



Daily Report

Monday, 8 February 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 8 February 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:35 P.M., 08 February 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Prorogation: Legal Costs

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[148928\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January 2021 to Question 143130, what the total legal costs were in the (a) Scottish Courts and (b) Supreme Court in respect of litigation relating to the prorogation of Parliament in 2019.

Michael Ellis:

The Government defended a petition for Judicial Review in relation to the prorogation of Parliament in 2019 raised by Joanna Cherry QC MP and others in (1) the Outer House in the Court of Session, (2) the Inner House of the Court of Session, and (3) the Supreme Court where it was joined with R (on the application of Miller) (Appellant) v The Prime Minister (Respondent).

The Office of the Advocate General and Government Legal Department have determined that the total legal costs incurred by the Government in relation to the *Cherry* litigation in the Outer and Inner Houses of the Court of Session was £83,715 (net of VAT). The total legal costs incurred by the Government in the Supreme Court in relation to *Cherry* was £83,715 (net of VAT), and in relation to *Miller* was £142,590. These figures include Counsel fees, Government Legal Department litigator costs and court dues.

The Government also incurred £30,000 in adverse costs in relation to the *Cherry* proceedings. It is not possible to attribute these costs between proceedings in the different courts.

■ Taking of Hostages Act 1982: Prosecutions

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[147944\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January 2021 to Question 143029 on Taking of Hostages Act 1982: Prosecutions, how many proceedings referred to her Office under article 2 of the Taking of Hostages Act 1982 by the Crown Prosecution Service her Office has consented to prosecute in the last 10 years.

Michael Ellis:

Our records indicate that the Law Officers have consented to prosecutions under the Taking of Hostages Act 1982 on four occasions in the last 10 years.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY**■ Advent International: Cobham****Sir Christopher Chope:****[148678]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the legally binding undertakings given to the Government by Advent International when its purchase of Cobham was agreed in 2020 remain valid in respect of Cobham Mission Systems following the further sale of that business by Advent International to Eaton; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The Government has been following closely the sale of Cobham Mission Systems to Eaton Corporation plc. The undertakings given to the Government by Advent International when it purchased Cobham in 2020 do not prevent the sale of the whole or parts of Cobham by Advent International. As a result of the sale of Cobham Mission Systems, Advent International is no longer bound by the undertakings in respect of Cobham Mission Systems. Any safeguards to address concerns arising from the sale of Cobham Mission Systems will be considered separately with the new owners.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme**Angus Brendan MacNeil:****[147780]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps with the Chancellor of the Exchequer to (a) extend the payback period for Bounce Back Loans for 6-12 months and (b) write-off a proportion of debt incurred under that scheme in response to the ongoing economic effects of the covid-19 outbreak.

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 was designed to 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.

On 8 February, the Government announced that these options would be made more generous – removing the requirement to make six payments before accessing the 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.

Drew Hendry:

[\[147922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many Bounce Back Loans businesses have taken up by business size; and what the value is of those loans by business size.

Paul Scully:

A breakdown on the number of loans offered through the Bounce Back Loan scheme as of 26 January 2021 is in the table below.

BUSINESS SIZE	NO. OF FACILITIES	VALUE (£)
Micro	1,311,041	37,408,683,602
Small	134,600	6,505,697,212
Medium	3,098	131,529,621
Mid-sized	3,304	141,820,279
Large	171	7,195,275
Total	1,452,214	44,194,925,990

The categories are based on turnover and breakdown as follows:

Micro: Turnover

Small: Turnover between £632K and £10.19 million

Medium: Turnover between £10.2 million and £24.9 million

Mid-Sized: Turnover between £25 million and £500 million

Large: Turnover > £500 million

■ Cleaning Services: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:

[\[148939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing dry cleaners, which are currently classed

as essential retail, to access a wider range of support funds in response to a loss of income resulting from the covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Paul Scully:

The Government continues to offer an unprecedented support package for business including loan schemes, grant funding, tax deferrals, the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, all of which have been designed to be accessible to businesses in most sectors and across the UK.

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

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[145742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to protect furloughed jobs from automation.

Paul Scully:

The World Economic Forum has estimated that robotics, automation and artificial intelligence (AI) will displace 75 million jobs globally between 2018 and 2022 but create 133 million new ones – a “net positive” of 58 million jobs.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has taken unprecedented steps to protect jobs. The objective of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is to enable employers to keep people in employment. So far, the CJRS has helped 1.2 million employers to pay the wages of 9.9 million jobs across all sectors of the economy.

Analysis published by HMRC shows that 90 per cent of employees that left the CJRS between April and July were still on their original payroll in August, suggesting they remained working for their original employer. The OBR have also estimated that unemployment would have been higher in the second quarter of 2021 in the absence of the CJRS and other measures.

The Government continues to monitor CJRS take-up, with HMRC's latest official statistics producing analysis of claims split by characteristics including employer size, sector of the economy, geography, age and gender.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Alexander Stafford:

[\[145892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to help increase the UK's covid-19 vaccine manufacturing capacity to meet future needs for that vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has invested over £300 million to secure and scaleup 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; and
- Funding for fill and finish capability through a contract with Wockhardt in Wrexham, North Wales, which is currently providing fill and finish capabilities to the University of Oxford / AstraZeneca vaccine.

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

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

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

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[147726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to procure a vaccine against covid-19 which has not involved the use of human embryo cells in its development; if he will encourage the use of (a) adult stem cells and (b) synthetic methods in vaccine development; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has confirmed that the Oxford University/AstraZeneca, Moderna, and Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines, which have all received regulatory approval, do not contain any components of animal origin, and no foetal material is present in the final vaccine.

Mark Eastwood:[\[148942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that Post Offices (a) have the capacity to achieve and (b) are achieving the timely processing of covid-19 vaccination letters.

Paul Scully:

As the UK's designated postal operator, Royal Mail is responsible for the last mile delivery of NHS vaccination letters. The Government is working closely with Royal Mail to ensure that these letters are prioritised. As a private company, Royal Mail is responsible for its day-to-day operations.

Education: Electronic Publishing**Drew Hendry:**[\[147921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department have had with the Competition and Markets Authority on price alterations across the academic ebook market during the covid-19 pandemic.

Paul Scully:

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is responsible for investigating individual and market-wide competition issues in the UK. The Government has ensured that the CMA has significant powers to investigate and act if it finds that companies are behaving anti-competitively in a market.

Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees**Dan Carden:**[\[147987\]](#)

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 the UK will end support for fossil fuel sector overseas, whether an impact assessment was undertaken by his Department prior to the decision to delay the implementation of that policy until after a consultation period.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

It is important to ensure we provide appropriate notice and transitional support for UK industry. That is why the Government launched a short consultation, seeking views on how to further enable an accelerated growth in UK clean energy exports and on the impacts of the timing of implementation of the policy shift announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 12 December 2020. The consultation closes on 8 February 2021. The decision to consult in advance of implementation did not require an impact assessment.

■ Fuel Poverty

Mr Steve Baker:

[147838]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of different measures to lower fuel poverty in electricity dominated households.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We recognise that electrically heated homes typically have higher energy costs, and that reducing these bills is key to addressing fuel poverty.

Improving energy efficiency is the best long-term solution to tackle fuel poverty, regardless of the heating system used. The Energy Company Obligation, worth £640 million each year, is focused on low-income and vulnerable households. The Green Homes Grant, launched in September 2020, will help improve the energy efficiency of homes in England. £500 million has been allocated under the scheme to the Local Authority Delivery scheme which is specifically for low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households.

We are also working to help fuel poor consumers transition away from forms of heating with high running costs. Heat pumps are a highly efficient, low-carbon heating solution, and benefit from government support through the Green Homes Grant and Renewable Heat Incentive. Evidence indicates that a heat pump can lower fuel bills, especially where it replaces a conventional electric heating system.

In addition to the available funding to support low-income households with improving the energy efficiency of their homes, we recognise that some households may need more immediate support and so also assist with energy bills for low income and vulnerable consumers through the Warm Homes Discount, Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Dan Jarvis:

[147855]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has been made of the potential merits of extending the eligibility for the Low Income Household voucher included in the Green Homes Grant for claimants of a War Pensions Scheme without a mobility element.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The list of qualifying benefits selected for the low income element of the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme mirrors the eligibility requirements for the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme. Under ECO, energy suppliers are required to provide low income and vulnerable households with energy efficiency and heating upgrades. We will keep the Green Homes Grant Voucher scheme eligibility, including qualifying benefits, under review.

Sarah Olney:

[\[147948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) renewable energy, (b) insulation and (c) glazing installers participating in the Green Homes Grant scheme are paid on time.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The scheme administrator is working to ensure vouchers are paid as quickly as possible. Payment to installers is a four-step process. It requires the customer to confirm the work has been completed, the installer to lodge the work and the scheme administrator to undertake scheme checks before they can proceed to payment. Once it has reached the payment stage, the administrator aims to make payments within five-working days. However, if an inspection is deemed necessary then the process will take longer, especially given the current COVID-19 restrictions.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[148670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 3 February 2021 to Question 145730, what the 10 Key Performance Indicators were in the contract awarded to ICF for administering the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The contract has 10 Key Performance Indicators, which cover four major areas: Digital Platform; Customer Journey and Payment; Fraud and Audit; and Call Centre.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Sarah Olney:

[\[148866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to support supply companies within the hospitality sector through mechanisms such as invoice factoring to ensure that suppliers' cashflows are protected when the hospitality sector reopens after the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown restrictions are lifted and forward payment contracts resume again.

Paul Scully:

Since the start of the pandemic the government has worked closely with the hospitality sector to understand the impact of COVID-19 on their businesses and has responded with a substantial package of business support. We also hold discussions with businesses in the supply chain.

■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Jessica Morden:

[\[147782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the UK steel sector's commitment to increase capital investment in the UK in the event that the Government takes steps to ensure a level playing field on electricity costs.

Nadhim Zahawi:

This issue is related to electricity costs for the steel industry and was highlighted in the recent UK Steel report "Closing the Gap". We welcome this report and will give its recommendations careful consideration.

■ Pay: Scottish Borders**John Lamont:****[145850]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many workers in the Scottish Borders will benefit from the increase in the (a) National Living Wage and (b) National Minimum Wage from April 2021.

Paul Scully:

This Government is committed to building an economy that works for everyone. Through the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and the National Living Wage (NLW) the Government protects the lowest paid within our society. The National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage have increased every year since their introduction – and this extraordinary year is no exception.

On 1 April 2021, the Government will increase that NLW by 2.2% to £8.91. This will be the highest ever UK minimum wage. The NLW currently applies to workers aged 25+, however, from April 2021 it will be extended to those aged 23+, following previous recommendations from the LPC. The government will also introduce inflation-beating increases in the NMW rates for younger workers and apprentices of between 1.5% and 3.6% on 1 April 2021.

Across Scotland, our best estimates suggest that around 100,000 workers will benefit from the planned rise in the National Living Wage, with a further 15,000 benefitting from the planned rise in the National Minimum Wage rates.

Further details on the regional impact of the NLW/NMW rate increase are contained in the NLW/NMW 2021 Impact Assessment. You can find further information [here](#).

■ Post Office: Fujitsu**Mr Kevan Jones:****[148732]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 1 February 2021 to Question 144626 on Post Office: Fujitsu, how that answer relates to paragraph 14.2 of the Post Office Limited: Shareholder Relationship Framework Document.

Paul Scully:

The litigation protocol agreed between the Government and Post Office Ltd is to enable the sharing and protection of legally privileged information between Post Office Limited and the Government. Its scope does not extend to commercial arrangements between Post Office Ltd and Fujitsu (or any other third party).

■ Recruitment**Sir Mark Hendrick:** [\[145743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of anonymous recruitment.

Paul Scully:

Employers should treat all job applicants courteously as well as being fair and objective in their selection of successful candidates. Provided they do not discriminate unlawfully, for example on grounds of race, sex or disability, they are free to use the recruitment methods that best suit their business needs.

■ Tidal Power**Alan Brown:** [\[145815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential baseload power that can be provided by tidal power as part of a net zero strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government recently ran a Call for Evidence inviting views on the scope for marine technologies across the UK. This concluded on 30th September 2020 and we are currently reviewing the responses received.

An individual tidal stream generator would generate with the tides, but with many turbines at multiple sites, each with different tide times, total output would be more constant. Adding tidal range and wave power, the overall generation pattern could resemble baseload.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus**Dame Cheryl Gillan:** [\[148668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what further support he plans to make available to the weddings industry to ensure its future viability.

Paul Scully:

Over the course of the pandemic, the Government has provided an unprecedented package of support to businesses, including those in the wedding sector, which it keeps under regular review.

I have met regularly with representatives of the wedding sector to understand the impact of COVID-19 on wedding businesses.

Dame Cheryl Gillan: [\[148669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the restrictions on the number of people permitted to attend a wedding will next be reviewed.

Paul Scully:

As my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said, we intend to publish our plan for taking the country out of lockdown in the last week of February. That plan will depend on the continued success of our vaccination programme.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Civil Servants: Coronavirus****Carolyn Harris:**[\[145819\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance his Department has published on civil service employers recording (a) absence due to illness and (b) periods of self-isolation as a result of exposure to covid-19 infection.

Julia Lopez:

Civil Service organisations should record COVID-19 related absences, which includes those for both sickness and self-isolation.

■ Parish Councils: Freedom of Information**Alexander Stafford:**[\[144888\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the cost to parish councils of dealing with freedom of information requests.

Alexander Stafford:[\[144889\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what (a) guidance and (b) support is available to parish councils to deal with (i) vexatious and (ii) repeated freedom of information requests.

Julia Lopez:

The Government recognises the substantial public interest in parish councils affairs, including those in Handforth.

The Government also recognises the difficulties that genuinely vexatious and repeated freedom of information requests can place on smaller organisations and in 2018, issued a revised Code of Practice to allow for the use of relevant provisions in the Freedom of Information Act where necessary and appropriate.

■ Prime Minister: Marketing**Owen Thompson:**[\[144742\]](#)

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

Penny Mordaunt:

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

www.gov.uk/government/collections/cabinet-office-spend-data(opens in a new tab).

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

Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**Preet Kaur Gill:****[144802]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits of issuing vaccine passports to those who need them in order to travel to (a) the Philippines and (b) other countries that require this certification.

Penny Mordaunt:

We are working closely with partner countries on a range of issues relating to COVID-19 and international travel and we are committed to ensuring an approach that is internationally recognised. At present international travel is illegal, other than in specific circumstances.

UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**John Redwood:****[144912]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he plans to take to ensure the free passage of goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

John Redwood:**[144913]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to bring forward proposals for the UK internal market legislative framework to clarify that the UK determines the passage of goods between GB and Northern Ireland.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the hon. Member to the [response](#) by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 2nd February and his letter published 3rd February to Maroš Šefčovič, Vice President of the European Commission available on gov.uk.

Rachel Reeves:**[148762]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the length of extensions required to the proposed grace periods for traders moving goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Honourable Member to the letter my Right Honourable Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster sent to Vice-President Maros Sefcovic on [2 February 2021](#).

COP26**■ Climate Change Convention****Sarah Olney:****[140229]**

To ask the President of COP26, whether he has had discussions with the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change on moving the Intersessional Conference taking place prior to the COP26 Summit online.

Alok Sharma:

The UK continues to work closely with the UNFCCC Secretariat, UNFCCC Subsidiary Body Chairs, and COP25 Presidency Chile to ensure we maximise progress ahead of COP26. Decisions regarding the Bonn intersessional will be made by the UNFCCC COP Bureau, where all countries are represented.

■ Climate Change Convention: Parliamentary Questions**Patrick Grady:****[140155]**

To ask the President of COP26, whether he will make arrangements with the Leader of the House for the President of COP26 to answer (a) written and (b) oral parliamentary questions.

Alok Sharma:

I will answer Oral Questions in the House on a regular basis. Written questions can be tabled to myself as the President of COP26.

