster and more efficient service for hon. Members to get answers to questions on behalf of their constituents.

■ Disability: Health Services**Marco Longhi:** [\[145166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support the healthcare needs of disabled people and their families in Dudley North constituency during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

During the pandemic, Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has supported the healthcare needs of disabled people through a number of actions. These include maintaining provision of NHS Continuing Healthcare for adults with long-term health conditions and NHS Continuing Care for children with the most complex needs, continuing to provide personal health budgets and continuing to provide health checks in general practice for people with a learning disability. Nationally, the Department has advised people with specific health conditions, including disabled people who are deemed to be clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19, to shield and has provided direct support to the shielded population.

■ Health Professions: Termination of Employment**Alex Norris:** [\[147020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland's survey finding that more than half of healthcare professionals are contemplating leaving the NHS or retiring early due to pressures faced during the covid-19 pandemic; and what steps he is taking to ensure the adequate provision of expertise in the NHS.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: The Government is committed to supporting the National Health Service workforce and has committed to deliver 50,000 more nurses, to increase the general practice workforce by 6,000 doctors and to enrol 26,000 other primary care professionals. Through increased education funding we are now seeing a record high intake for medical students and historically high numbers of people entering nursing degrees. Our new healthcare visa means we are cutting application decision times, removing the immigration surcharge and in turn ensuring the supply of international healthcare workers remains strong. Finally, the NHS People Plan is helping us retain staff through an enhanced wellbeing offer to help mitigate stress and a diversity and inclusion programme to ensure all staff feel valued.

Health Services: Older People**Nicola Richards:****[112166]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing to elderly residents in (a) West Bromwich East constituency and (b) the wider West Midlands who live alone in assisted living accommodation.

Helen Whately:

We have published national guidance for the public, which includes advice for older people and will be relevant for those who live alone in assisted living accommodation in West Bromwich East and the wider West Midlands. The guidance can be found at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19#older-people

In addition, the NHS Volunteers Responders Programme is a national scheme which provides companionship and support to those who may be isolated from contact with others, including through the check in and chat service. The Programme will continue to be available until at least March 2021.

Home Care Services: Coronavirus**Peter Kyle:****[126078]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of making regular repeat covid-19 tests available to domiciliary care users.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 December 2020]: Home care workers employed by Care Quality Commission-registered organisations are able to access weekly PCR tests, which can be self-administered at home. This will help identify whether any home care workers have COVID-19 asymptotically.

■ Mental Health

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[145745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to assess the mental wellbeing of people living alone who have been furloughed.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There are no plans to assess the mental wellbeing of this specific group.

However, Public Health England has developed a mental health and wellbeing surveillance tracker to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 on the population's mental health. This is a proactive step which will help ensure that our response to the effects of COVID-19 on mental health and wellbeing is shaped by emerging data. Its report is regularly updated with the most recent information and is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report

We recognise the effect that being furloughed and living alone may have on mental wellbeing. We have published guidance on mental health and wellbeing on GOV.UK and the 'Every Mind Matters' portal. The Government has also invested £5 million in national loneliness charities, raising awareness and providing advice through the Let's Talk Loneliness campaign.

■ Midwives: Yorkshire and the Humber

Jon Trickett:

[\[146773\]](#)

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

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: This information is not held centrally.

■ NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme 2020

Justin Madders:

[\[146915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January 2021 to Question 140829 on NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme 2020, how many of the 261 accepted claims have been paid.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: The latest data for the NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme (England) was released on 27 January, with 268 claims to the Scheme having 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.

■ NHS Test and Trace**Munira Wilson:** [\[127000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 6 December 2020 to Question 100550 on Coronavirus: Contact Tracing, in what format his Department holds that information.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: NHS Test and Trace monitors monthly expenditure, spend across test, trace and other activities for the year to date and spend overall on contact tracing across centralised contact tracing and local contact tracing.

Justin Madders: [\[129037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many IT problems have resulted in the NHS Test and Trace service being unable to carry out contact tracing since that system was established.

Helen Whately:

There have been no IT failures preventing contact tracing.

■ Respiratory System: Coronavirus**Dan Jarvis:** [\[88871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that patients with respiratory conditions are prioritised for covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 September 2020]: Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 can get a test. The majority of people who take a test in person will receive their result the next day. The country has moved back to a tiered system of local restrictions. We have reinstated this guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people linked to these tiers.

This information can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/>

HOME OFFICE**■ Airguns: Children****Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:** [\[145734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many breaches of the law have occurred as a result of a person between the ages of 14 and 17 using an airgun unsupervised on private land with the permission of the owner over the last 14 years.

Kit Malthouse:

The requested information is not held centrally.

■ **British Nationality: Assessments****Holly Lynch:**[\[144730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of Life in the UK citizenship tests taken have been passed by nationality annually since 2010 in (a) English, (b) Welsh and (c) Scots Gaelic.

Kevin Foster:

Since 2010 there has been one test taken in Welsh by a Brazilian national and one test taken in Scots Gaelic by a German national.

Table 1 shows the number of tests taken by nationality. Table 2 shows the proportion of LitUK tests that have been passed by nationality.