DEFENCE**■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Navy****Patrick Grady:****[148829]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the judgment of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea on 28 January 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure that when Ships of the Royal Navy are within the 12 nautical mile territorial sea of the Chagos Archipelago they comply with the laws and regulations of Mauritius as the coastal State as required by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

James Heappey:

The United Kingdom is aware of the judgment delivered on 28 January by the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea formed to deal with the Dispute concerning delimitation of a maritime boundary claimed by Mauritius to exist between Mauritius and Maldives in the Indian Ocean. The UK is not a party to these

proceedings, which can have no effect for the UK or for maritime delimitation between the UK (in respect of the British Indian Ocean Territory) and the Republic of the Maldives.

We have no doubt about our sovereignty over the territory of the British Indian Ocean Territory, which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Mauritius has never held sovereignty over the Archipelago, and we do not recognise its claim. We have made a long-standing commitment to cede sovereignty of the territory to Mauritius when it is no longer required for defence purposes. We stand by that commitment.

Owing to the UK's sovereignty over the territory, the prevailing laws and regulations within its 12 nautical mile territorial sea are those enacted in governance of a British overseas territory. The domestic laws and regulations of Mauritius do not apply. As such, there is no requirement for Royal Navy ships to adhere to Mauritian law when within the 12 nautical mile territorial sea.

■ Gulf War Syndrome

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[148719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Minister for Veterans or anyone nominated on his behalf has plans to meet with (a) former military personnel and (b) representatives of the Justice 4 Veterans group, to discuss issues of concern to those groups; and if he will make a statement.

Johnny Mercer:

There are no plans to meet with Justice4Veterans. It has long been accepted by the UK Government that some veterans developed disabling non-specific symptoms on their return from the Gulf. Extensive international research has failed to establish a discrete underlying disorder or causal factors. Any veteran of the 1990-91 Gulf Conflict who believes their health has been adversely affected by their Service can apply for compensation under the War Pension Scheme, which covers any injury, illness, or death caused by Service before 6 April 2005.

■ Maritime Patrol Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[148731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether RAF Lossiemouth currently has adequate depth maintenance facilities to undertake maintenance on the UK's P-8 fleet.

Jeremy Quin:

The P-8A Strategic Facility at RAF Lossiemouth provides a state-of-the-art support establishment in which routine maintenance of the RAF P-8A Poseidon fleet, including some depth activities, is already being carried out. This will continue to be the case once the fleet reaches its full size of nine aircraft later this year.

The arrangements for other depth maintenance activities, such as the longer duration and more intrusive, but less frequent events during the in-service life of the aircraft do not need to begin for the RAF P-8A fleet until the mid-2020's. These arrangements

are still being considered and will be subject to the usual Ministry of Defence scrutiny and approvals processes, which will take into account their potential impact on overall maintenance capacity at RAF Lossiemouth.

■ **Military Aircraft: Safety**

Hywel Williams:

[\[147752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his letter of 7 December 2020, reference MSU/4/6/2/1/ap, what progress has been made on the acquisition of new harnesses, life jackets and life rafts which would enable the Texan aircraft to operate over seas; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 28 January 2020 to question 142802.

Attachments:

1. 142802 - Military Aircraft; Safety [142802 - Military Aircraft Safety.docx]

■ **Ministry of Defence: Apprentices**

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[147815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of staff employed by his Department are apprentices.

Johnny Mercer:

As at 31 January 2021, three per cent of civilian staff employed by the Ministry of Defence are apprentices.

■ **Office of Net Assessment and Challenge**

John Healey:

[\[148685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department has made on establishing the Office of Net Assessment and Challenge.

John Healey:

[\[148686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what budget he plans to allocate to the Office of Net Assessment and Challenge.

John Healey:

[\[148687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many staff he plans to allocate to the Office of Net Assessment and Challenge.

Mr Ben Wallace:

The new Secretary of State's Office of Net Assessment and Challenge was announced in December last year. It will undertake strategic analysis, net assessment, doctrinal development, and red teaming, in order to provide a strengthened challenge function within the Ministry of Defence.

The composition, size, and budget of the Office is still under development, incorporating advice from Air Marshal Edward Stringer, Director-General Joint Force Development, and further details will be announced on completion.

■ **Submarine Delivery Agency: Finance**

Mr Kevan Jones: [148729]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of the Submarine Delivery Agency's procurement budget is exposed to the US dollar.

Jeremy Quin:

The planned expenditure with United States suppliers over the next 10 years is estimated to be 7.5% of the Submarine Delivery Agency's equipment programme.

■ **Veterans: Radiation Exposure**

Rachel Reeves: [148761]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information his Department holds on the number of veterans who were part of the Balloon Unit of Operation Grapple Z in 1958; and how many of those veterans were alive as at 3 February 2021.

Johnny Mercer:

The information is not held in the format requested. The unit records for the Balloon Unit are in the public domain and are held by The National Archives. The Ministry of Defence does not collect data on all Service personnel once they have left the Armed Forces and therefore the number of veterans who were part of the Balloon Unit of Operation Grapple Z in 1958 and were alive on 3 February 2021 is not held.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **BBC: Mobile Phones**

Janet Daby: [145880]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect on access to BBC services of the decision by the BBC to stop supporting their output on devices running the Android 4.4.4 system.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The BBC is operationally and editorially independent from the government and the government cannot intervene in the BBC's day-to-day operations. The assessment of the effect on access to BBC services from technical changes is therefore a matter for the BBC.

The BBC addresses the issue of device compatibility with BBC iPlayer on its website. More information can be found here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/help/questions/supported-devices/use-mobile-tablet>

■ Charities: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[145060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to provide an additional funding support package for charities during the covid-19 outbreak in the first three months of 2021.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[145061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on allocating additional funding for voluntary and community organisations during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The £750 million sector funding package offered unprecedented support to allow charities and social enterprises to continue their vital work and adapt their service delivery to support our national response to the pandemic.

On top of this, the Government continues to make an unprecedented package of support available across the economy to enable organisations to get through the months ahead. Charities continue to access these schemes, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the scheme to defer VAT bills to the end of June, and the business rate holiday for shops as well as government backed loan schemes.

We will continue to work with the sector to assess their emerging needs and understand how we can best support them during the current period.

■ Charities: Shops

Lee Anderson:

[\[145153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the support available to charity retailers while they are shut during covid-19 lockdowns.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government has made available an unprecedented £750 million package of support, specifically for charities, social enterprises and the voluntary sector. This will ensure charities at risk of financial hardship can continue their vital work supporting the country during the coronavirus outbreak.

The Government has also made available a package of support across the economy, designed to enable organisations to get through the months ahead. Businesses that are mandated to close by law due to the current national restrictions can access grants of up to £4,500 per 6 weeks of closure through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Addendum.

In addition, closed businesses may be eligible for a one-off payment of up to £9,000 to help them through spring, through the Closed Business Lockdown Payment. Where the business in question, e.g. a charity shop, is mandated to close in the

regulations and they meet the other eligibility criteria laid out in scheme guidance, then they would be eligible for the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) and variations of that scheme. Local authorities are responsible for determining eligibility for this grant funding on the basis of legislation, guidance and other information submitted by applicants.

We will continue to work with the sector to assess their emerging needs and understand how we can best support them during the current period.

■ Community Development and Voluntary Organisations: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[145062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many jobs have been lost in the voluntary and community sectors since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

While reliable live data is not available on levels of employment in the voluntary and community sectors, we recognise that many charities are experiencing pressures as a result of Covid-19, including having to adapt fundraising and trading activities to take account of local and national restrictions.

Government has made available an unprecedented Covid-support package to protect jobs and livelihoods. In addition, we have committed a £750 million of targeted support to enable voluntary and community sector organisations to maintain and enhance services for those affected by the crisis during this difficult time. This package continues to support the vital work of these organisations.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[145817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the amount of funding for voluntary and community organisations lost since the start of the covid-19 outbreak; and what comparative assessment he has made of the level of funding for those organisations in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019 and (d) 2020.

Mr John Whittingdale:

A complete picture of the impact of covid-19 outbreak on the finances of the voluntary and community sector is not available at this time. However, we recognise that many charities are experiencing pressures as a result of Covid-19, including having to adapt usual forms of income generation, such as fundraising and trading.

Government's £750 million sector funding package is allowing charities and social enterprises to continue their vital work and support our national response to the pandemic. This was in addition to the unprecedented package of support available across the economy to enable organisations to get through the months ahead. This includes the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which continues to be a lifeline to a multitude of organisations, as well as grants to support those operating premises that have been required to close due to national restrictions.

We continue to work closely with the voluntary and community sector to assess the impact of the crisis and their emerging needs.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[145818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the average increase in demand for the services of voluntary and community organisations has been since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

While robust and representative data is not available on the average increase in demand for services of voluntary and community organisations, we recognise that many charities are experiencing pressures as a result of Covid-19, including increasing demand for some services.

The government has committed £750 million of targeted support to enable voluntary and community sector organisations to maintain and enhance services for those affected by the crisis during this difficult time. This package continues to support the vital work of these organisations.

■ **Culture Recovery Fund: West Midlands**

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[147744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many applications to the Culture Recovery Fund from applicants in the West Midlands have been accepted.

Caroline Dinéage:

Last year the government announced the unprecedented £1.57 billion support package for the culture sector, of which over £1 billion has now been allocated to over 3,000 arts and culture organisations across the country. This funding is supporting the arts and culture sector to survive the pandemic and continue operating.

We have now also announced a second round of the Culture Recovery Fund to support organisations to make the transition to full reopening.

So far 289 organisations in the West Midlands received funding through the recovery grants programme, the capital grants programme and via repayable finance. These include world-renowned organisations such as the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Birmingham Royal Ballet as well as those at the heart of their communities, such as the Black Country Living Museum, the People's Orchestra in West Bromwich and Re-form Heritage in Stoke-on-Trent.

Overall, funding awarded through the first Round of the Culture Recovery Fund is supporting organisations which employ 69% of arts sector employees in the West Midlands.

■ **Culture: Coronavirus**

Ruth Jones:

[\[147051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of lockdowns on participation in arts and culture.

Caroline Dinenage:

The DCMS Taking Part Web Panel COVID-19 Report, published in September 2020, asked adults about their participation in arts and creative activities in the home. In May 2020, 49% of respondents reported doing creative activities in the home in the previous four weeks, though this dropped to 42% of respondents by July.

Between May -July watching a pre-recorded music or dance performance online was the most popular activity. Watching a live music/dance performance online decreased in popularity from 15% in May to 10% in July.

Since 5 January, restrictions have been in force to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Professionals may continue to rehearse, train and perform for live streaming, broadcast and recording. Venues must close for any other purpose, no performances with an audience can go ahead either indoor or outdoor. Unfortunately non-professional activity, such as amateur choirs and orchestra, cannot take place at this time.

We are in regular dialogue with the relevant sectors and public health experts to agree a realistic return date for festivals and other large events. However, protecting the public is our first priority. We continue to explore all barriers to reopening, working closely with the industry to understand the challenges they face and support them in developing planning guidance to reopen in a safe way.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Apprentices**Kate Green:****[147840]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many and what proportion of the staff employed by his Department are apprentices.

Mr John Whittingdale:

As of 31 March 2020, the Civil Service has achieved a total of 2.1% of its total workforce as apprentices against the legislative target for the public sector of 2.3% by March 2021.

As at the end of January 2021, DCMS employed 1,726 FTE civil servants, 14 of whom are currently apprentices (0.81% of staff). This target is a percentage of the total workforce so the percentage attained will change in line with workforce fluctuations over time, making it challenging to predict when a department will meet it. The data for 2018/19 can be found [here](#). The data for 2019/20 can be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-apprenticeship-data-2018-to-2019).
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-apprenticeship-data-2018-to-2019>.

DCMS is committed to increasing the number of apprentices across the Civil Service and continue to work towards the 2.3% target. The impact of the current pandemic has slowed progress against the target due to priority work and logistics. DCMS had four apprentice starts in the first three quarters of 2020-21 and has a further 11 starts planned for Q4. This would take us to 1.68% by the end of the financial year.

With the current strategy and targets coming to an end in April 2021, the Civil Service is focusing on how to continue to support the apprenticeship agenda and drive forward apprenticeship recruitment, building on the Plan for Jobs initiative and considering the current economic situation.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Staff**

Darren Jones:

[144807]

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

Mr John Whittingdale:

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 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) own the Government's Industrial Strategy. As the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport contributes to delivery of the aims of the Industrial Strategy through existing workstreams rather than dedicated resource, it is not possible to provide the information requested.

■ **Employment: Privacy**

Chi Onwurah:

[148776]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 141983, if he will publish the names of the eight companies currently being investigated by the Information Commissioner's Office.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) regulates and enforces the data protection legislation independently of Government. The ICO has not yet concluded its investigations into the eight companies concerned, and it would therefore be inappropriate to publish the names of these companies.

The ICO has a number of powers to tackle the unlawful processing of personal data, including the power to serve enforcement notices requiring organisations to stop the processing of personal data, and the power to serve civil monetary penalties. Details of the ICO's enforcement activity can be found on its website at:

<https://ico.org.uk/action-weve-taken/>

■ **Entertainers: Visas**

Rachel Reeves:

[147832]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Government stating in February 2020 that it aimed to negotiate a Canada-style

agreement with the EU; and statements by Baroness Barran in Parliament on 3 June 2020 outlining that the government was seeking reciprocal arrangements for temporary entry and stay (Mode IV) to facilitate touring and other short-term creative work based on best precedent; what assessment the Government had made of the precedent for touring provisions in other Free Trade Agreements on temporary entry and stay, including Annex 10-D of Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement.

Caroline Dinenage:

Through the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the UK and the EU agreed to a list of 11 activities that can be carried out by short-term business visitors without the need for a work permit, on a reciprocal basis in most Member States – subject to any reservations taken. This list of permitted activities is based on the best precedent established in the EU's Free Trade Agreements with Canada and Japan. It includes, among other activities, permissions for after-sales, translation and market research services. The EU–Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement does not include any facilitations for touring musicians.

The UK pushed for the list of permitted activities to be expanded to capture the work done by musicians, artists and entertainers, and their accompanying staff. This was a straightforward solution for our creative industries which would have benefited all sides. Regrettably, the EU rejected these proposals.

■ **Events Industry: Insurance**

Jamie Stone:

[\[147955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a Government-backed insurance scheme for the live events industry.

Caroline Dinenage:

We are aware of the concerns which have been raised about securing insurance for live events.

Understandably, the bar for considering Government intervention is set extremely high. Given the high costs involved in setting up a scheme we need to make sure it is the most effective use of funds at a time when we are looking at how best to support the sector.

The evidence of market failure must clearly demonstrate that such a scheme is the only barrier to staging events. At the moment, progress with the vaccine rollout and beating the virus is crucial in determining a timetable for staging events.

We are working closely with the sector to determine the appropriate and most effective response within the public health context.

■ Gambling: Internet

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[R] [\[147735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to consider the Gambling Commission's consultation and call for evidence on Remote Customer Interaction as part of the Government's wider review of the Gambling Act 2005; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Gambling Commission requires operators to monitor play and to intervene where players may be at risk of harm. Its consultation and call for evidence on Remote Customer Interaction is considering whether further requirements are needed for how operators identify and interact with customers who may be at risk.

The Commission will be led by the evidence it receives in deciding its next steps, and its findings may also inform its advice to government on the Review of the Gambling Act 2005. Following a one month extension to allow extra evidence to be submitted, the deadline for submissions is now 9 February.

■ Gift Aid: Coronavirus

Lee Anderson:

[\[145154\]](#)

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 proposals to temporarily increase Gift Aid to support charities impacted by the covid-19 pandemic.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government recognises the invaluable work of the charity sector for communities across the UK.

There are generous tax reliefs already available for the whole charity sector, including more than £1.3 billion a year in respect of Gift Aid on donations. Increasing the value of Gift Aid would break the link with tax that has been paid; this means it would no longer be a tax relief, but a grant to charities which is based solely on the amount of Gift Aid that they claim. The Government is not convinced this is the most appropriate or practical way to provide support to charities at this time.

We will continue to work with the sector to assess their emerging needs and understand how we can best support them during the current period.

■ Gyms: Coronavirus

Alexander Stafford:

[\[148064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what future support he plans to make available to help restore confidence in the fitness and gym sector after the national covid-19 lockdown measures have been lifted.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

The Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support. On 22 October 2020, the Government also announced a £100m support fund for local authority leisure centres.

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

We are continuing to work with organisations to understand what they need and how we may be able to support them.

Internet: Safety**Stephen Morgan:**[\[147030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when his Department plans to publish its online Media Literacy Strategy.

Caroline Dinenage:

As set out in the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper Consultation, the Government is developing an Online Media Literacy Strategy which will be published in Spring 2021. The Strategy will explore the existing media literacy landscape and ensure a coordinated and strategic approach to media literacy education for children, young people, and adults.

Stephen Morgan:[\[147031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what representations he has received on the use of (a) size and (b) risk as contributing factors in the categorisation of companies in the forthcoming Online Safety Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Stephen Morgan:[\[147032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, which groups his Department (a) has consulted and (b) plans to consult to help determine the list of harms which will accompany the Online Safety Bill.

Caroline Dinenage:

We have engaged with a broad range of stakeholders throughout the policy development process for the new online safety legislation, including with industry, civil society, academia and parliamentarians. This will continue to inform the scope of the regulatory framework, including categorisation of companies and harms they

must address. We will continue to engage with a broad range of stakeholders as we develop online safety legislation.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Robert Largan:

[\[148058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon. Member for High Peak of 26 November 2020, case reference RL4323.

Nigel Huddleston:

A response was issued on 03 February (ref MC2020/26866), we apologise for the delay in issuing a response.

■ **Musicians: Work Permits**

Rachel Reeves:

[\[147831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the oral contributions of the Minister for Digital and Culture of 19 January 2021 ., Official Report column 773 on UK Musicians: EU Visa Arrangements; what assessment the Government has made of (a) the effectiveness of adding musicians to the list of independent professionals for short-term business visitors in enabling frictionless work travel for touring musicians and (b) whether adoption of that policy would have removed the requirement for EU work permits.

Caroline Dineneage:

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement includes a list of 11 activities that can be carried out by short-term business visitors without a work permit, on a reciprocal basis in most Member States, subject to any reservations taken.

During negotiations with the EU, the UK proposed expanding this list of activities for Short Term Business Visitors to cover musicians and their accompanying staff. This would have enabled musicians and other creative professionals to travel and perform in the UK and the EU without needing work-permits. Regrettably, these proposals were rejected by the EU.

Therefore, UK cultural professionals, including musicians, seeking to perform within the EU will be required to check domestic immigration and visitor rules for each Member State in which they intend to perform. Although some Member States may allow paid performances without a visa or work permit, others will require musicians and other creative professionals to obtain a visa or work permit, in the same way that they are required for other international artists.

■ Rented Housing: Internet

Fleur Anderson: [\[148029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent steps he has taken to regulate online rental companies that accept bookings in cities that are subject to stay at home orders.

Nigel Huddleston:

Guest accommodation providers such as hotels, B&Bs, short term lets and caravan parks may remain open for the specific reasons set out in law, including where guests are unable to return to their main residence, use that guest accommodation as their main residence, need accommodation while moving house, are self-isolating as required by law, or would otherwise be made homeless as a result of the accommodation closing.

As such, accommodation providers have not been required to stop accepting bookings under the current national restrictions, nor have the online platforms that facilitate those bookings.

Accommodation businesses should take all reasonable steps to encourage guests to adhere to government restrictions, including informing guests of restrictions when taking bookings and communicating to all customers. We expect people to act responsibly and in line with the law. Accommodation businesses should not intentionally facilitate bookings that do not adhere to government restrictions. Those not complying with these responsibilities may be at risk of the premises being closed.

■ Social Media

Owen Thompson: [\[146942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to tackle the threat to UK public life from (a) professionalised and organised bot activity, (b) trolling or doxing, and (c) politically-motivated polarisation.

Owen Thompson: [\[146943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment the Government has made of the level of threat of (a) professionalised and organised bot activity, (b) trolling or doxing, and (c) politically motivated polarisation to UK public life (i) in general and (ii) in the context of the upcoming May elections.

Owen Thompson: [\[146944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to (a) ensure free and fair elections and (b) ensure public trust in elections in response to the findings on threats to democracy in the report, Industrialized Disinformation: 2020 Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation, published by the University of Oxford.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government takes the issues of disinformation, online manipulation and abuse very seriously and remains committed to strengthening the integrity of our electoral system and giving the public confidence that our elections are modern, fair and secure.

The Defending Democracy programme is working to ensure a joined-up cross-Government approach to safeguarding UK democracy. The programme's objectives are to protect democratic processes; strengthen the integrity of elections; encourage respect for open and safe democratic participation; and promote open, fact-based discourse.

The Government is committed to ensuring that democratic events are delivered safely and securely. During major democratic events the Government stands up an Election Cell. This is a coordination structure that works with stakeholders to identify and respond to emerging issues.

Online abuse of any kind is unacceptable. To ensure the law is fit for purpose to tackle abuses online, we have asked the Law Commission to review our laws on harmful and abusive online communications and highlight any gaps in the criminal law that cause problems in tackling this abuse. The Law Commission has consulted on provisional reforms and will issue final recommendations by summer 2021, which the government will carefully consider.

In addition, the Government has established a dedicated Counter Disinformation Unit. The Unit stands up during periods of heightened vulnerability such as democratic events, and supports the Election Cell by providing a picture of the extent, scope and the reach disinformation and working with partners to identify and respond to it in line with platform terms and conditions. The Unit was previously stood up during the European Parliamentary Election and UK General Election in 2019. It stood up in March 2020 in support of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and remains operational.

The Government is also preparing legislation to address some of these issues. Last year we published the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation, which sets out the new expectations on companies to keep their users safe online.

The Online Safety Bill will establish a new duty of care on companies towards their users, overseen by an independent regulator. Under the new framework, companies will be held to account for tackling illegal activity and content, such as illegal online abuse and illegal hate crime. Some companies will also need to address legal but harmful content for adults, including some forms of online abuse.

We are also developing a package of electoral integrity measures which we will bring forward when Parliamentary time allows.

■ Sports: Children

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[145746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that organised sports are accessible to all children regardless of socioeconomic status.

Nigel Huddleston:

Government is committed to ensuring that all children and young people, particularly those who are currently least active or from under-represented groups, have the best opportunities to engage in sport and physical activity. Our Sporting Future strategy sets out how important it is for all children to have a good experience of sport and physical activity while they are young. We want all young people, regardless of economic background, to be healthy and active.

To help achieve this Sport England is investing over £190m into physical activity for children and young people over 2016-2021, including programmes such as the £40m Families Fund, which encourages low-income families with children to do sport and physical activity together.

In July 2019 the Department for Education (DfE), Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), jointly published the Government's School Sport and Activity Action Plan (SSAAP). It sets out a joint commitment to ongoing collaboration to support the delivery of high-quality PE lessons and to ensure that sport and physical activity are an integral part of both the school day and after-school activities. This will contribute to the ambition of the Government's Sporting Future strategy and the aim set out in the Childhood Obesity Plan that all children should take part in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day, with 30 minutes a day in school.

The government also provides £320m of funding each year to primary schools through the PE and sport premium to make additional and sustainable improvements to the quality of PE, physical activity and sport. It is allocated directly to schools, so they have the flexibility to use it in the way that works best for their pupils. The amount of the PE and sport premium was doubled in 2017 to the current £320 million amount. The 2019 Primary PE and sport premium survey investigated the impact of this doubling of the PE and sport premium amount. Teachers reported improvements across all five key indicators for the PE and sport premium as well as other positive impacts such as increased participation in PE, extra-curricular sport and competitions for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Pupil premium/Free School Meals) and pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

■ Tourism: Coronavirus

Greg Clark: [\[147803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support the Government has provided to inbound tour operators since the start of the covid-19 pandemic.

Greg Clark: [\[147804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the UK's inbound tourism sector.

Greg Clark: [\[147805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on financial support for the inbound tourism sector.

Nigel Huddleston:

We have introduced a number of measures since the start of the pandemic which businesses in the UK inbound tourism sector can access. This includes the extended furlough and self-employed schemes and various government-backed loans, discretionary grant schemes, business rates relief and a reduced VAT rate.

The Chancellor also announced that Local Authorities in England will be given an additional £594 million discretionary funding to support their local businesses. This builds on the £1.1 billion discretionary funding which local authorities in England have already received to support their local economies and help businesses impacted. The guidance for the Additional Restriction Grant funding encourages Local Authorities to develop discretionary grant schemes to help those businesses which - while not legally forced to close - are nonetheless severely impacted by the restrictions. We encourage local authorities to be sympathetic to applications from businesses who may not have been eligible for other grants.

We continue to gather intelligence from stakeholders such as UKInbound and other members of the Tourism Industry Council in order to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on inbound tourism.

We are regularly engaging across Government to consider how we can most effectively support the recovery of travel and tourism across the UK, including via the development of a Tourism Recovery Plan. In the longer term, the ambitions and recommendations of the Global Travel Taskforce to restart international travel safely still stand.

■ Voluntary Work: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[145063]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of volunteering in the voluntary and community sector since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Volunteers around the country are making vital contributions to the COVID-19 response, supporting people in need and complementing the delivery of essential public services. The Government is grateful to all volunteers for their energy, compassion and willingness to support the country through these challenging times.

Through the NHS Volunteer Responders programme alone, volunteers have undertaken over 1.4 million tasks in support of over 144,000 unique clients, as of 25 January 2021.

As part of ongoing work to assess trends in volunteering during the pandemic, DCMS published the results of the Community Life COVID-19 Re-contact Survey in December 2020. The survey estimated that, across England, 21% of people volunteered through an organisation or group (formal volunteering) between March and July 2020. 9% of respondents were new volunteers and 6% had volunteered previously, but now gave more time. People who identified as ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities) were more likely to start volunteering for the first time during COVID-19. 47% of people informally volunteered, giving unpaid help to other people who are not relatives and 52% of informal volunteers were helping people affected by COVID-19. 72% of COVID-19 informal volunteers started their activities during the pandemic

The full results of the survey can be found at [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk) and copies have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

EDUCATION

■ Adoption: Ethnic Groups

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[148921]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the policy under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 that consideration to the child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background is made when placing the child for adoption on the average time it takes to place black children for adoption.

Vicky Ford:

In 2014 the government removed the requirement for adoption agencies to give "due consideration to a child's religious persuasion, racial origin, and cultural and linguistic background" when matching a child and prospective adopters. This was to avoid any suggestion that the legislation placed a child's religious persuasion, racial origin and

cultural and linguistic background above other factors which the agency should consider. As my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, said in his speech of October 2020, “we want to make sure that far more people from all sorts of different backgrounds are willing to become adoptive parents, and to do that we must end this obsession with finding the perfect ethnic match for children”.

Adoption agencies must still have regard to any of the child's characteristics that the agency considers relevant. This could include a range of issues including health, disability, education, religious persuasion, racial origin, and cultural and linguistic background. This is about creating a children's social care system that works for all children, giving them the best possible chance to succeed in life.

Latest published analysis shows that in 2014-15, Black and minority ethnic children were being placed for adoption 5 months earlier than in 2012-13. More recent Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB) figures also show that waiting times fell by 35% for Black and minority ethnic children between 2014-15 and 2017-18. Since then, ASGLB data shows that waiting times for all children have increased which is due to a national shortage of adopters.

During the 2020-21 financial year, we gave the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) Leaders Group £1 million to develop a sector led recruitment campaign. This campaign launched on 16 September 2020 and challenged preconceived conceptions about who can adopt and encouraged more people to come forward.

Part of the campaign had a specific focus on Black and minority ethnic communities through outreach work in 2 pilot areas, London and Birmingham. The RAA Leaders Group are also funding Home for Good to run a triage service to support prospective adopters from these pilot areas. This included a safe space to explore adoption and ask further questions, but also seek extra support during the process. Ensuring that the right adopters come forward for the children we have waiting for forever homes remains a priority for the government.

■ Apprentices

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[146842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprenticeship starts there were between 1 August 2020 and 31 January 2021.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[146843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprenticeship starts there were between 1 August 2019 and 31 January 2020.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[146844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprenticeship starts there were between 1 August 2018 and 31 January 2019.

Gillian Keegan:

The latest available apprenticeship starts data for the 2020/21 academic year covers 01 August to 31 October 2020, reported to date, and shows there were 91,100

apprenticeship starts. For the same period in 2019/20 there were 125,800 starts and in 2018/19 there were 132,000 starts.

Finalised figures for the first 6 months (01 August to 31 January) of the 2019/20 and 2018/19 academic years show there were 220,400 and 235,200 apprenticeship starts respectively.

Further breakdowns of these apprenticeship starts figures can be found in our Apprenticeships and traineeships: January 2020 statistics publication, available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships/2020-21>.

The next publication of apprenticeship statistics (covering 01 August to 30 November 2020) will be the Apprenticeship and traineeships: February 2020 statistics publication, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/apprenticeships-and-traineeships-february-2021>.

■ Apprentices and Further Education: Coronavirus

Sir Charles Walker:

[147763]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether FE and apprenticeship training providers are (a) required to close and (b) may open in specific circumstances during the national covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Gillian Keegan:

Further education (FE) providers will remain open for on-site attendance to vulnerable students and the children of critical workers.

A small number of FE students and apprentices who would otherwise be completing their courses or apprenticeships in January, February or March are able to attend where it is not possible for their training or assessment to be completed remotely.

This includes:

- Those who are due to do a licence to practise, or other occupational competence, assessment in January, February or March.
- Those training for some critical worker roles, for example, engineering, health and social care, manufacturing technologies, nursing and subjects and vocations allied to medicine, transportation operations and maintenance, agriculture, education and training and building and construction (where this is connected to utilities and communications) that are due to complete in the next 3 months.

All other students will continue to learn remotely.

We will continue to review restrictions and will ensure that remaining students and apprentices return to face-to-face education as soon as possible.

■ Apprentices: Recruitment

Mr Toby Perkins:

[146845]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, by what method were people making apprenticeship starts between 1 August 2020 and 31 January 2021 recruited.

Gillian Keegan:

Apprenticeships are jobs with high-quality training, created by employers, and will be more important than ever in helping businesses to recruit the right people and develop the skills they need to recover and grow.

Apprenticeship opportunities in England can be found on the 'Find an apprenticeship' (FAA) service here: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>. Employers can use the 'recruit an apprentice' service to advertise on FAA; we encourage employers to use this to maximise engagement with their vacancies. Prospective apprentices can search for vacancies on FAA and create an account to manage their applications and get alerts about new apprenticeships.

We publish figures for monthly apprenticeship vacancies reported on the FAA website here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships>. Between August and December 2020, employers advertised over 36,000 apprenticeship vacancies on the FAA website. Apprenticeship vacancies for January 2021 will first be published on 25 February in our 'Apprenticeships and traineeships: February 2021' statistics publication: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/apprenticeships-and-traineeships-february-2021>.

Employers can also choose to recruit apprentices through their own channels, for example their own websites, which we do not monitor.

To help employers offer new apprenticeships, they are now able to claim up to £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire. These incentive payments were announced as part of the government's Plan for Jobs in July 2020 and the extension of the scheme (to the end of March 2021) was announced in the November Spending Review. It is encouraging that employers continue to see the value apprentices can bring to their businesses; as of 8 January 2021 employers had so far claimed incentive payments for 18,670 apprentices.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[147813]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding has been (a) allocated to and (b) spent on incentive payments for hiring a new apprentice since the start of that payment scheme.

Gillian Keegan:

Apprenticeships will be more important than ever in helping businesses to recruit the right people and develop the skills they need to recover and grow. To help employers offer new apprenticeships, they are now able to claim £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire under the age of 25, and £1,500 for new apprentices aged 25 and over. These incentive payments were announced as part of the government's

Plan for Jobs in July 2020 and the extension of the scheme (to the end of March 2021) was announced in the November Spending Review. Employers have been able to register to claim the incentive since 1 September 2020.