Attachments:

1. PQ 144730 - tests taken and passed [Tables for PQ 144730.xlsx]

Holly Lynch:[\[144731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how applicants taking the Life in the UK citizenship test are able to find out the (a) number of incorrect answers and (b) correct answers to those questions.

Kevin Foster:

Customers who fail the Life in the UK test are not informed of the number of questions they answered incorrectly, and they are not given the correct answers. They are told they have failed the test and are advised which subject areas of the official handbook they need to study.

Holly Lynch:[\[144732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure Life in the UK citizenship test centres (a) correctly inform applicants of their results and (b) receive unannounced inspections from her Department.

Kevin Foster:

The Life in the UK (LitUK) test is a computer delivered test and automatically marked, which mitigates against any potential incorrect results. We are not aware of any cases where a customer has been given an incorrect result.

The Home Office undertakes a schedule of unannounced inspections of all LitUK test centres. This has been impacted as a result of Covid-19 during 2020/21, but will recommence when it is appropriate to do so.

In addition to the inspections undertaken by the Home Office, the test provider is required to undertake audits of each of the test centres. Each centre will receive a combination of both an in-person audit and remote audit undertaken via CCTV monitoring.

Also, the test provider is required to facilitate independent third-party mystery shopping events for each test centre assessing the security arrangements at the centre.

The results of both the audits and mystery shopping events are provided to the Home Office officials for review and monitoring purposes. These audits and mystery shopping events and Home Office review thereof have continued during 2020/21.

■ **Drugs: Organised Crime**

John Lamont:

[\[145855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions her Department has had with (a) Police Scotland and (b) the British Transport Police on county lines.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office and its operational partners work closely with both Police Scotland and the British Transport Police, both of whom have a key role in addressing county lines drug dealing. Regular dialogue takes place with the British Transport Police on county lines, and through our investment the British Transport Police has established a dedicated taskforce focusing on county lines operations. We are also funding the National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC) to co-ordinate the national law enforcement response to county lines and NCLCC regularly engage with Police Scotland. County lines was also discussed at the UK Drugs Ministerial in September, which was attended by HO and Scottish Government ministers and by Police Scotland among others.

This Government is determined to crack down on the county lines gangs who are exploiting our children and have a devastating impact on our communities. That is why, on 20 January the Government announced £40m dedicated investment to tackle drugs supply and county lines and surge our activity against these ruthless gangs. This will allow us to expand and build upon the successful results of our existing £25m county lines programme. In September 2020 NCLCC coordinated a county lines 'week of intensification' which included all forces, including Police Scotland. This resulted in over 1,000 arrests, drugs worth more than £1m seized and over 1,500 vulnerable individuals safeguarded.

■ **Financial Services: Fraud**

Pat McFadden:

[\[146832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many suspicious activity reports were filed with regulators in (a) the UK and (b) other countries by UK based financial institutions in each of the last five years.

Kit Malthouse:

Suspicious Activity Reports are submitted by reporters to the UK Financial Intelligence Unit within the National Crime Agency.

In the last 5 years, the following volumes of Suspicious Activity Reports have been received by the UK Financial Intelligence Unit. The UK Financial Intelligence Unit does not hold data on whether an institution is based in the UK.

	APRIL 2019 TO MARCH 2020	APRIL 2018- MARCH 2019	APRIL 2017- MARCH 2018	OCTOBER 2015 TO SEPTEMBER 2016	OCT 2014 TO SEPT 2015
Credit institution – banks	432,316	383,733	371,522	348,688	318,445
Credit institution – building societies	30,579	21,714	19,640	15,078	15,806
Credit institution – others	8,080	10,203	13,678	13,222	11,828
Financial institution – MSBs	17,701	18,940	21,198	10,091	11,120
Financial institution – others	58,930	24,911	21,446	14,496	6,835

The Home Office or National Crime Agency does not hold information relating to Suspicious Activity Reports submitted to other countries.

Suspicious Activity Report submission volumes can be found in the SARs Annual Reports which are published by the National Crime Agency, which includes breakdowns by sector. The 2019-2020 report can be found here:

<https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/who-we-are/publications/480-sars-annual-report-2020/file>

■ Immigration: Armed Forces

Stephen Morgan:

[145120]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for leave to remain her Department has received from Commonwealth service personnel in each of the last five years.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not hold published data on leave to remain applications, grants or refusals from Commonwealth service personnel. These are grouped together with other categories and published as 'other' in our published statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2020/how-many-people-continue-their-stay-in-the-uk-or-apply-to-stay-permanently>

■ **Police: Pay****Stephanie Peacock:****[145842]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the economic effect on police officers of their pay freeze.

Kit Malthouse:

At the Spending Review, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that pay rises in the public sector will be restrained and targeted in 2021/22. The pay freeze will apply to headline pay uplifts only. Other payments, such as progression pay, overtime and special allowances will continue as before.

The Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) provides independent advice to the Government on pay and conditions for police officers. The Review Body will provide recommendations on the implementation of the £250 uplift for those earning less than £24,000 and the number of officers it will apply to.

■ **Police: Suicide****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[147969]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce the suicide rate amongst police officers.

Kit Malthouse:

The death of any police officer is a tragedy. The Government and police leaders take this matter very seriously and are working to support the mental and physical wellbeing of all police officers and staff.