It is encouraging that employers continue to see the value apprentices can bring to their businesses, as of 8 January 2021 employers had so far claimed incentive payments for 18,670 apprentices. 15,270 of these were for 16–24 year olds and 3,400 were for those aged 25 and over.

Incentive payments are funded from the overall annual apprenticeship budget. In the 2020-21 financial year, funding available for investment in apprenticeships in England is almost £2.5 billion, double what was spent in the 2010-11 financial year.

Incentive payments are paid to employers in 2 equal instalments to maximise apprenticeship retention. Employers receive the first payment of 50% 90 days after the apprenticeship start date and the remaining 50% after 365 days. These payments are dependent on the apprentice remaining in employment and on their apprenticeship. £5 million has been paid to employers in incentive payments for apprentices who started between August and September 2020. This is the first payment of incentive payments in the academic year to date.

■ Assessments: Coronavirus

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[148741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of whether exams will be able to take place in the 2021-22 academic year.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[148742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department is going to give to students who will be taking exams 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 obtain qualifications safely and fairly. We will continue to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak 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 of new money to early years, schools and providers of 16-19 further education for tutoring and we will work in collaboration with the education

sector to develop, as appropriate, specific initiatives for summer schools and a COVID premium to support catch-up.

We recognise that these extended school and college closures have had a huge impact on children and young people's education, which will take more than a year to make up. We will work in collaboration with the wider education sector to develop a long-term plan to make sure children and young people have the chance to make up their education over the course of this Parliament.

We have also appointed an Education Recovery Commissioner, Sir Kevan Collins, who will advise Ministers on the approach for education recovery, with a particular focus on helping students catch up on learning lost as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Understanding the impact of the COVID-19 disruption is a key priority for the Government. The Department has commissioned an independent research agency to analyse catch-up needs and monitor progress over this academic year.

■ **Childminding: Coronavirus**

Jane Stevenson:

[\[147056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will extend the use of covid-19 home testing kits to childminders.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is continuing to work closely with colleagues across government and local authorities to secure the most effective approach to asymptomatic testing for the whole of the early years sector. This includes ongoing discussions about providing testing via the education testing programme, as well as encouraging local authorities to prioritise appropriate testing for private voluntary and independent nurseries and childminders via the Community Testing Programme wherever possible. This is now available to all local authorities.

■ **Children's Social Care Independent Review**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[148802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2021 to Question 138450 on Children's Social Care Independent Review, whether the chair of the review is working with a review team; and how and by whom will members of that team be selected.

Vicky Ford:

The review of children's social care will be bold, broad and independently led, taking a fundamental look at what is needed to make a real difference to the needs, experiences and outcomes of the children supported by children's social care.

The review launched on 15 January, and my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has asked Josh MacAlister, the founder and Chief Executive of Frontline, to lead the review. The review will also make use of a wide range of

expertise to inform its work. This includes an experts by experience group, who will advise the reviewer on how to bring the voices of people with experience of children's social care into the review.

The reviewer will be independent of the government, with freedom to make ambitious recommendations based on his findings. The reviewer will report his findings to ministers, and the government will respond to the review recommendations. The reviewer will be supported by a secretariat team, which will operate independently. In line with comparable reviews, the majority of the team will be made up of civil servants from a range of backgrounds and disciplines, and others will be recruited by the reviewer as needed to support his work.

■ Department for Education: Apprentices

Mr Toby Perkins: [147814]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of staff employed by his Department are apprentices.

Nick Gibb:

As of 31 January 2021, 4.9% of staff employed by the Department for Education are apprentices.

■ Extended Services: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq: [145825]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to provide financial support to the wraparound and holiday childcare sector during the period of national restrictions announced in January 2021.

Vicky Ford:

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

We recognise that the wraparound childcare sector, like many sectors, is facing unprecedented financial pressures, as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. It is for this reason that the government has made a range of financial packages of support available for businesses to access throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes tax relief, business loans or cash grants through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), and the Self-Employed Support Scheme (SEISS), as well as a £594 million discretionary fund for councils and the devolved administrations to support local businesses that may not be eligible for other support during the current national lockdown.

We are also still encouraging all local authorities to consider using local grants that have been made available to them during the COVID-19 outbreak to support the wraparound childcare sector in their areas and to safeguard sufficient childcare provision for all families. This includes the expanded Holiday Activities and Food Programme, which comprises a £220 million fund to be delivered through grants to local authorities. This programme will give children eligible for free school meals the option to join a free holiday-time programme that provides healthy food and enriching activities during the summer, Christmas and Easter holidays in 2021.

■ Food Technology

Sarah Olney:

[\[148865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of the national school curriculum in (a) primary and (b) secondary school is dedicated to learning about food, cooking and nutrition.

Nick Gibb:

The national curriculum is a framework setting out the content of what the Department expects schools to cover in each subject. The curriculum does not set out how curriculum subjects should be taught nor how much time should be spent on each subject. The Department believes teachers should be able to use their own knowledge and expertise to determine how they teach their pupils, and to make choices about what they teach.

Cooking and nutrition education is a discrete strand of the design and technology programme of study within the national curriculum. It is compulsory in state-maintained schools for all Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 (for pupils aged 5 to 14) and can be used as an exemplar for free schools and academies. The curriculum aims to teach children how to cook and how to apply the principles of healthy eating and good nutrition. It recognises that cooking is an important life skill that will help children to feed themselves and others healthy and affordable food. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils should be able to cook a repertoire of predominantly savoury dishes and be competent in a range of cooking techniques. In September 2016, the Government also introduced a new GCSE in food preparation and nutrition. The new GCSE enables pupils to acquire a proper understanding of the scientific principles behind food and nutrition and use a number of practical techniques to prepare and cook food.

■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:

[\[148023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what value of service credits has been applied to Chartwells' contract to provide food hampers as free school meals.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[148024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the value is of service credits applied to Edenred's contract for free school meal vouchers to date.

Vicky Ford:

The continuing provision of free school meals to children from out of work families or those on low incomes is of the utmost importance to this government.

School catering contracts are agreed locally, and are held by the school, academy trust or the local authority. The department does not hold a contract with Chartwells UK or any food company for the provision of free school meals or lunch parcels to children. We have guidance in place allowing schools to decide the best approach for their pupils. This can be through lunch parcels, locally arranged vouchers, or the national voucher scheme.

Edenred are contracted to deliver the national voucher scheme. The department does not comment on the commercial arrangements of third parties but can confirm that we have only paid for the face value of goods delivered, in this case vouchers.

■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Coronavirus**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[148740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021, which closed on 15 January 2021, when he plans to publish the findings of that consultation.

Nick Gibb:

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

The Department has already confirmed that students taking GCSE, AS and A levels, regulated by Ofqual in the Summer 2021 series, should be awarded grades based on an assessment by their teachers.

To ensure that our approach is developed with the sector, Ofqual and the Department have now concluded a two week consultation on how to ensure all pupils are supported to move to the next stage of their lives. The Department is working at pace to provide further clarity of the sector and details of alternative arrangements to examinations will be confirmed in our response to the consultation, which will be published by the end of February 2021.

■ Higher Education: West Midlands**Liam Byrne:**[\[144941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of pupils in England started higher education by age 19 in 2018-19 in constituencies in the West Midlands Combined Authority Area by (a) ethnicity and (b) free school meals eligibility.

Michelle Donelan:

The figures below relate to the 7 constituent authorities[1] of the West Midlands Combined Authority Area (WMCA).

The table below shows the number and proportion of pupils who were in state-funded schools and special schools at age 15 in the WMCA who progressed to higher education (HE) by age 19 in the 2018/19 academic year by free school meal status.

Progression to HE by age 19 by the 2018/19 academic year by free school meal status

Pupils attending state-funded schools in WMCA at age 15

FREE SCHOOL MEAL

STATUS	HE STUDENTS	ALL PUPILS	HE PROGRESSION RATE
All other pupils	11,828	24,990	47.3%
Free school meals[2]	2,176	6,968	31.2%
All	14,004	31,958	43.8%

Source: Matched data from the Department for Education's National Pupil Database, Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student Record and the Education and Skills Funding Agency's Individual Learning Record.

The table below shows the number and proportion of pupils who were in state-funded schools and special schools at age 15 in the WMCA who progressed to HE by age 19 in the 2018/19 academic year by ethnic group.

Progression to HE by age 19 by the 2018/19 academic year by ethnic group

Pupils attending state-funded schools in WMCA at age 15

ETHNIC GROUP	HE STUDENTS	ALL PUPILS	HE PROGRESSION RATE
White	6,613	18,730	35.3%
White – British	6,183	17,661	35.0%
White – Irish	86	174	49.4%
Traveller of Irish Heritage	0	5	0.0%
Gypsy / Roma	4	71	5.6%
Any Other White Background	340	819	41.5%
Mixed	810	2,015	40.2%

ETHNIC GROUP	HE STUDENTS	ALL PUPILS	HE PROGRESSION RATE
White and Black Caribbean	332	968	34.3%
White and Black African	46	105	43.8%
White and Asian	190	412	46.1%
Any Other Mixed Background	242	530	45.7%
Asian	4,714	7,687	61.3%
Indian	1,605	2,209	72.7%
Pakistani	2,193	4,053	54.1%
Bangladeshi	606	929	65.2%
Any Other Asian Background	310	496	62.5%
Black	1,295	2,446	52.9%
Black Caribbean	442	1,025	43.1%
Black – African	734	1,178	62.3%
Any Other Black Background	119	243	49.0%
Chinese	65	83	78.3%
Any Other Ethnic Group	363	639	56.8%
Unknown	144	358	40.2%
All	14,004	31,958	43.8%

Source: Matched data from the Department for Education's National Pupil Database, HESA Student Record and the Education and Skills Funding Agency's Individual Learning Record.

[1] The constituent authorities are: Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton

[2] Eligible for and claiming free school meals

■ Languages: Teachers

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[143123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the proportion of qualified modern foreign language teachers in England who took part in the Erasmus scheme.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[143124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the UK's withdrawal from the Erasmus scheme on the number of modern foreign language teachers in the UK.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not collect or hold information on the proportion of qualified modern foreign language (MFL) teachers in England that have taken part in the Erasmus+ scheme.

The Turing scheme, which replaces the UK's participation in Erasmus+, will be backed by at least £100 million, providing funding for around 35,000 students in universities, colleges, and schools to go on placements and exchanges overseas, starting in September 2021. The scheme will be global and not limited to the European Union. The Turing scheme will be available to students of all subjects, including those studying degrees in MFL. Further details of the scheme will be published shortly.

Alongside the Turing scheme, the Government remains committed to ensuring pupils have access to high quality languages provision and that we continue to attract, retain, and develop the high quality languages teachers we need. To support MFL teacher recruitment, we are offering a £10,000 bursary for MFL trainees starting initial teacher training (ITT) in the 2021/22 academic year. We have also confirmed that ITT providers will be able to offer subject knowledge enhancement (SKE) courses to support MFL candidates for the academic year 2020/21 from April 2021. SKE courses are designed to help ITT applicants gain the depth of subject knowledge they need to train to teach their chosen subject.

■ Older Workers: Digital Technology

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[145741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to improve the digital skills of older workers.

Gillian Keegan:

The government recognises the importance of digital skills for employability and participation in society. This is why we introduced a legal entitlement in August 2020 for adults with no or low digital skills to study new Essential Digital Skills Qualifications (EDSQs) at entry level and level 1 for free. The digital entitlement mirrors the existing legal entitlements for English and maths and will provide adults with the digital skills needed for life and work. EDSQs are a new qualification type,

based on new national standards for essential digital skills, designed to meet the diverse needs of adults with no or low digital skills. We also continue to support the provision of basic digital skills training for adults in community learning settings through the Adult Education Budget.

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

We have introduced the skills bootcamps, which are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving adults the opportunity to build up sector specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. The skills bootcamps are open to all adults aged 19 or over, who are either in work or recently unemployed. In September 2020 these were launched in West Midlands, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Liverpool City Region, initially focusing on digital skills such as software development, digital marketing, and data analytics. In December 2020, registrations opened for the skills bootcamps in Leeds City Region, Heart of South West (Devon and Somerset) and Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, with delivery set to begin in early 2021.

From April 2021 we are investing a further £43 million through the National Skills Fund to extend skills bootcamps further in England. These bootcamps will cover not only digital skills but also technical skills training including engineering and construction.

Public libraries are also a vital component in tackling digital exclusion at all ages. There are around 2,900 public libraries in England, providing a trusted network of accessible locations offering free Wi-Fi, computers and other technology. The library staff, supported by volunteers, have been trained to enable them to provide library users with support in using digital skills. Libraries help tackle the combined barriers of skills, confidence and motivation by offering skills training, helping people to understand the benefits that using the internet and accessing online services can bring. Their vital role has been recognised during the current lockdown, with the new regulations enabling libraries to continue some services during this lockdown period including access to public PCs for essential purposes.

■ Primary Education: Coronavirus

Dr Rupa Huq:

[148854]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment the potential merits of allowing each primary school year group to return to school in-person on a part-time, rota basis when the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown measures are eased.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is committed to getting all pupils and students back into schools and colleges full time, as soon as the public health picture allows, in terms of the spread of the virus in communities and the pressures on the NHS. In doing so, the Department will be guided by scientific and medical experts. Data and evidence are considered regularly, including that from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, the Joint Biosecurity Centre, Public Health England, and the Chief Medical Officers.

In the week commencing 22 February 2021, the Government will publish a plan for taking the country out of lockdown. Our aim will be to set out a gradual approach towards easing the restrictions in a sustainable way, guided by the principles we have observed throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, beginning with the most important principle of all: that reopening schools must be our national priority. We have committed to providing schools, parents and young people with a minimum of two weeks' notice for this return to on-site provision. Additional pupils and students will return to on-site education on 8 March 2021 at the earliest.

■ Pupils: Hearing Impairment**Alex Sobel:****[145132]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to include in his guidance to schools that children and staff should wear clear face coverings if needed to meet the needs of pupils and students.

Nick Gibb:

The Department's guidance on face coverings can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education>.

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

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

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

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

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

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

■ **Qualifications: International Cooperation**

Dame Angela Eagle:

[\[148718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of countries that do not have a mutual recognition of academic qualifications with the UK; and what steps his Department is taking to reach a mutual recognition of academic qualifications with those countries.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not have a full estimate of the number of countries with which the UK Government has not established the mutual recognition of academic qualifications through an agreement, a multilateral framework or a memorandum of understanding.

The UK takes part in the Bologna Process and is a member of the 49 country European Higher Education Area, which seeks to ensure mutual recognition of higher education (HE) qualifications and mobility for European students and staff. The UK Government is also a signatory to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Council of Europe Lisbon Convention on the recognition of HE qualifications in the Europe and secondary school qualifications giving access to higher education.

In addition to multilateral frameworks and agreements, recognition of academic qualifications can also be included within bilateral memorandums of understanding. Existing UK Government agreements, for example, with China and Argentina cover HE qualifications.

Should it be to our mutual benefit, the Department, alongside the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and colleagues across Government, will pursue arrangements with countries outside existing agreements.

■ **Remote Education: Computers**

Stella Creasy:

[\[145012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 25 January 2021 to Question 140063 on Remote Education: Computers, if he will publish weekly data on the number of laptops (a) allocated and (b) delivered to pupils to support remote education by constituency since 1 April 2020.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has allocated and delivered devices to schools, academy trusts and local authorities through our £400 million Get Help with Technology programme. On delivery, devices become the property of the organisation that receives them. Academy trusts and local authorities often have schools in several constituencies and will have passed on devices according to their own assessment of the need of their schools. For this reason, it is not possible to provide the requested data.

As of Monday 1 February 2021, we have delivered over 920,000 laptops to schools, academy trusts and local authorities. We are publishing aggregate data on a weekly basis which shows deliveries at local authority and academy trust level, which can be found at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data/2021-week-5>.

Fleur Anderson:**[148025]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the value is of service credits applied to Computacenter Ltd's contract for providing laptops for schoolchildren.