We have invested in programmes which offer help directly to officers and staff. This includes £7.5million to fund the development of the National Police Wellbeing Service, which was launched in 2019. The service is helping forces to identify where there is most risk of impacts on mental health, developing work around building resilience, as well as supporting those who need it in response to traumatic events.

The Government has also accelerated work to introduce a Police Covenant, which will ensure our police get the support and protection they need. The Covenant will be enshrined in law, with provisions being brought forward later this session, and the Home Secretary will have a duty to report annually to Parliament on the work undertaken.

Our focus will be on health and wellbeing, physical protection and support for families, with a real emphasis on mental health support. Together with our policing partners we are working to ensure the Covenant has a lasting impact on both those who work, or have worked in, policing.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund: Leeds

Hilary Benn:

[144933]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what stage in the application process to the Building Safety Fund the application for West Point, Wellington Street, Leeds, LS1 4JL has reached.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department is continuing to work with building owners to progress applications for the Building Safety Fund (BSF). Application progress is communicated to registrants who we expect will ensure that their residents are kept fully informed. Any registrants wishing to check their progress can also contact the BSF Registrations Team using the email address provided when they first register.

■ Buildings: Hampstead and Kilburn

Tulip Siddiq:

[144776]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of buildings in Hampstead and Kilburn constituency that (a) have combustible non-ACM cladding and (b) require EWS1 forms.

Christopher Pincher:

Summary information from the External Wall Systems data collection are published in this Building Safety Programme data release:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-programme-estimates-of-ews1-requirements-on-residential-buildings-in-england/building-safety-programme-estimates-of-ews1-requirements-on-residential-buildings-in-england>.

Constituency analysis is not available.

Tulip Siddiq:

[144778]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to prohibit building owners from passing the remediation cost of cladding replacement to leaseholders and tenants in Hampstead and Kilburn constituency.

Christopher Pincher:

Government guidance is clear that building safety is the responsibility of building owners and we have given expert advice on a range of safety issues to provide clarity.

Building Owners should consider all routes to meet costs, including through warranties and recovering costs from contractors for incorrect or poor work. We have seen many responsible developers and building owners stepping up to take responsibility for correcting these defects - for example, in more than half of the high-rise private sector buildings with ACM cladding.

Government also expects building owners who have already committed to pay for the removal and replacement of unsafe non-ACM cladding systems to honour their commitments.

We recognise that there are cases where leasehold agreements will allow building owners or their managing agents to pass on remediation costs to leaseholders. That is why the Government is developing proposals to help to protect leaseholders, and we will provide more details as soon as we are in a position to do so.

■ Buildings: Insulation

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[144777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to reimburse leaseholders and tenants for increased service payments related to remedial cladding works since June 2017.

Christopher Pincher:

Government guidance is clear that building safety is the responsibility of building owners and we have given expert advice on a range of safety issues to provide clarity.

The Department has ongoing engagement with developers and building owners of private sector high-rise residential buildings (over 18 metres or six storeys, whichever is reached first) with unsafe cladding. This has led to the remediation of over half of high-rise residential buildings with unsafe Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding being funded by the developer, freeholder or through warranty claims, without passing the costs onto leaseholders. Furthermore, the Private Sector ACM Remediation Fund and the Building Safety Fund for the remediation of buildings with unsafe non-ACM cladding both require applicants to demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to recover the costs of replacing the unsafe cladding from those responsible through insurance claims, warranties or legal action.

Government also expects building owners who have already committed to pay for the removal and replacement of unsafe cladding systems to honour their commitments.

We recognise that there are cases where leasehold agreements will allow building owners or their managing agents to pass on remediation costs to leaseholders. That is why the Government is developing proposals to help to protect leaseholders, and we will provide more details as soon as we are in a position to do so.

■ Housing Act 1988

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[144649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to bring forward legislation to repeal Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government remains committed to abolishing Section 21 through a Renters' Reform Bill which will enhance renters' security. However, our collective efforts are currently focused on responding to the coronavirus outbreak.

Repealing Section 21 represents the largest change to renting in 30 years and it is only right that the reforms are taken forward in a considered manner. It is important that providing tenants with greater security of tenure is balanced with an assurance that landlords are able to recover their properties where they have valid reasons to do so. This is vital to ensuring the future supply of good quality housing in the rented sector.

We will bring forward the Renters' Reform Bill at the appropriate time.

■ Local Government: Coronavirus

Nicola Richards:

[\[144890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the total amount of financial support provided to each local authority in England during the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

MHCLG works with other government departments to ensure local authorities are fully supported to deliver their vital role in the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In total, we have allocated over £8 billion so far to support local authorities during the pandemic. This includes £7.5 billion allocated directly to councils to address expenditure pressures, and over £500 million of payments from the first round of our sales, fees and charges compensation scheme. This does not include the £3 billion of additional financial support committed to councils for the COVID-19 response in 2021-22.