Nick Gibb:

There have been multiple contracts let with Computacenter Ltd (amongst other suppliers) through the course of the Get Help with Technology Programme. Across these, the Department has not applied Service Credits to the supplier due to Service Levels being met and a high level of performance delivered.

■ Remote Education: Darlington**Peter Gibson:****[136615]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many electronic devices to support remote learning have been distributed to each educational institution in Darlington during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people, 920,000 of which were delivered to schools, trusts, local authorities and further education providers by 1 February.

As of 1 February, 543 devices have been delivered directly to Darlington Local Authority. Devices have also been allocated to academy trusts that include schools in Darlington, which are not included in this figure.

More information on the number of devices delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities can be viewed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data/2021-week-5>.

The number of devices allocated is based on recent data on the number of free school meal eligible pupils at the school. On 12 January, the Department announced a further 300,000 devices will be provided nationally over the course of this term.

■ Remote Education: ICT

Chi Onwurah: [\[148777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 132912 in children, when the 440,000 additional devices will be distributed to disadvantaged children.

Nick Gibb:

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

As of Monday 1 February 2021, over 927,000 laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, academy trusts, local authorities, and further education providers.

We are making further deliveries all the time and expect to achieve our overall commitment of 1.3 million devices this term.

■ Schools: Admissions

Siobhain McDonagh: [\[146765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils in (a) primary and (b) secondary schools have a sibling who attends the same school in England and Wales.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not collect information on whether pupils have siblings attending the same school.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Layla Moran: [\[147037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many lateral flow tests bought for schools are left over as a result of the change in the school testing strategy.

Nick Gibb:

Test kits delivered at the start of January 2021 continue to be used for regular testing of staff as well as for one off testing of pupils who are attending school (vulnerable children and the children of critical workers) as they returned to their institution. Additional test kits are supplied when individual settings run out.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[148744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has in place to make schools covid-19 secure when they reopen to students.

Nick Gibb:

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

The way to control this virus is the same, even with the current new variants. Current evidence suggests that the Public Health England-endorsed 'system of controls', that has been in use throughout the autumn term and which is set out in guidance, continues to be the right measures to take. This includes minimising contact with individuals who are unwell, use of face coverings in corridors and communal areas, cleaning hands and good respiratory hygiene, regular thorough cleaning of the school, minimising contact, ventilation and use of personal protective equipment where specifically advised. The latest schools' guidance is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957766/Restricting_attendance_during_the_national_lockdown-schools.pdf.

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

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

Schools: Mental Health Services**Stephanie Peacock:****[145843]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding is available to support the mental health of pupils and staff at (a) school and (b) home for the duration of the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

Schools already support the mental wellbeing of their pupils as part of their curriculum provision and pastoral support. This is paid for from schools' core funding, which is rising in each financial year by £2.6 billion in 2020/21, £4.8 billion in 2021/22 and £7.1 billion in 2022/23, compared to 2019/20 funding levels. Pastoral support is a core job for schools; we do not place restrictions on spending because it is important that schools are free to decide how best to use the core funding they receive.

We have also put in place a £1 billion COVID "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 in putting 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.

The Wellbeing for Education Return, a Department for Education led initiative alongside the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), Health Education England, Public Health England, and key voluntary sector organisations, backed by £8 million, has trained local experts to provide additional advice and resources for schools and colleges. This is to help support pupil, student, parent, carer, and staff wellbeing, resilience, and recovery, in light of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown. Alongside this, the department has launched a £95,000 pilot led by the Education Support charity to provide online peer-support and telephone counselling from experts to around 250 school leaders. The pilot will end in March 2021. The outcome of the pilot will inform any future wellbeing and mental health interventions for staff.

The College Collaboration Fund is a £5.4 million grant funding programme open to all statutory further education colleges, to be delivered in the 2020/21 financial year. We particularly welcomed applications that address one of five specific quality improvement needs. Five of the funded projects are designed to provide remote/online mental health and wellbeing support to students and/or staff.

We worked closely with DHSC on their wellbeing and mental health support plan for COVID-19. The plan sets out the support available for individuals in the context of a second wave, and the winter months, including support for children and young people. As part of taking forward this work, the department will also be convening a mental health action group to look at the effects on children, young people and staff in the education system. We will confirm the next steps as soon as possible.

For children and young people who need specialist support, the government continues to invest in and prioritise mental health for all, with an additional investment of £2.3 billion a year by the 2023/24 financial year through the NHS Long Term Plan. The NHS will also receive approximately an additional £500 million this financial year, to address waiting times for mental health services, give more people the mental health support that they need, and invest in the NHS workforce. The government has also provided £9 million in funding to mental health charities, including Mind, the Samaritans, Young Minds, and Bipolar UK, to help them adapt, expand, and reach those who are most vulnerable. We have also extended the Barnardo's See Hear, Respond support for vulnerable children, including support for mental health.

In the long term, we remain committed to our joint green paper delivery programme with DHSC and NHS England, including introducing new mental health support teams for all schools and colleges, providing training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges, and testing approaches to faster access to NHS specialist support. The department will be convening an action group 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.

■ Sex and Relationship Education

Sarah Champion: [147861]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to introduce mandatory Relationship education for primary schools.

Sarah Champion: [147862]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to extend funding to support teachers in delivering Relationship and Sex Education beyond April 2021 to account for the delay in making that education mandatory from September 2020.

Nick Gibb:

The regulations for the new subjects of Relationships Education (for all primary school pupils), Relationships and Sex Education (for all secondary school pupils) and Health Education (for all pupils in state-funded schools) came into force in September 2020. Given the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department clarified that the statutory requirement allows some flexibility over when schools discharge their duty in teaching the new curriculum within the first year of compulsory teaching.

The Department invested up to £2 million in the financial year 2019-20 and is investing up to £4 million in the current financial year to fund a support programme of work to help schools in their delivery of the new curriculum.

The support programme includes grant funding to 21 lead Teaching Schools covering all eight regions to deliver a train the trainer and peer support programme to primary and secondary schools in their region. This programme has supported over 2,000 schools since May 2020, and we expect a further 1500 schools to be helped by spring 2021. The training materials and other resources developed for this programme by the lead Teaching Schools will be available for access by all schools from April 2021.

Furthermore, Oak National Academy provides free remote education video lessons and resources covering the new Relationships, Sex and Health Education curriculum. To support the hard work of schools in delivering remote education, Oak National Academy was very quickly brought together by over 40 teachers, their schools and other education organisations. The Department has made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy both for the summer term of the academic year 2019-20, and then for the 2020-21 academic year, to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects for Reception up to Year 11. Information about Oak National Academy and the resources available can be accessed via this link:

<https://www.thenational.academy>.

Dame Diana Johnson: [148743]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the provision of sex education for secondary school children who have learning disabilities.

Nick Gibb:

In September 2020, relationships education became compulsory for all primary school pupils, relationships and sex education compulsory for all secondary school pupils, and health education compulsory for pupils in all state-funded schools. However, schools have flexibility up to the summer term 2021 before they start teaching the new subjects to accommodate school closures due to the COVID-19 outbreak. We have not conducted a formal review of relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) as it is too early to be able to make an accurate assessment of the impact on pupils, including those with learning disabilities.

Those who teach pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are used to adapting materials to meet the varied needs of their pupils and the RSHE statutory guidance is clear that the curriculum must be accessible to all pupils. We recognise that some teachers may need additional support when covering sensitive topics in the RSHE curriculum and last summer the Department organised a webinar for teachers of pupils with SEND, teaching assistants and SEND coordinators. The webinar was attended by over 2400 people and covered an overview of the RSHE curriculum, SEND curriculum planning, relationships and sex education and mental wellbeing. It is available to view on the PSHE Association's SEND Hub:

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/content/send-hub>.

The Department is currently working with teachers, SEND subject experts and SEND stakeholders to support all schools to build their expertise and increase their confidence to deliver the curriculum to those with more complex needs. This work includes the development of a SEND-specific RSHE module that will sit alongside the other RSHE teacher training modules available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health> and working with SEND stakeholders to run regional workshops to allow teachers and other practitioners to share best practice and provide peer support.

Teachers: Coronavirus**Rachael Maskell:****[145056]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of asking teachers to come out of retirement and assist in the recovery phase of the covid-19 outbreak to educate and support children and young people with their learning.

Nick Gibb:

The return of former teachers to the classroom is an important component of the Department's recruitment strategy, and we continue to prioritise initiatives that capitalise on any potential increased interest in the profession from former teachers. This includes former teachers who wish to support with the recovery phase of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Department is using our Return to Teaching Adviser Service to support these efforts. The service provides one-to-one support to former teachers interested in

returning to teach maths, physics and modern foreign languages. The Return to Teaching Adviser Service assists these former teachers with their applications, helps them prepare for interviews, and signposts them to the further support. Through the Return to Teaching Adviser Service, we have also encouraged former teachers to support the Department's wider pupil catch-up efforts, such as the National Tutoring Programme.

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[145844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to ensure that teachers are offered priority access to a covid-19 vaccine.

Nick Gibb:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the UK should use and provide advice on who should be offered them. The JCVI advises that the first priorities for the COVID-19 vaccination should be the prevention of mortality and the maintenance of the health and social care systems, and as the risk of mortality from COVID-19 increases with age, prioritisation is primarily based on age.

Under the priority groups for the first phase of vaccine rollout, those over 50 years of age, and all those 16 years of age and over who are clinically extremely vulnerable or have certain underlying health conditions, are eligible for vaccination within the first phase of the programme. This captures almost all preventable deaths from COVID-19 and will include thousands of those in the education and childcare workforce.

In the next phase of the vaccine rollout, the JCVI have asked that the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) consider occupational vaccination in collaboration with other Government departments. The Department for Education is working with DHSC and Public Health England to ensure that the education and childcare workforce is considered for prioritisation in the rollout of the vaccine.

■ Universities: Greater London

Emma Hardy:

[\[148894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when the Office for Students consultation on the proposed removal of London Weighting from the Teaching Grant for London-based universities in the financial year 2020-21 will be published.

Emma Hardy:

[\[148895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish the economic rationale behind the removal of the London Weighting aspect of the Teaching Grant for London-based universities.

Emma Hardy:

[\[148896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential effect on higher education institutions of funding reductions resulting from the proposed removal of London Weighting from 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, 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 the 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 higher education, and more HE providers than 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 analysis we offer at this stage, as presented in the annex to the letter to the Office for Students (OfS), gives a broad indication of the impact of the changes to aid understanding. This letter can be accessed here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/a3814453-4c28-404a-bf76-490183867d9a/rt-hon-gavin-williamson-cbe-mp-t-grant-ofs-chair-smb.pdf>.

The OfS will consult on these changes shortly, before final allocations for the 2021-22 financial year are confirmed and will carefully consider the impact of any changes on providers.

We are also making available an additional £50 million of hardship funding this financial year. In total we have made £70 million of funding available for student hardship given the £20 million made available to higher education providers in December 2020. Providers will have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to students, in a way that will best prioritise those in greatest need.

This money is in addition to the £256 million of Student Premium funding higher education providers are able draw on this academic year towards student hardship funds, including the purchase of IT equipment and mental health support, as well as to support providers' access and participation plans. Furthermore, we have asked the OfS to allocate £15 million towards student mental health in 2021/22 through the proposed reforms to teaching grant funding.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Animal Welfare****Patrick Grady:****[147902]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent progress his Department has made on bringing forward legislative proposals on animal sentience.

Victoria Prentis:

We have committed to bringing in new laws on animal sentience. Any necessary changes required to domestic legislation will be made in an effective and credible way and will be brought forward when parliamentary time allows.

Blue Planet Fund**Rachael Maskell:**[\[147927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Blue Planet Fund will be launched; and whether civil society will be consulted to inform the fund's design, prior to its launch.

Rebecca Pow:

The Blue Planet Fund will be launched later this year and will be jointly delivered by Defra and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. We will engage with a range of stakeholders in advance of this in order to inform the fund's design, and plan to include civil society organisations as part of this.

Cheese: UK Trade with EU**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[145039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the ability of cheesemakers based in Great Britain to sell their products to the EU.

Daniel Zeichner:[\[145040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of cheesemakers based in Great Britain that have stopped selling their products to the EU since 1 January 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

No formal impact assessment has been made.

My department made extensive guidance available and held webinars and meetings with exporters and trade associations to help businesses prepare for the new rules from 01 January. We continue to work closely with traders to support businesses as they adjust to the new arrangements.

It is vital that traders ensure that their exports have the correct paperwork to comply with new animal and animal product checks when they cross the EU border.

Fruit and Vegetables: Horticulture**John Redwood:**[\[144914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to promote and support more protected growing of vegetables and salad crops to extend the UK growing season.

John Redwood:

[\[144915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential to extend the UK fruit growing season; and what support his Department provides to growers to extend their season.

Victoria Prentis:

We have the ideal climate and landscape to enable us to produce a wide range of fruit, vegetables and salad crops throughout the year. Innovation such as the development of new plant varieties and growing systems has already allowed growers to extend the domestic growing season for products such as strawberries.

We will continue to encourage and support our growers to produce more high-quality home-grown fruits and vegetables, ensuring a reliable and sustainable supply of top quality and healthy home-grown fresh fruit and vegetables throughout the year, all produced to high environmental standards.

Growers of protected and salad crops are currently able to apply for financial support to help them improve their productivity via the Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme, and looking ahead the Agriculture Act will provide powers to offer financial support to anyone starting, or improving the productivity, of an agricultural or horticultural activity.

Later this year, growers will have the opportunity to apply for support to invest in equipment, technology and infrastructure via the new Farming Investment Fund. This will help them to boost their productivity whilst also reducing impact on the environment.

■ Heather Burning

Olivia Blake:

[\[148970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the announcement of 29 January 2021 that the Government will bring forward legislation to prevent the burning of heather and other vegetation on protected blanket bog habitats, what the scientific basis is for continuing to permit the burning of vegetation on (a) peat under 40 cm in depth and (b) outside of protected areas.

Rebecca Pow:

Peat over 40cm depth most likely encompasses most of the blanket bog habitat in the uplands where the greatest volumes of peat are found. The legislation we are bringing forward focuses on the protection of that blanket bog habitat. However, the government recognises that all peat is important and is working with stakeholders to promote sustainable management practices on all peat habitats so that all our peatlands are in good condition, under restoration management or more sustainably managed.

The Government will be setting out further measures to restore, protect and manage England's peatlands this year as part of a package of measures to protect England's landscapes and nature-based solutions.

■ Microplastics: Environment Protection

John Lamont:

[145845]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the environmental benefits of banning microbeads in June 2018.

Rebecca Pow:

The ban on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products in 2018 was developed based on evidence of harm to the marine environment from microplastics, and specifically evidence of microbeads directly entering the marine environment through the water treatment process. It aimed to create a level playing field between businesses that had already taken voluntary action and those that continued to use microbeads. An impact assessment was carried out before the ban was implemented. The impact assessment can be found here:

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2017/178/pdfs/ukia_20170178_en.pdf.

More evidence is required to understand the full impact of microplastics, including microbeads, on the marine environment. We have been working to understand other sources of microplastics into the marine environment. This includes a Defra funded study, which investigated the sources and pathways of microplastics from tyres and textiles into the ocean:

<http://scienceresearch.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=0&ProjectID=20110>.

■ Peat Bogs

Olivia Blake:

[148061]

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

Rebecca Pow:

The proposed legislation, which applies to areas of deep peat in a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) that are also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and/or a Special Protection Area (SPA), will provide for an exemption to the need to apply for a licence where that land has steep slopes or in circumstances where more than half of the area is covered by exposed rock and scree.

Deep peat by its very nature is unlikely to have formed on steep slopes. Current data suggests that the majority of protected deep peat is sited on slopes that will not be considered steep under the proposed regulations and would therefore not qualify for such an exemption. Similarly, we consider only a very small amount of protected blanket bog habitat will contain exposed rock or scree. In such cases, any burns will be limited to an area of 0.5 ha, in any single burning season.