A full breakdown of the funding we have captured in this assessment is set out below:

FUND NAME	FUNDING (£M)
COVID-19 2020/21 emergency unringfenced funding for LAs (Tranches 1-4)	4,607
Contain Outbreak Management Fund	978
Infection Control Fund	1,146
Adult Social Care Rapid Testing Fund	149

FUND NAME	FUNDING (£M)
Workforce Capacity Fund for Adult Social Care	120
Local authority compliance and enforcement grant	30
Funding to support the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable	33
Reopening High Streets Safely Fund	50
Next Steps Accommodation Programme	92
Emergency Support for Rough Sleepers	3
Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies	63
Additional Funding for Home to School Travel	71
COVID Winter Grant Scheme	170
SFC Compensation Scheme (first round)	528
Total	8,040

Attached is a breakdown of this £8 billion of funding by region and by local authority. This reflects the department's current best understanding and further payments will be made to local authorities this financial year in due course including: additional funding from further rounds of the sales, fees and charges scheme; and additional funding that will be provided through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund to tackle the spread of the virus – worth over £225 million a month during the national lockdown.

Also attached is a breakdown in relation to England's ceremonial counties. For this, the following caveats apply:

- Ceremonial counties do not necessarily cover the same area as county councils. The area covered by a ceremonial county will include all local authorities within that historical definition of the county. It will include the county council and shire districts, as well as any additional single-tier councils within the area.
- A small number of standalone fire and rescue authorities cross ceremonial county borders. In these cases, funding is apportioned between the ceremonial counties covered by the fire authority according to population.

Attachments:

1. Breakdown by region and local authority [PQ 144890 Breakdown by region and local authority.docx]
2. PQ 144890 Ceremonial counties list [PQ 144890 Ceremonial counties list.docx]

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Staff**Darren Jones:**[\[144817\]](#)

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

Luke Hall:

The Department does not hold the information requested. The Industrial Strategy is a cross-government policy which comprises and drives a significant number of initiatives. These span a wide array of policy areas across 20 government departments and arm's-length bodies.

■ New Homes Ombudsman**Ian Mearns:**[\[144994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 25 January 2021 to Question 140777, when the New Homes Ombudsman is planned to be in place; and whether he plans to provide that ombudsman with the power to process complaints which arose prior to its formation.

Christopher Pincher:

Provision for the New Homes Ombudsman will be brought forward through the Building Safety Bill which we will introduce when Parliamentary time allows. We continue to stay in touch with the industry-led New Homes Quality Board on its plans for a voluntary New Homes Ombudsman scheme, to be in place ahead of legislation. As there will be different requirements for developers when they are members of the New Homes Ombudsman, the legislation will not apply retrospectively. We will set out transition arrangements to the New Homes Ombudsman scheme when arrangements for the scheme are in place. Consumers will still be able to seek redress using existing routes, including through consumer codes and warranty providers.

■ Parish Councils: Freedom of Information**Alexander Stafford:**[\[144886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to increase resources to parish councils to assist with responding to freedom of information requests.

Luke Hall:

The Government does not have powers to offer direct financial support to parish councils, which are funded through a precept collected from within the overall council tax paid by the residents of the parish.

The Government has provided £8billion of un-ringfenced support to local authorities since the start of the pandemic, recognising that local authorities are best placed to

decide how to meet the major service pressures in their local areas. In addition we have announced no cap on precept increases, granting additional flexibility.

To ensure that freedom of information requests costs are proportionate the Government has capped the cost of a request to £450 for a parish council and allows a fee to be charged where appropriate.

■ Rented Housing

Ian Mearns:

[\[144667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish the findings of the consultation on A New Deal for Renting: Resetting the Balance of Rights and Responsibilities Between Landlords and Tenants, which closed on the 12th October 2019.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government remains committed to abolishing Section 21 through a Renters' Reform Bill, which will enhance renters' security. However, our collective efforts are currently focused on responding to the coronavirus outbreak.

Repealing Section 21 represents the largest change to renting in 30 years and it is only right that the reforms are taken forward in a considered manner. The Government's consultation 'A New Deal for Renting: Resetting the Balance of Rights and Responsibilities Between Landlords and Tenants' sought views on the best way to provide tenants with greater security, but also ensure that landlords are able to recover their properties where they have valid reasons to do so. This balance is vital to ensuring the future supply of good quality housing in the rented sector.

We will publish a response to the consultation and bring forward a Renters Reform Bill to implement the reforms.

■ Shared Ownership

Jack Lopresti:

[\[144666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department are taking to ensure that residents in a Shared Ownership Scheme are not disadvantaged by the terms of their lease, particularly in regard to service charge increases.

Christopher Pincher:

On 8 September the Government confirmed the new model for Shared Ownership. The new model has reduced the minimum share to 10 per cent, introduced 1 per cent staircasing and introduced a 10-year period during which the landlord will support with the cost of repairs on new build homes. These reforms will help to make the scheme more consumer friendly, more accessible and fairer, leading to a better experience for a future generation of shared owners.

In line with making Shared Ownership more consumer friendly, the Government believes very strongly that service charges should be transparent and communicated

effectively, and that there should be a clear route to challenge or redress if things go wrong. The law is clear that service charges are payable only to the extent that costs have been reasonably incurred. In support of this, leaseholders, including shared owners, have the ability to apply to the Property Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal for a determination where they do not believe the charges are reasonable.

The Government established an independent working group chaired by Lord Best to raise standards across the property sector, which also considered how fees such as service charges should be presented to consumers. The working group published its final report to Government (see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulation-of-property-agents-working-group-report>) and we are considering the report's recommendations before announcing next steps.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Department for International Trade: Marketing

Owen Thompson:

[\[144748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how much her Department spent on (a) communications, (b) advertising and (c) marketing in (i) the UK, (ii) England, (iii) Northern Ireland, (iv) Scotland and (v) Wales in each month from August 2020 to December 2020.

Greg Hands:

The total spend on UK advertising activity through paid media channels between August 2020 and December 2020 was £19,971.47 (excl. VAT). This excludes communications and marketing activity undertaken by the Department overseas.

This media spend targets the UK business audience as a whole and the Department does not hold information separating this spend by the nations of the UK.

The Department for International Trade publishes expenditure exceeding £25,000 on all communications and marketing on a rolling monthly basis on gov.uk as part of routine government transparency arrangements.

JUSTICE

■ Criminal Proceedings: Females

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[144642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to The Concordat on Women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System, published on 23 January 2021, which areas have a Whole System Approach (a) in place and (b) being planned in England and Wales.

Lucy Frazer:

In 2016, the Ministry of Justice provided seed funding totalling £200,000 for five areas (Greater Manchester, Norfolk, Surrey, Sussex and Wales) to develop whole system approaches for women in or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system. This investment helped secure a further £325,000 from local agencies to support projects, as well as supporting Manchester's women's centres to successfully apply for funding from the Big Lottery and Tampon Tax Funds.

In 2017, the Ministry of Justice announced six successful bidders who had applied for further £800,000 multi-year funding. The money was available to develop or continue to develop whole system approaches and was awarded to Lancashire, West Mercia, Norfolk, Sussex, Surrey and Devon. Four of these grants were paid over 3 years, ending in March 2020, and two were for one year.

In Wales, the Future 4 Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach (and 18-25 Early Intervention Service) was launched in South Wales and Gwent in October 2019, building on the learning from the Integrated Offender Management Cymru Women's Pathfinder initiative (2013). The Service provides an example of an effective multi-agency, joined up approach between public, private and third sector organisations, working to address the complex needs and vulnerabilities of women in Wales, and enabling women to have opportunities to live positive, independent lives.

A Blueprint for a Whole System Approach to Women in Contact with the Criminal Justice System in London was published in 2019, consolidating the range of strategies and commitments in respect of women in the capital and setting a foundation for ongoing multi-agency work in this area.

The Ministry of Justice does not have information about further whole system approaches that are currently planned but one of the aims of publishing the Concordat, which sets out strong support for the whole system approach, is that it will promote further interest and take up locally.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[144643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to The Concordat on Women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System, published on 23 January 2021, what assessment he has made of the areas in England and Wales that do not have a Whole System Approach in place or being planned, but which are suitable for one.

Lucy Frazer:

The aim of a Whole System Approach for women in or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system is to allow local partners to work together more effectively, using existing resources differently to provide a joined up response targeting support, avoiding gaps and/or duplication in service provision. There is no single model for a Whole System Approach as the most effective will reflect local needs and circumstances. Therefore, there is no reason in principle why any local area could not adopt a Whole System Approach tailored to local needs.

One of the aims of publishing the Concordat, which sets out strong support for the whole system approach, is that it will promote further interest and take up locally.

In Wales, the Future 4 Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach (and 18-25 Early Intervention Service) was launched in South Wales and Gwent in October 2019, building on the learning from the Integrated Offender Management Cymru Women's Pathfinder initiative (2013). The Service provides an example of an effective multi-agency, joined up approach between public, private and third sector organisations, working to address the complex needs and vulnerabilities of women in Wales, and enabling women to have opportunities to live positive, independent lives.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[144644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to The Concordat on Women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System, published on 23 January 2021, what estimate he has made of the average start-up costs of a Whole System Approach.

Lucy Frazer:

There is no single model for a Whole System Approach as the most effective will reflect local needs and circumstances. Costs will differ between local areas depending on the model adopted.

Previously, the Ministry of Justice has provided seed funding to promote development of Whole Systems Approaches in several local areas. This illustrates the level of funding that can be useful for start-up purposes. In 2016, the Ministry of Justice provided seed funding totalling £200,000 for five areas (Greater Manchester, Norfolk, Surrey, Sussex and Wales) to develop whole system approaches for women in or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system. This investment helped secure a further £325,000 from local agencies to support projects, as well as supporting Manchester's women's centres to successfully apply for funding from the Big Lottery and Tampon Tax Funds.

In 2017, the Ministry of Justice announced six successful bidders who had applied for further £800,000 multi-year funding. The money was available to develop or continue to develop whole system approaches and was awarded to Lancashire, West Mercia, Norfolk, Sussex, Surrey and Devon. Four of these grants were paid over 3 years, ending in March 2020, and two were for one year.

One of the aims of publishing the Concordat, which sets out strong support for the whole system approach, is that it will promote further interest and take up locally.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[144645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to The Concordat on Women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System, published on 23 January 2021, what targets he has set against the metrics for (a) the criminogenic and responsivity needs of women in the community and custody, (b) arrests, (c) Out of Court Disposals, (d) prosecutions and court outcomes, (e) Liaison and Diversion, (f) Community Sentence Orders and Suspended Sentence Orders and associated treatment requirements, (g) Pre-Sentence Reports, (h) remand, (i) custodial sentences including details on length, (j)

prison population, (k) safety in custody, (l) discipline in custody, (m) family ties and mothers in custody, (n) resettlement and (o) reoffending.