In either case, should a landowner seek to use such an exemption, they would still be required to hold an appropriate consent to burn and comply with the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

■ Peat Bogs: Environment Protection

Olivia Blake: [\[148969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 3 February 2021 to Question 145891 on Peat Bogs: Environment Protection, what steps he is taking to extend statutory protections to the remaining 38 per cent of peatlands not currently protected.

Olivia Blake: [\[148971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the England Peatland Strategy will provide a strategic approach to restoring and protecting peat resources.

Rebecca Pow:

We are committed to restoring and sustainably managing England's peatlands. The Chancellor announced in March that as part of the Nature for Climate Fund, 35,000ha of peatland restoration would be achieved over the next five years. This represents a significant step forward in our restoration efforts and will require us to work closely with a wide range of stakeholders.

The Government will be setting out further measures to restore, protect and manage England's peatlands this year as part of a package of measures to protect England's landscapes and nature-based solutions.

■ Peat Bogs: Fires

Olivia Blake: [\[148060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the total CO₂ emissions created by the burning of vegetation on peat under 40 cm in depth.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government does not hold sufficient data on the amount of peat that is less than 40cm in depth and is therefore unable to provide an estimation of the CO₂ emitted from such activities.

■ Pollinators

Darren Henry: [\[148940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the provisions in The National Pollinator Strategy: for bees and other pollinators in England are being upheld.

Rebecca Pow:

Pollinators are a priority for this Government, and we are taking action alongside many partners to implement the National Pollinator Strategy's provisions. We are addressing the pressures on wild and managed pollinators, restoring and creating habitat for them to thrive, raising awareness across society and strengthening the evidence base.

To manage pressures on pollinators associated with the use of pesticides, we operate a strict system of regulation, including a thorough risk assessment by our expert regulator, the Health and Safety Executive. Pesticides that pose unacceptable risks – including to pollinators - are not authorised. With the Devolved Administrations, we are also consulting on the revised National Action Plan for Sustainable Use of Pesticides. This lays out how we intend to support the uptake of integrated pest management, including to reduce risks to pollinators.

Our Healthy Bees Plan 2030, published in November 2020, works to improve honeybee health through better husbandry and knowledge sharing. The National Bee Unit carries out around 6,500 risk-based apiary inspections per year in England and Wales.

On habitat restoration and creation, Natural England estimates that the area of land covered by agri-environment scheme options delivering pollen and nectar for pollinators increased by 30,000 hectares between 2014 and 2019. We are also supporting nature recovery through our Green Recovery Challenge Fund, with three of the projects awarded in round 1 focusing specifically on pollinators.

We are building on these measures and projects in the design of the new Environmental Land Management scheme, which will help improve biodiversity and species' status, and enable many more farmers and land managers to take positive action for pollinators and other farm wildlife.

To strengthen the evidence base, we work closely with leading academics and have introduced a national pollinator monitoring scheme across the whole of the UK, with trend estimates published annually as official statistics. To raise awareness and highlight the action that people take across the country, Defra coordinates a 'Bees' Needs' campaign including public events, best practice advice and awards.

■ Public Footpaths: Christchurch**Sir Christopher Chope:****[148676]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what action he is taking to ensure that coastal paths being established under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 incorporate ferry connections; and if he will ensure that the proposed coastal path between Mudeford and Hengistbury Head uses the route provided by the Mudeford ferry, taking into account the ferry times for 2021-22 as updated with effect from 1 February 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

Natural England's 2013 Approved Coastal Access Scheme sets out the criteria under which decisions regarding estuarial discretion are made. The Scheme is clear that the presence of a ferry service must be taken into account in such circumstances. This must, however, also be weighed alongside other determining factors such as public enjoyment and the coastal nature of an estuary.

The proposals for Kimmeridge Bay to Highcliffe in which the Mudeford Ferry sits were published on 21 June 2017. A decision regarding this Coastal Access Report has been delayed, however, due to the European Court ruling known as People Over Wind. Natural England is reviewing the relevant Habitats Regulations Assessment in compliance with this ruling. In addition, a number of objections were received following the publication of Natural England's initial report. Defra has appointed an independent planning inspector to examine these objections who will provide a report to the Secretary of State.

This evidence and the Planning Inspectors Report will need to be considered as part of the Secretary of State's decision on the proposals.

Natural England continues to monitor the local situation and any changes since the report was published, for example updates to the ferry timetable, will be taken into account.

■ Recycling: Finance**Mr Clive Betts:**[\[147736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what interim financial support he plans to provide to local authorities in the event that the launch of the Deposit Return Scheme is delayed until 2024.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is committed to ensuring that Local Authorities are properly funded for the services they deliver. In 2021-22, we estimate that local government will see a cash terms increase of 4.6% in core spending power - a real-terms increase. This is in line with last year's increase and recognises the resources councils need to meet their responsibilities and maintain current service levels. In total, we expect Core Spending Power to rise from £49.0 billion to £51.2 billion next year.

With regards to the introduction of a deposit return scheme (DRS) for drinks containers, any additional costs incurred by local authorities to support the introduction of a DRS will be funded in line with the new burdens doctrine.

■ Soil and Groundwater Technology Association**Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[148753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 3 February 2021 to Question 145762 on the Soil and Groundwater Technology Association, if he will make an assessment of the independence of the Soil and Groundwater Technical Association.

Rebecca Pow:

The Soil and Groundwater Technical Association is a not-for-profit membership organisation focused on the issue of contaminated land. It is formed of UK organisations representative of this focus. There are currently no plans to assess the independence of the Soil and Groundwater Technical Association.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Interpreters****Jessica Morden:**[\[147784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to Afghan counterpart on the recent execution of Afghan interpreters who served alongside the UK's armed forces; and what assessment he has made of the ongoing security risks faced by interpreters still living in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

Her Majesty's Government regularly speaks to the Afghan authorities on a range of issues. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, the Minister for South Asia, discussed concerns around ongoing security issues and targeted killings with the Afghan Foreign Minister Atmar on 18 January.

We recognise the vital role local staff, including interpreters, have played in supporting the UK's activities in Afghanistan over the last decade. That is why, as well as offering a generous redundancy package in recognition of this service, we have a permanent expert team based in Kabul to thoroughly investigate claims of intimidation. They assist with relocations within Afghanistan and, where necessary, relocation to the UK. So far, Her Majesty's Government has supported over 1,300 Afghan interpreters and their families to build new lives in the UK. A further 350 staff have benefitted from our in-country finance and training packages. The UK government is constantly reviewing its policies in relation to local staff. Whilst I cannot provide details for operational security reasons, we take necessary measures to mitigate the risks to all our staff.

■ Arms Trade: International Law**Stephen Timms:**[\[148674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the extent to which UK-made arms are being used in activities which are in breach of international law; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The Government takes its export control responsibilities seriously and every licence application is rigorously assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria. We draw on a range of sources in making assessments, including NGOs and international organisations, our diplomatic posts and reports from our overseas networks. We continue to monitor developments

closely, and are able to respond quickly to changing situations. We will not issue any export licences when to do so would be inconsistent with these Criteria.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[145047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what provision is being made for UK citizens who are residing overseas and in priority categories for covid-19 vaccination.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: We are closely following other countries' plans to roll out vaccines. We are providing information through Travel Advice pages and 'Living In' guides on gov.uk to inform British Nationals of healthcare options available to them and how they can receive a vaccine locally. The UK is playing a leading international role to ensure global access to vaccines. For example we are contributing the equivalent of £330m a year, totalling £1.65bn, for the next five years to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance that provides equitable access to safe and effective vaccines for 190 economies.

■ **British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies: Coronavirus**

John Lamont:

[\[145854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how the UK is assisting the Overseas Territories and Crown dependencies with the roll-out of the covid-19 vaccine.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, together with Public Health England, the Department of Health and Social Care, and the UK Vaccine Taskforce, are coordinating the deployment of vaccines to the Overseas Territories. Vaccines have so far been delivered to Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, St Helena and the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office are currently finalising plans to deliver vaccines to the other inhabited Overseas Territories. Public Health England are coordinating the deliveries to the Crown Dependencies, the governments of which are taking forward the distribution of vaccine in their respective jurisdictions.

■ **China: Overseas Aid**

Sarah Champion:

[\[148801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of the UK's Official Development Assistance spending in China in 2020 related to projects and programmes in Xinjiang.

Nigel Adams:

The Statistics on International Development (SID) National Statistics, published on GOV.UK, provides an overview of all UK spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA). Detailed UK ODA figures for 2020 will be published in autumn 2021, via SID: Final UK Aid Spend 2020. SID is collected and reported in line with the OECD reporting directives, and therefore is captured using the OECD categories. We do not collect UK ODA information at a provincial level for these official statistics, but I can confirm that we do not have any bilateral ODA-funded programmes in Xinjiang.

China: Uighurs**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[148879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps to verify reports that Uighur camp detainees in China have been systematically raped, sexually abused and tortured; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

As I said in the House of Commons on 4 February, the BBC report of 3 February includes deeply distressing testimony of the rape, torture and dehumanisation of Uyghur women in Xinjiang detention centres. The testimonies in the report offer a further, compelling addition to the growing body of evidence of the gross human rights violations being perpetrated against Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in Xinjiang. The government is committed to continuing to work with our international partners, including with the new US Administration, and through our G7 Presidency, to hold China to account for its actions in Xinjiang.

Coronavirus: Intellectual Property**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[147951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer to Question 59474, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of a voluntary approach to intellectual property in supporting equitable access to covid-19 medical technologies.

Wendy Morton:

The UK believes that voluntary licensing is a preferable way to support equitable access to COVID-19 medical technologies. It allows third-party manufacturers to produce innovative products, enables innovators to make an informed decision on sharing their intellectual property (IP), and provides flexibility for parties in agreeing how to ensure access to technologies.

Voluntary approaches have underpinned the development and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines. For example, Oxford University's partnership with AstraZeneca, and subsequently the Serum Institute of India, has generated mass scale-up of their vaccine technology.

■ Coronavirus: Technology**Preet Kaur Gill:****[147950]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether pharmaceutical companies have voluntarily contributed scientific (a) knowledge, (b) data and (c) intellectual property to the covid-19 Technology Access Pool since its inception in May 2020.

Wendy Morton:

The World Health Organization (WHO) is currently establishing the governance structures, and refining the operating model for the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP), including undertaking stakeholder consultations in which the UK has participated. The WHO maintains the details of any contributors to this initiative.

■ Developing Countries: Voluntary Work**Greg Clark:****[147801]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what guidance he plans to issue to volunteers travelling internationally to undertake overseas development projects during the covid-19 restrictions announced in January 2021.

Nigel Adams:

All individuals should follow the stay at home advice and should only leave home to travel internationally - or within the UK - when they have a legally permitted reason to leave home. Individuals should check the guidance for their personal circumstances before considering any travel, as well as any entry requirements in the destination country.

The Department of Health and Social Care, or the relevant health ministry in the devolved administrations, oversee domestic COVID-19 health restrictions. Further guidance on international travel can be found here online at www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home#international-travel.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff**Darren Jones:****[144814]**

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

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: 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 resources associated with the Industrial Strategy within the FCDO. The information is

not readily available/held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ **Frontiir: CDC**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[147807]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, in light of the Government's commitment on 2 February 2021 to review all indirect support to the Myanmar government, what recent assessment he has made to the status of funds allocated by CDC to Frontiir Co. Ltd.

Nigel Adams:

CDC Group's (CDC) investment in Frontiir has previously helped connect over one million people in Myanmar to the internet at affordable prices, thereby increasing access to information, boosting businesses, supporting education and tackling poverty. CDC carries out due diligence on every investment it makes, including Frontiir. Frontiir has at all times adhered to international best practice and the company has become an observer of the Global Network Initiative at CDC's request.

Following the Myanmar military coup on 1 February, the UK Government is reviewing all programmes in country and will work to ensure no funds reach the military. CDC has enhanced the private sector due diligence regime to effectively mitigate the risk of UK funds going to government institutions. In addition, FCDO has written to partners asking them to review supply chains, to check UK money is not being used to purchase goods and services from military owned companies.

■ **Genocide**

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[146924]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Prime Minister's oral contribution of 20 January 2021, Official Report, column 959, that that the attribution of genocide is a judicial matter, whether it is his policy that the recognition of genocide is a matter for the courts.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: Genocide is an international crime with a strict legal meaning. It is the policy of the UK Government that any judgment on whether genocide has occurred is a matter for competent courts, rather than for governments or other non-judicial bodies. Competent courts include international courts and domestic criminal courts meeting international standards of due process. The determination as to whether a situation constitutes genocide is factually and legally complex and should only be made by a competent court following a careful and detailed examination.

■ India: Agriculture**Nicola Richards:** [\[145187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the effect of the Indian Government's legislative reforms to farming on Punjabi and Sikh communities in India.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: Our British High Commission in New Delhi monitors political, social and economic developments in India including agricultural reform. We are aware of concerns in India and here in the UK about how these reforms might affect farming communities. Agricultural reform is a domestic policy issue for the Indian authorities to address.

■ Overseas Aid: Legal Opinion**Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[147952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to his oral contribution in the debate on Official Development Assistance on 26 November 2020, Official Report, col 1018, if he will publish the legal advice he has received on the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary set out his position to Parliament on Official Development Assistance and the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015 on 26 November 2020. In accordance with the usual principles governing legal professional privilege, the Government does not intend to publish any legal advice it has received on this issue.

■ Overseas Aid: Research**Chi Onwurah:** [\[148780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of research projects that will be cancelled or paused as a result of reductions in the Official Development Assistance funded R&D budget.

James Duddridge:

The economic impact of the COVID pandemic has forced the government to take the difficult decision to temporarily reduce ODA to 0.5% of GNI. The Foreign Secretary has set out a strategic approach to ensure maximum impact for our aid spend. This includes the use of ODA to support research that can provide new solutions to critical challenges in development.

In January the Foreign Secretary laid a Written Ministerial Statement in Parliament summarising the overall departmental cross-government allocations of ODA spend for 2021. Individual departments will now work through the implications of their spending allocation for the research programmes and activities they manage.

Difficult decisions will be necessary. Ministers will be engaged during February and March on spending plans for financial year 2021/22. I am not yet able to comment on implications for specific research programmes.

■ **Palestinians: Health Services**

Tommy Sheppard:

[\[147916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the financial capacity of the Palestinian Ministry of Health to purchase sufficient covid-19 vaccines for its population.

James Cleverly:

We remain in regular, close contact with the Palestinian Authority to discuss their plans for access to safe COVID-19 vaccines in the OPTs including on their ability to finance the purchase of vaccines.

The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines as demonstrated by our commitment of up to £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. Our commitment to the COVAX AMC will support access to COVID-19 vaccines for up to 92 developing countries, including in the Occupied Palestinian Territories by contributing to the supply of 1 billion doses in 2021. We are pleased to note that the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) will be among the first to benefit from the COVAX scheme with delivery of a first batch anticipated in mid-February.

■ **Palestinians: Overseas Aid**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[144964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 May 2020 to Question 42248 on Palestinians: Overseas Aid, on what date the internal panel of researchers will complete its analysis.

James Cleverly:

The programme included a research component that looked at the impact of People to People work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to contribute to an evidence base in this area, which is presently limited. The research has been finalised and we are working to publish the report soon.

■ **Three Seas Initiative**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[146827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of joining the United States, Germany and Japan in becoming an observer state for the Three Seas Initiative.

Wendy Morton:

The Government is committed to maintaining strong relationships with our European partners, both bilaterally and through multilateral groups and arrangements. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is following the development of the Three Seas Initiative through our Embassies in the region, including by supporting UK business engagement with the Initiative. The FCDO is aware of interest in the Initiative on the part of a range of our international partners. We continue to engage with the Initiative and its member states, and are open to the possibility of deepening our interaction with it.

■ **UNRWA: Overseas Aid****Wayne David:**[\[147755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to make an announcement on future funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency, as part of the cross-government review into future Official Development Assistance allocations.

James Cleverly:

The UK is a long-term supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) which provides protection and core services to Palestinian refugees across the region. UNRWA is also a vital humanitarian and stabilising force in the Middle East region. FCDO is currently running a prioritisation exercise across all its programmes, to ensure that every pound we spend goes as far as possible and makes a world-leading difference. Decisions on support for UNRWA will be taken as part of this process.