Lucy Frazer:

The Concordat sets out a joint commitment agreed by all signatories. Progress in delivering against the commitment will be measured via the Actions listed on pages 5 to 9 and Annex B of the Concordat lists the metrics that will be monitored to assess progress. However, no targets have been set against the metrics (a) to (o) listed in the question.

The Female Offender Strategy contained a commitment to publish a data tool alongside the Concordat to enable local areas to better understand the needs of the women in their area. The data tool allows work to be tailored to respond more closely to local needs and to track the outcomes and success of work locally. It is available at:

https://public.tableau.com/profile/moj.analysis#!/vizhome/WomenintheCJSLocalDataTool2019_15936996079540/WomenintheCJSLocalDataTool2019

■ **Ministry of Justice: Marketing**

Owen Thompson:

[144757]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, 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 Philp:

The Ministry of Justice publishes campaign expenditure (including advertising and marketing spend on campaigns such as HMPPS recruitment) on a quarterly basis, details of which can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) – as part of routine government transparency arrangements. All substantive campaign spend is subject to Cabinet Office professional assurance.

The criminal justice system and legal jurisdiction of England and Wales are under the control of the UK parliament and government at Westminster. The criminal justice systems of Scotland and Northern Ireland are devolved to the Scottish parliament and Northern Ireland assembly respectively. The majority of MOJ campaign spend therefore relates to England and Wales.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Staff**

Darren Jones:

[144818]

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

Alex Chalk:

The Industrial Strategy is a cross-government policy which comprises and drives a significant number of initiatives. These span a wide array of policy areas across 20 government departments and arm's-length bodies.

The Ministry of Justice does not maintain records of the number of officials associated with supporting the Industrial Strategy. It is a departmental priority to support a flourishing legal services sector and the growth of the UK's £6bn trade surplus in legal services through improving market access for UK legal professionals overseas and by maintaining and promoting the strength of UK legal services, English and Welsh law and the UK courts.

■ Remand in Custody: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[144984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to tackle the effects of lack of access to (a) support, (b) education and training, and (c) visits during stage 4 covid-19 restrictions for unconvicted (i) young people, (ii) adult women, and (iii) adult men held on remand while awaiting trial.

Lucy Frazer:

We are committed to continuing to provide support for everyone under our care, including those on remand. We have tailored guidance for supporting specific groups of people in prison whose wellbeing may be more impacted by current regimes. A range of products to support Governors mitigate risks have been produced. This has included resources for staff assisting prison residents who might be struggling, and materials for residents themselves to support wellbeing. We continue to make the Samaritans phone service available and are working with the Samaritans to ensure that the Listener peer support scheme continues to function effectively. We have also introduced a range of measures and products designed to manage prisoners with specific needs, including mental health needs.

Classroom-based education provision is currently not available across the adult prison estate to limit the spread of infection. We have, however, continued to work very closely with all Prison Education Framework (PEF) and Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) education providers to support prisons which has allowed learning to continue from the start of the pandemic via in cell activity and learning packs. Within the Youth Secure Estate the delivery of education remains a particular priority and we continue to provide 'face to face' classroom-based education in line with the community provision for vulnerable children, notwithstanding local variations and the impact of potential outbreaks amongst staff or children.

Social prison visits are currently suspended in all adult prisons in England and Wales, other than on exceptional compassionate grounds. Visits to children in custody are continuing on this basis, although video calling is promoted where possible. Video calls are now available in all prisons, and we are maximising their use to support prisoners maintaining family contact. The suspension of visits is a step that we have taken to manage the current risk, but we will review this change regularly with a view of resuming visits when it is safe to do so. To mitigate the impact of reduced family contact we are providing additional PIN credit, and secure mobile PIN Phones where in cell telephony is not available.

The National Framework also provides a roadmap for easing restrictions in prisons when it becomes appropriate, guided by public health advice, alongside an operational assessment of what can be achieved in custodial settings while keeping staff and those in our care safe.

■ **Styal Prison: Pregnancy**

Richard Burgon:

[144767]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how (a) many and (b) what ethnicity of women were known to be pregnant while (i) on remand or (ii) serving a sentence in HMP Styal on (A) 31 March and (B) 30 June 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

Pregnancy data is collected and monitored locally by individual prisons to ensure the appropriate support can be provided to women in our care, whether women are on remand or sentenced.

I can confirm that an ad hoc data collection exercise was undertaken on the 28 January 2021 which indicates that the number of women known to be pregnant whilst on remand or serving a sentence in HMP Styal on 31 March 2020 and 30 June 2020 was fewer than three on each date. As the overall number is fewer than three and releasing the actual number would risk identification of individuals, it is not possible to give any more information about ethnicity, for the same reason.

On 31 July we published a summary report of our review of operational policy on pregnancy and women separated from children under 2. This includes an undertaking to extend the range of data we publish in relation to pregnant women in prison, and can be found at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/905559/summary-report-of-review-of-policy-on-mbu.pdf.

We have already taken steps to increase our internal national data collection processes to support the policy review, and to enable us to plan for future publication.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **Iron and Steel: Northern Ireland**

Louise Haigh:

[145078]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to his Answer to Question 100 at the Oral Evidence session of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee of 20 January, whether guidance on steel tariffs has been issued to business.

Mr Robin Walker:

We have put into place temporary measures to ensure steel traders avoid paying tariffs. The Government wrote to affected businesses to set out routes for bringing UK-origin and EU-origin steel into Northern Ireland tariff-free.

The Government also set out how relevant quotas can be accessed when businesses in Northern Ireland import steel from the rest of the world. We will continue to engage on this issue with industry and the European Commission.

TRANSPORT

■ Driving Instruction: Compensation

Stuart Anderson:

[\[147055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment has been made of the potential merits of providing compensation to learner drivers whose theory test certificate has expired before the completion of their driving course due to the covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

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 Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) and subsequently to other fee payers were the DVSA to put in place arrangements to pay it. This would be unfair to the other fee payers who would not benefit from the arrangement.

■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[146855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the DVLA's policy is on advising people whether they can participate in driving theory tests.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is responsible for the conduct of theory driving tests.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement of the national lockdown in England, the DVSA has once again had to suspend all routine theory and practical driving tests.

Government guidance is very clear people should be staying at home to save lives and protect the NHS unless their trip is essential. A journey solely for driver learning or testing purposes is not considered essential. It is also contrary to the 'stay at home' message and would increase movement of both people and vehicles.

The DVSA is working with its theory test contract provider, Pearson VUE, to respond to requests for theory tests in England 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 has been working closely with Pearson VUE, to explore ways in which it can expand theory testing capacity and reduce waiting times for theory tests once testing can resume.

WALES**■ Hydrogen: Wales****Philip Dunne:**[\[144972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps he is taking to grow the hydrogen economy in Wales.

David T C Davies:

The Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution confirms the UK Government's ambition, working with industry, for 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030. As we progress towards this ambition, we would hope to see around 1GW of hydrogen production capacity by 2025.

This will be supported by the £240m Net Zero Hydrogen Fund confirmed out to 2025, intended to support both CCUS enabled (blue) hydrogen and electrolytic (green) hydrogen production.

In the first half of this year, the government will publish a Hydrogen Strategy which will set out an action plan for decarbonisation and expansion of hydrogen in the 2020s across the UK.

There are already promising signs of interest and innovation around hydrogen production and utilisation in Wales, which the UK Government is backing.

For example, the Riversimple Clean Mobility Fleet was awarded £1.2m from the UK Government's Hydrogen Transport Programme to develop fuel cell electric vehicles.

The Milford Haven Energy Kingdom has received a £1m grant from UK Research and Innovation to develop diverse, local seed markets to support the transition to hydrogen and renewables along the Milford Haven Waterway.

The South Wales Industrial Cluster has received funding from the UK Government's Industrial Decarbonisation Challenge to explore options to transition the region's industries to net-zero, including by considering the role of low-carbon hydrogen.

I and my officials continue to work closely with colleagues across government to raise awareness of the interest in Wales in the role of low-carbon hydrogen in the transition to net-zero.

Philip Dunne:[\[144974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, whether the Government plans to set a target for the deployment of hydrogen refueling infrastructure in Wales.

David T C Davies:

Whilst it is true that battery electric vehicles dominate the current zero emission vehicle market, we recognise the potential of hydrogen as another solution for zero emission transport, particularly for heavier road vehicles.

The fuel cell electric vehicle (FCEV) and hydrogen refuelling market is in its infancy and government has taken steps to support its growth in the UK.

For example, the Hydrogen for Transport Programme, launched in 2017, set out the next steps to develop the UK hydrogen vehicle market, providing up to £23m of new grant funding to support the growth of refuelling infrastructure alongside the deployment of new vehicles. The programme awarded £1.2m to the Riversimple Clean Mobility Fleet initiative, led by the Welsh company, Riversimple, alongside Monmouthshire County Council.

The Department for Transport's forthcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan will discuss the potential role for hydrogen in decarbonising the transport sector, including road transport.

Philip Dunne:

[\[144975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, whether the Government plans to set a target for hydrogen production in Wales.

David T C Davies:

The Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution confirms the UK Government's ambition, working with industry, for 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030. As we progress towards this ambition, we would hope to see around 1GW of hydrogen production capacity by 2025.

I and my officials continue to work closely with colleagues across government to raise awareness of the interest in Wales in the role of low-carbon hydrogen in the transition to net-zero.

Philip Dunne:

[\[144976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for International Trade on a strategy to boost exports of Welsh hydrogen technology.

David T C Davies:

The global annual hydrogen market is estimated to potentially be worth over \$1 trillion by 2050, and the global hydrogen project pipeline is estimated at \$90bn today. The UK Government's focus is to seize the opportunity to export UK skills, capability and technology into the growing global hydrogen market.

The UK Government is already investing in hydrogen technologies and is an active partner in a range of international initiatives.

The UK Government continues to explore the export opportunities associated with developing a low carbon hydrogen economy and to attract inward investment.