■ **Western Sahara: Armed Forces and Police****Alex Sobel:**[\[148899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 142052 on Western Sahara: Armed Forces, how many (a) police, (b) Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire staff and (c) soldiers make up that security presence.

James Cleverly:

We are unable to provide a detailed breakdown of the Moroccan security presence in Western Sahara.

■ **Westminster Foundation for Democracy****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[147949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding his Department plans to allocate to the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in 2021.

Nigel Adams:

Currently, the majority of funding the FCDO allocates to Westminster Foundation for Democracy is classified as Official Development Assistance (ODA). The Foreign Secretary has completed the cross-government review of how ODA will be allocated against the government's priorities for 2021, which has ensured that UK ODA is focused on our strategic priorities, spent where it will have the maximum impact, has greater coherence and delivers most value for money. Officials are now working through the implications of these allocations, alongside the implications of the recent Spending Review. No decisions on individual budgets have been taken yet by Ministers.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE■ **Abortion: Drugs****Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[147798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many 999 ambulance calls were received nationwide from distressed women having taken mifepristone and misoprostol at home between 30 March and 30th November 2020; and how many ambulances were sent out.

Helen Whately:

This information is not held centrally.

■ **Breast Cancer: Diagnosis****Debbie Abrahams:**[\[145021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the proportion of new diagnoses of recurrent and metastatic breast cancer which hospital trusts are submitting to the Cancer Outcomes and Services Dataset (COSD).

Debbie Abrahams:[\[145022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what mechanisms are in place to monitor hospital trust compliance with the requirement to collect data on new diagnoses of recurrent and metastatic breast cancer.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 February 2021]: No recent estimate has been made.

It is a requirement for hospital trusts to report on new diagnoses of recurrent and metastatic breast cancer. Public Health England reports data on recurrent and metastatic breast cancer to National Health Service trusts to support improved data quality and ascertainment. Non-compliance with data standards is monitored through the local clinical commissioning groups.

■ Breast Cancer: Health Services

Zarah Sultana:

[\[147078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to recommendation 46 of the Achieving World-Class Cancer Outcomes: A Strategy for Cancer 2015-2020, what proportion of metastatic breast cancer patients have their care discussed by a multidisciplinary team.

Jo Churchill:

Data on metastatic breast cancer patients who have care discussed by a multidisciplinary team are not available in the format requested.

■ Breast Cancer: Nurses

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[146807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NHS Long-Term Plan, what progress his Department has made in ensuring all metastatic breast cancer patients have access to a Clinical Nurse Specialist.

Jo Churchill:

Health Education England is facilitating a number of initiatives to increase Clinical Nurse Specialist capacity, including the development of cancer nurses through provision of 250 training grants of up to £5,000 each in 2020/21. The grants are aimed at existing and aspiring Cancer Nurse Specialists to enable them to undertake additional training to develop specialist clinical, leadership, education or research capabilities.

The Spending Review 2020 provided £260 million to continue to grow the National Health Service workforce and support commitments made in the NHS Long Term Plan. Full details on funding allocations towards NHS workforce budgets, including relating to cancer, in 2021-22 will be subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and finalised in due course.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Jon Trickett:

[\[146777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cancer treatment referrals were made in each year from (a) 2016 to (b) 2020.

Jo Churchill:

The following table shows the number of two week waits from general practitioner (GP) urgent referral to first consultant appointment from 2015/16.

YEAR	NUMBER OF TWO WEEK WAITS FROM GP URGENT REFERRAL TO FIRST CONSULTANT APPOINTMENT
2015/16	1,714,017

YEAR	NUMBER OF TWO WEEK WAITS FROM GP URGENT REFERRAL TO FIRST CONSULTANT APPOINTMENT
2016/17	1,867,303
2017/18	1,935,054
2018/19	2,245,524
2019/20	2,386,815
2020/21 (April to November 2020)	1,299,524

Source: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/cancer-waiting-times/>

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments

Christine Jardine:

[133111]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequacy of supply of medicinal cannabis so that people who require it are able to fill their prescriptions lawfully after the transition period.

Christine Jardine:

[133112]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the efficacy of alleviating medical conditions with (a) Bedrocan oils and (b) alternate cannabis-based medicines in place of finished cannabis oil.

Christine Jardine:

[133113]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of specialist importers' capacity to produce the required medication from imported Bedrocan flowers after the transition period.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Department, supported by the British Embassy to The Hague, has reached an agreement with the Dutch Government to allow the continued supply of Bedrocan oils, a form of unlicensed medicinal cannabis, against United Kingdom prescriptions for existing patients until 1 July 2021. The medicines supply chain has ensured that there continues to be good supply of licensed and unlicensed cannabis-based medicines after the transition period.

The Written Ministerial Statement of 26 January [HCWS734](#) provided an update on action taken by the Government on supply from the Netherlands and next steps to establish a more permanent solution.

The Department has not made an assessment of the efficacy of the different unlicensed cannabis-based medicines. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published guidance that states that there is insufficient

evidence on the clinical and cost effectiveness of these products, to support their use in the National Health Service. The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the National Institute of Health Research to establish clinical trials to develop the evidence base to support further commissioning decisions.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Mike Amesbury: [133151]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the priority of care home residents for the covid-19 vaccine; and when residents will be contacted.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Deliveries of both Oxford/Astra Zeneca and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines to large (over 50 beds), medium (25-49 beds) and small (under 25 beds) care homes are underway. As set out in the COVID-19 vaccines delivery plan, published on 12 January 2021, it is our ambition to offer the vaccine to all care home residents and staff in the more than 10,000 care homes in England for older people by the end of January. The delivery plan is available at the following link.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-covid-19-vaccines-delivery-plan

■ Conditions of Employment: Pregnancy

Sarah Owen: [143918]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will meet with the family of Mary Agyeiwaa Agyapong to discuss working conditions of pregnant women during the covid-19 outbreak.

Sarah Owen: [143919]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will meet with the family of Mary Agyeiwaa Agyapong to discuss the safety of pregnant women at work during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: Due to significant diary pressures, we are unable to meet with the family of Mary Agyeiwaa Agyapong at this time.

The Government takes this issue seriously and is committed to ensuring the safety of pregnant women during this pandemic.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Dr Rupa Huq: [105479]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set out the criteria for determining an area's local covid-19 alert tier status.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 22 October 2020]: Decisions on tiers are made by ministers based on public health recommendations primarily informed by five key indicators - the case detection rate in all age groups, case detection rates among the over 60 year olds, the rate at which case rates are rising or falling, positivity rate and pressures on the NHS.

Final decisions on tiering are made by the COVID-19 Operations Committee.

As of 6 January, all areas have been moved into tier 4 and the Government will review the tiering allocations every 14 days.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:[\[109682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria his Department is using to determine when a city is moved to a higher tier under the three-tiered system for local covid-19 lockdowns.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Decisions on tiers are made by Ministers based on public health recommendations from senior clinical and scientific advisors, guided by five key indicators - the case detection rate in all age groups, case detection rates among the over 60 year olds, the rate at which case rates are rising or falling, positivity rate and pressures on the National Health Service. Final decisions on tiering are made by the COVID-19 Operations Committee.

As of 6 January, all areas have been moved into tier 4 and the Government will review the tiering allocations every 14 days.

Mr Marcus Fysh:[\[110867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data on covid-19 would be required and what criteria would need to be met for him to recommend an exit from the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions in England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: Decisions on tiers are made by Ministers based on public health recommendations from senior clinical and scientific advisors, guided by five key indicators - the case detection rate in all age groups, case detection rates among the over 60 year olds, the rate at which case rates are rising or falling, positivity rate and pressures on the National Health Service. Final decisions on tiering are made by the COVID-19 Operations Committee.

As of 6 January, all areas have moved into tier 4 and the Government will review the tiering allocations every 14 days.

Theresa Villiers:[\[120828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria he plans to apply to determine which covid-19 tier each local authority area will be included in at the end of the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown arrangements.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 30 November 2020]: Decisions on tiers are made by Ministers based on public health recommendations from senior clinical and scientific advisors, guided by five key indicators - the case detection rate in all age groups, case detection among the over 60 year olds, the rate at which case rates are rising or falling, positivity rate and pressures on the National Health Service. Final decisions on tiering are made by the COVID-19 Operations Committee.

As of 6 January, all areas have been moved into tier 4 and the Government will review the tiering allocations every 14 days.

Theresa Villiers:[\[120830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the criteria he will use to determine when an area can be moved to a lower tier of covid-19 restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 30 November 2020]: Decisions on tiers are made by Ministers based on public health recommendations from senior clinical and scientific advisors, guided by five key indicators - the case detection rate in all age groups, case detection rates among the over 60 year olds, the rate at which case rates are rising or falling, positivity rate and pressures on the National Health Service. Final decisions on tiering are made by the COVID-19 Operations Committee.

As of 6 January, all areas have been moved into tier 4 and the Government will review the tiering allocations every 14 days.

Julie Elliott:[\[121252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his criteria are for determining (a) which covid-19 restriction tier each region is placed under and (b) when an area can be moved down one tier.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 December 2020]: Decisions on tiers are made by Ministers based on public health recommendations from senior clinical and scientific advisors, guided by five key indicators - the case detection rate in all age groups, case detection rate among the over 60 year olds, the rate at which case rates are rising or falling, positivity rate and pressures on the National Health Service. Final decisions on tiering are made by the COVID-19 Operations Committee.

As of 6 January, all areas have been moved into tier 4 and the Government will review the tiering allocations every 14 days.

Rachael Maskell:[\[121297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the criteria are for local authorities in the tier 2 covid-19 level to move to tier 1.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 December 2020]: Decisions on tiers are made by Ministers based on public health recommendations from senior clinical and scientific advisors, guided

by five key indicators - the case detection rate in all age groups, case detection rates among the over 60 year olds, the rate at which case rates are rising or falling, positivity rate and pressures on the National Health Service. Final decisions on tiering are made by the COVID-19 Operations Committee.

As of 6 January, all areas have been moved into tier 4 and the Government will review the tiering allocations every 14 days.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[145106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effectiveness of UV air disinfection in reducing the spread of covid-19 infection within clinical settings.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has made no specific assessment.

■ **Coronavirus: Dorset**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[148680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many statutory notifications of covid-19 were submitted to Public Health England in (a) November 2020, (b) December 2020 and (c) January 2021; and how many in each month were submitted from (i) Dorset Council and (ii) Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) received 669 statutory notifications of COVID-19 in November 2020, two of which were from Bournemouth Council and none from Dorset, Christchurch and Poole Councils.

PHE received 662 statutory notifications of COVID-19 in December 2020, five of which were from Dorset Council, seven from Bournemouth Council, one from Christchurch Council and one from Poole Council.

PHE received 545 statutory notifications of COVID-19 in January 2021, nine of which were from Dorset Council, five from Bournemouth Council, three from Christchurch Council and four from Poole Council.

■ **Coronavirus: Easington**

Grahame Morris:

[\[133786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in the Easington constituency had received a covid-19 vaccine by 6 January 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Since 24 December 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement have published weekly United Kingdom-wide vaccination data. In January 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement began to publish daily statistics by age and region, with more

detailed information provided weekly, including the overall number of people who have been vaccinated by dose, those aged 80 years old and above and location.

Vaccination data is currently available at a national and regional level by sustainability and transformation partnership and integrated care system.

As more reliable data become available, it is expected to be published.

Further data is available at the following links:

www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/

coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/vaccinations

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-monitoring-reports

■ Coronavirus: Greater London

Sarah Olney:

[140899]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons the rate of the rollout of the vaccine in London has decreased when compared to the rate in England.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: Vaccines are being distributed fairly across the United Kingdom to ensure the most vulnerable are immunised first. Some parts of the country have made very significant progress and are putting more supply into areas that have more to do. We also have more than one hundred vaccination sites up and running across the capital, including at the London Nightingale hospital, the vaccination centre at the Olympic Office Centre in Wembley and more to open in due course.

Andrew Rosindell:

[141406]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) Havering and (b) other London boroughs with significant elderly and vulnerable populations receive supplies of covid-19 vaccines proportionate to the number of residents in high priority groups.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The COVID-19 vaccine programme has expanded rapidly in the last month, with over 140 vaccination sites across London, including 44 hospital hubs, 101 local vaccination services and two vaccination centres currently in operation. This network of vaccination sites has been designed to fit the expected vaccine supply and demand and to ensure safe and easy access for the whole population. For the provision of vaccines and their onward deployment, the Government closely monitors the clearly defined supply chain plans for manufacturing, transport, storage and distribution. Targeted deliveries are being made to areas where there are more people left to vaccinate in the priority cohorts, proportionate to the at-risk population they have registered.

■ Coronavirus: Medical Treatments

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[144585]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the work of the Wessex Neurological Centre on safely treating patients with covid-19 using advanced centrifugal plasma exchange technology in an outpatient setting is shared across the NHS.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement advise that it has not been approached by the Wessex Neurological Centre regarding the treatment of patients with COVID-19 using plasma exchange technology.

NHS England and NHS Improvement will consider any published evidence as an outcome of research completed in line with its published clinical policy process. This is available at the following link:

www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Methods-National-clinical-policies-updated-July-2020.pdf

■ Coronavirus: Nottinghamshire

Lee Anderson:

[134580]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when mass community testing for covid-19 will begin in Nottinghamshire following the 20,000 lateral flow tests received by Nottinghamshire County Council.

Helen Whately:

NHS Test and Trace will work with each local authority on an expanded community testing plan appropriate for them. This support will be rolled out during national lockdown restrictions, being kept closely under review. It will be for local authorities in partnership with their directors of public health and with the support of NHS Test and Trace to design a programme that maximises accessibility to, and take-up of, asymptomatic testing in their area. Support for the programme will be provided until at least the end of March 2021.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Alex Davies-Jones:

[147089]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total value of service credits applied to personal protective equipment procurement contracts was since 1 March 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: Service credits are not used in the contracts the Department has awarded to personal protective equipment suppliers.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Barbara Keeley:** [\[90102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of covid-19 testing kits completed at walk-in or drive-through testing centres in each week from 3 August to 13 September 2020 were returned in a compromised or otherwise unusable state.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Sir Alan Campbell:** [\[124687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions the Government has had with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on including unpaid carers in its priority list for the covid-19 vaccine.

Sarah Champion: [\[124757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation decision not to include unpaid carers on the priority list for covid-19 vaccination of the policy whereby unpaid carers do have priority status for the influenza vaccination.

Sarah Champion: [\[124758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ask the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation to revise its recommendation not to include unpaid carers on the priority list for covid-19 vaccinations.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[124814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of adding unpaid care workers to the priority list for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that the vaccine should be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people over 80 years old and health and social care workers.

We recognise the vital role unpaid carers play in caring for vulnerable individuals. JCVI recommends that carers who are in receipt of a carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill, should also be offered vaccination alongside people with underlying health conditions.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[132892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of when progress on the covid-19 vaccine programme could make it safe to start lifting general covid-19 restrictions.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Over 6.5 million people in the United Kingdom have now received their first dose of the vaccine.

However, we need to understand the full impact the vaccines have on infection rates and transmission rates, which will become clearer as more people receive their vaccination. As this evidence is gathered and analysed, we will gain a greater understanding of infection rates, hospitalisation and reduced deaths and if successful, this should lead to a reassessment of current restrictions.

Catherine West:

[\[133100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether UK residents who are in the UK on Tier Visas will be eligible to be vaccinated under the UK covid-19 vaccination programme in line with Government guidelines for priority of vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation have advised that phase one of the COVID-19 vaccination programme should be targeted at reducing mortality, as well as protecting health and social care staff and systems. As a result, vaccines have first been prioritised to care home residents and staff, followed by people aged 80 years old and above and health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors.