I have regular discussions with the Secretary of State for International Trade on increasing Welsh exports.

■ Motor Vehicles: Hydrogen**Philip Dunne:**[\[144973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on the role hydrogen passenger vehicles can play in supporting the growth of the Welsh hydrogen economy.

David T C Davies:

The UK Government is committed to exploring all options for low carbon hydrogen across freight, buses, trains, maritime, and aviation to ensure that the UK can lead the world in its deployment and use across the economy.

The Department for Transport is working closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on a new overarching hydrogen strategy setting out how to deliver all the benefits of a hydrogen economy for the UK, including for transport.

Whilst we expect hydrogen to play a key role in decarbonising transport, it is likely to be most effective in the areas 'that batteries cannot reach', where energy density requirements or duty cycles and refuelling times make it the most suitable low carbon energy source.

At this point, progressing the hydrogen economy as a whole in the UK means rapidly expanding our expertise, innovation and infrastructure deployments to create a critical mass and overcome barriers to production and use.

I and my officials continue to work closely with colleagues across government to raise awareness of the interest in Wales in the role of low-carbon hydrogen in the transition to net-zero, including in the transport sector.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Department for Work and Pensions: Epilepsy****Kirsten Oswald:**[\[144710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 132962 on Epilepsy, how many of the 47 staff members that have declared having epilepsy are paid staff members; and how many of those with a declared disability are on (a) full-time and (b) part-time contracts.

Guy Opperman:

Declaring a health condition is voluntary, therefore the figures provided are specifically from staff members who have declared a disability or long-term health condition.

Of the 47 department staff members declaring epilepsy 46 are paid staff members.

Of all colleagues declaring a disability or long-term health condition, 7,045 are full time, 5,778 are part-time.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Cat Smith: [\[140162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Kickstart work placements have been created by industry since that scheme was introduced.

Mims Davies:

As of 19/01/2021 there have been over 100,000 job placements approved by the Department for Work and Pensions' Kickstart Scheme. Of these, we are only able to collect data on those jobs that have been confirmed through grant agreements with the employer and then uploaded as a vacancy through our jobcentres.

The sector information for each job is not categorised by 'industry'.

■ Unemployment: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher: [\[143776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what (a) recent assessment she has made of trends in the level of unemployment amongst 25 to 30 year olds and (b) steps her Department is taking to reduce unemployment among that age group in (i) Coventry North East constituency and (ii) Coventry.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: Universal Credit is an in-work benefit that supports claimants of all ages, and through our Plan for Jobs, DWP also provides a range of support which can be accessed by people aged 25-30, including the Job Finding Support Service(JFS), Job Entry Targeted Support(JETS), and Sector-Based Work Academy Programmes(SWAPS). The Restart programme will also be available for people who are long term unemployed later this year.

The Department regularly publishes statistics on the Alternative Claimant Count, and these are available by age and local authority and constituency here: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Winter Fuel Payments

Douglas Chapman: [\[146911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many recipients of the winter fuel payment were paid (a) prior to 31 December 2020 and (b) from 1 January to 1 February 2021; and how many payments remain outstanding.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: We are not able to respond to your request as this information is only available at disproportionate cost to DWP.

Douglas Chapman:

[\[146912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to tackle delays in the payment of the winter fuel payment.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: DWP paid ninety-nine per cent of payments on time, which equated to 11.4 Million payments.

DWP has deployed additional resources to ensure that the remaining Winter Fuel Payments are made as soon as possible, as well as boosting our capacity to handle an increase in telephone enquiries.

The remaining 1% of payments, and supplementary payments generated by a customer's change of circumstances, will be made by 31 March 2021.

Douglas Chapman:

[\[146913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will commission a review on processes relating to winter fuel payments to ensure that all qualifying recipients are paid (a) accurately and (b) within agreed timescales.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: As standard practice, DWP will review the Winter Fuel Payment exercise.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Kashmir: Human Rights

Afzal Khan:

[\[147995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take diplomatic steps to support the International People's Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice in Kashmir.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 4 February 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Nigel Adams:

The UK remains concerned about the situation in Kashmir and we continue to follow developments there closely. The Foreign Secretary raised Kashmir with his counterpart, External Affairs Minister Dr Jaishankar, during his visit to India in December 2020. Officials at the British High Commission in New Delhi engage regularly with human rights organisations on the situation. Any allegation of human rights abuses is deeply concerning and must be investigated thoroughly, promptly and transparently. The UK's position remains that it is for India and Pakistan to identify a lasting political resolution to the situation, one that takes into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

~~The UK condemns the state of emergency imposed in Myanmar, and the arbitrary detention of democratically elected politicians and civil society by the military. It is essential that Aung San Suu Kyi, and all those arbitrarily detained, are released. Under the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime and the Myanmar Sanctions Regime the UK had already sanctioned 16 individuals, responsible for human rights violations in Myanmar. In July 2020, we sanctioned the Commander-in-Chief and his Deputy, in our first tranche of sanctions under the Global Human Rights Sanctions regime. We are working closely with international partners to consider next steps with the aim of ensuring that democratic wishes of Myanmar's people are respected and politicians and civil society leaders are released.~~