Entitlement to free National Health Service treatment is generally based on ordinary residence in the United Kingdom. A person who can show they have taken up ordinary residence in the UK can access all NHS services immediately, including COVID-19 vaccinations in line with the guidelines on prioritisation. This will be on a free of charge basis. It is recommended those who have not done so already should apply to register with a general practitioner practice near where they now live.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[133741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce bureaucracy for medical professionals who volunteer to administer the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We are streamlining the process for registering medical professionals who wish to volunteer as vaccinators. There are no delays in the COVID-19 vaccination programme caused by accrediting volunteers or returners.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[133884]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria his Department is using to allocate covid-19 vaccines to GP surgeries in (a) South Shields and (b) the rest of the country.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: General practices are delivering COVID-19 vaccinations at scale, coming together in Primary Care Network (PCN) groupings to deliver the vaccine as local vaccination services. Over 1,000 PCN-led local vaccination service sites are now offering the vaccine across England.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are aligning the supply of the vaccine with the number of people in the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation priority cohorts yet to receive their vaccination, to ensure an equitable distribution across England. This means the frequency and quantity of vaccine delivered may vary between local vaccination services in line with local need. Each week, all available vaccine is allocated, so local vaccination services are supplied with the vaccine as soon as it is available.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[134051]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of recruiting and training (a) trainee dental and veterinary students and (b) beauticians who perform botox/fillers to assist with the rollout of the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Those administering the vaccines are either existing healthcare staff or those recruited specifically for the programme— including those who signed up to the NHS Bring Back scheme. There are a number of roles within the vaccination programme and these will require different levels of qualifications and experience.

The Department recently changed legislation to allow a wider group of people to administer vaccines, including more health care professionals as well as others who have passed a programme of training developed by Public Health England and Health Education England. New vaccinators will be assessed in person and closely supervised to ensure their and patients' safety.

Mr Clive Betts:

[134337]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what priority will be given to workers in homeless hostels for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 13 January 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. For the first phase, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors.

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

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[134588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of prioritising staff of (a) homelessness, (b) domestic abuse and (c) social care for the severely disabled services for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

If staff working with the homeless or victims of domestic abuse are captured in phase one due to their age or clinical risk factors they will be prioritised. However the Government, as advised by the JCVI, are not considering vaccinating such workers as a phase one priority at this stage. Care workers providing care for those who are severely disabled and clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 will be prioritised in phase one.

Prioritisation decisions for next phase delivery are subject to surveillance and monitoring data and information from phase one, as well as further input from independent scientific experts such as the JCVI. Phase two may include further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[135851\]](#)

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

Olivia Blake:

[\[136098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the priority for children's and adults' social workers is for receipt of the covid-19 vaccine; whether those social workers will be deemed to be under the category of social care workers in respect of the priority accorded to them for that vaccine; and what the timetable is for the receipt of that

vaccine by (a) mental health professionals and (b) other such workers with higher-risks of covid-19 infection undertaking house calls to households with covid-19 positive cases.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

All frontline social care workers directly working with people clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 who need care and support irrespective of where they work will be a priority for phase one of the vaccine programme.

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

Dr Dan Poulter:

[140033]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to ensure that (a) rural parts of Suffolk and (b) all other parts of the UK receive adequate supplies of the covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The COVID-19 vaccine programme has expanded rapidly in the last month, with over 2,700 vaccination sites currently in operation via hospitals hubs, local vaccination services and vaccination centres.

The network of vaccination sites has been designed to fit the expected vaccine supply and ensure safe and easy access for the whole population. The Government closely monitors plans for the requirements across the supply chain. For the provision of vaccines and their onward deployment, there are clearly defined supply chain plans for manufacturing, transport, storage and distribution.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[140241]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 134547 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, whether the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has made an assessment concluding that the 89 per cent vaccine efficacy from the first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is maintained at that level for 12 weeks.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[140242]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 134547, what assessment his Department has made of the length of protection of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine when administered at (a) 3 weeks apart and (b) 12 weeks apart; and if he will publish that assessment.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[140243]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 134547 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, on what basis the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consider that protective immunity from the first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech covid-19 vaccine likely lasts for a duration of 12 weeks; what the maximum likely duration is that the JCVI considers that protective immunity is provided from the first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech covid-19 vaccine; what the basis is for that view; whether Pfizer/BioNTech has expressed a view on the JCVI's position on that matter; and whether the JCVI has considered the novel mRNA nature of the Pfizer/BioNTech covid-19 vaccine as part of its consideration on that matter.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has reviewed evidence on the efficacy of the first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines.

The estimated efficacy from the first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech is 89%, calculated 15 to 21 days after the first dose. There is no estimate for this beyond 21 days.

Noting the novel nature of the vaccines and considering evidence on the AstraZeneca vaccine and other non-COVID-19 vaccines used in the United Kingdom, the JCVI is of the view that protective immunity from the first dose is likely to last for a duration of 12 weeks.

The JCVI advises initially prioritising delivery of the first vaccine dose as this is highly likely to have a greater public health impact in the short term and reduce the number of preventable deaths from COVID-19. The UK Chief Medical Officers had previously released a letter to the medical profession regarding the UK COVID-19 vaccination programmes, stating that they support a 12-week dosing interval to achieve good longer-term protection. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-the-profession-from-the-uk-chief-medical-officers-on-the-uk-covid-19-vaccination-programmes/letter-to-the-profession-from-the-uk-chief-medical-officers-regarding-the-uk-covid-19-vaccination-programmes>

The JCVI's advice was published on 31 December 2020 and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prioritising-the-first-covid-19-vaccine-dose-jcvi-statement>

The JCVI has not received any comment from Pfizer on this issue.

Tulip Siddiq:

[140889]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of prioritising (a) workers in homeless services, (b) school and childcare staff and (c) frontline police officers for the covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

NHS England and NHS Improvement have published a Standard Operating Procedure on the vaccination of frontline health and social care workers.

This sets out the roles and services where individuals are providing frontline social care support may be considered eligible within this cohort. This could include services provided by organisations commissioned by local government and the National Health Service, such as homelessness services and support.

Prioritisation decisions for the next phase are subject to surveillance and monitoring data and information from phase one, as well as further input from independent scientific experts such as the JCVI. Phase two may include further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services.

Paula Barker:[\[140964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of prioritising for covid-19 vaccination NHS contractors providing critical equipment and medicine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that the first priorities for the current COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems. The JCVI recommend that within this group, priority should be given to frontline staff at high risk of acquiring infection, at high individual risk of developing serious disease and at risk of transmitting infection to multiple vulnerable persons or other staff in a healthcare setting.

The Public Health England Green Book provides supportive guidance on the roles that may be considered as 'frontline healthcare' staff to prioritise as being at a high risk of exposure to COVID-19, or at risk of transmitting infection to multiple vulnerable persons or other staff in a healthcare environment. The guidance provides advice on what roles may be considered which includes 'non-clinical staff in secondary or primary care/community healthcare settings', specifically non-clinical ancillary staff who may have social contact with patients but are not directly involved in patient care. Those staff will be prioritised if they are at a high risk of exposure to COVID-19 or at risk of transmitting infection to multiple vulnerable persons or other staff.

Tim Loughton:

[141384]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many yellow card notifications have been recorded by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Authority for each of the covid-19 vaccines currently in use by (a) type and (b) level of seriousness.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency will publish details of all suspected reactions reported in association with available COVID-19 vaccines shortly, including narrative assessment of the data and any issues identified on our website.

Damien Moore:

[143083]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of the effectiveness of (a) a single dose and (b) two doses of the covid-19 vaccine for people taking immunosuppressant medications.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: No data is available on the effectiveness of a single dose or two doses of the COVID-19 vaccines in people taking immunosuppressant medications, therefore no assessment has been made.

Liam Byrne:

[144940]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to use the 11,300 community pharmacies in England to administer the Oxford/AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccine at scale.

Nadhim Zahawi:

From 1 February 2021, 130 community pharmacies have started to offer the COVID-19 vaccination service, including the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, with more pharmacies joining the service over the coming weeks. Some pharmacists and members of their team have also been working with general practitioners to deliver the vaccine in many areas of the country.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with all the national pharmacy organisations on plans to ensure that community pharmacies are used to optimal effect in the COVID-19 vaccination programme, starting with the sites that can do this at scale.

Rachael Maskell:

[145068]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that all covid-19 vaccination centres are covid-secure.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: All vaccination sites, including vaccination centres have been designed to ensure safe and easy access for the whole population, so it is paramount they are COVID-19 secure. To enable this, guidance has been provided to ensure that the required non-pharmaceutical interventions are

in operation at all times. This includes, but not limited to regular cleaning, the wearing of facemasks at all times, maintaining the two-meter rule and hand sanitising stations being readily available. At the same time healthcare professionals will be supplied with the appropriate personal protective equipment and vaccinations should be deferred for those with confirmed COVID-19 infection.

Karl Turner:

[147830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including prison officers on the priority list for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that phase one of the vaccine programme will have the prevention of mortality at the forefront of its objectives, as well as to support the National Health Service and social care system. For the first phase, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors. Included in this are those with underlying health conditions, which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality.

Prison officers who are eligible for a vaccine, based on the JCVI's prioritisation, will be offered a vaccine in line with clinical advice. Phase two may include further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services.

Apsana Begum:

[148032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to encourage homeless people to register with a GP so that they may receive a covid-19 vaccine.

Apsana Begum:

[148034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase GP registration amongst undocumented migrants.

Jo Churchill:

National Health Service regional teams are working with appropriate local systems to reach out to unregistered people so as to ensure that all their health needs are met and that they are offered the COVID-19 vaccine in line with Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation priorities. NHS England and NHS Improvement recently launched a general practitioner (GP) registration campaign alongside the voluntary sector. To support this, NHS England and NHS Improvement are providing materials, such as training for practice staff and access cards which support the message that everyone is entitled to register with a GP and give the NHS England

and NHS Improvement Customer Contact Centre number for people to use if they have been refused registration.

■ **Coronavirus: Wansbeck**

Ian Lavery:

[133846]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many constituents have received the covid-19 vaccines in Wansbeck.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Since 24 December 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement have published weekly United Kingdom-wide vaccination data. In January 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement began to publish daily statistics by age and region, with a more detailed information provided weekly including the overall number of people who have been vaccinated by dose, those aged 80 years old and above and location.

Vaccination data is currently available at a national and regional level by sustainability and transformation partnership and integrated care system.

Further data is available at the following links:

www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/

coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/vaccinations

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-monitoring-reports

Ian Lavery:

[133847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many key workers have received the covid-19 vaccines in Wansbeck.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The information is not held in the format requested.

■ **Dental Services: Coronavirus**

Darren Henry:

[148941]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure there is an adequate number of NHS dentist appointments available throughout the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Dental practices closed in March 2020. Since June, a steady increase in dental activity has been made possible following updated Infection Prevention and Control guidance issued by Public Health England. Contractual arrangements for quarter four have been introduced by NHS England and NHS Improvement requiring dental practices to deliver 45% of contracted units of dental activity from 1 January to 31 March 2021 to be deemed to have delivered the full contractual volume. This is expected to increase available National Health Service dental care for patients.

The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Chief Dental Officer for England to increase levels of service, as fast as is safely possible. In circumstances where patients are unable to access an urgent dental appointment directly through an NHS dental practice, they should contact NHS 111 for assistance. Over 600 urgent dental care centres remain open to help patients access care.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Apprentices**

Kate Green: [\[146874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of the staff employed by his Department are apprentices.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: The Department has grown in size in the past year and now employs 2,284 civil servants, headcount. There are 58 members of staff currently undertaking an apprenticeship, which constitutes 2.5% of this workforce. There are a further 10 members of staff expected to begin an apprenticeship within the next month.

■ **Exercise Cygnus: Armed Forces**

Sir Mark Hendrick: [\[144611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what role the military played in Exercise Cygnus.

Jo Churchill:

The Ministry of Defence was involved in the exercise at both the national and local level. At the national level, the Ministry provided policy advice to the participating Minister from that Department and responded to requests for military assistance which formed part of the exercise scenario. Standing Joint Command (UK) participated at the local level, with Joint Regional Liaison Officers providing advice to local authorities participating in the exercise.

The Ministry of Defence was further involved along with other Government departments in supporting the exercise development.

■ **Gambling**

Ronnie Cowan: [\[147920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made a clinical assessment of the effect on rates of problem gambling of shirt-front gambling sponsorship in sport.

Jo Churchill:

On 8 December 2021, as part of the continued commitment to address gambling-related harms, the Government launched its Review of the Gambling Act 2005, with publication of a Call for Evidence. This includes a call for evidence on the benefits or

harms of allowing operators to advertise and engage in sponsorship arrangements in sport. The initial Call for Evidence will close on 31 March 2021.

The Department continues to work collaboratively with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, supporting the comprehensive review of the Gambling Act 2005, ensuring the regulatory framework is fit for purpose and protecting children and vulnerable people from gambling-related harms.

■ **Gambling: Females**

Margaret Ferrier: [\[147870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to increase the number of specialist treatment services for women with gambling disorders.

Margaret Ferrier: [\[147871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the correlation between trauma and levels of problem gambling among women.

Margaret Ferrier: [\[147872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the barriers to treatment for women suffering from gambling disorder.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to tackling gambling-related harm.

The NHS Long Term Plan announced the creation of up to 15 specialist gambling clinics by 2023/24. Work continues on phased expansion of these services, enabling the National Health Service to explore how best to use existing treatment models to reach those most in need of support.

The Department commissioned Public Health England to undertake the first ever comprehensive evidence review focussed on gambling-related harm. The review will look at prevalence, determinants and harms associated with gambling, alongside the social and economic burden of gambling-related harms. This includes reviewing the evidence on young people, men and women. The review will be published later this year.

■ **Gender Recognition: Young People**

Fleur Anderson: [\[142065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve waiting times for trans young people to access safe and supportive medical care.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 27 January 2021]: The Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) is currently undergoing a review led by Dr Hilary Cass. This review will make recommendations regarding how the service is planned and delivered including

matters that may impact on clinical capacity, workforce recommendations and the relationship with other NHS services.

In addition, following the publication of a Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection which rated the service as inadequate and identified long waiting times as an area of concern, the board of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust has submitted a plan to the CQC that includes actions to improve management of the waiting list.

■ Government Departments: Procurement

Rachel Reeves: [\[145780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many contracts have been awarded via the high priority lane for procurement since 1 March 2020.

Rachel Reeves: [\[145781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria have been applied in the awarding of contracts via the high priority lane for procurement since 1 March 2020.

Rachel Reeves: [\[145782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much money has been spent on contracts awarded via the high priority lane for procurement since 1 March 2020.

Rachel Reeves: [\[145783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a list of the companies awarded contracts via the high priority lane for procurement since 1 March 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 February 2021]: In March 2020 the Government issued a public call to action to support the increased requirements of personal protective equipment (PPE). This resulted in over 15,000 suppliers offering their help and support. The cross-government PPE team considered that leads referred by Government officials, Ministers' offices, Parliamentarians, senior National Health Service staff and other health professionals were likely to be the more credible and needed to be initially reviewed with more urgency. This was commonly referred to as a 'high priority' or 'VIP' channel.

At the point of being prioritised these offers went into exactly the same due diligence, technical assurance, closing or contract negotiation and contract award process as all the other offers. About one in ten suppliers processed through this channel - 47 out of 493 - obtained contracts.

We do not intend to publish the list of these suppliers as there may be associated commercial implications. The Department has to consider the position of suppliers in terms of the recognition that disclosure of their names may damage the supplier's

reputation, affecting their competitive position and could have a potentially detrimental impact on their revenue and/or their ability to obtain future contracts. Contract Award Notices and the contracts themselves have now been published for all the PPE contracts awarded by the Department which contain the details of the supplier, the value of the contract and the items ordered under the contract.

Fleur Anderson:

[145886]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what conflict of interest criteria have been applied to the awarding of contracts via the high priority lane for procurement since 1 March 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 February 2021]: Regulation 24 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 requires contracting authorities to take appropriate measures to effectively prevent, identify and remedy conflicts of interest arising in the conduct of procurement procedures. The Department has robust rules and processes in place to ensure that conflicts of interest do not occur, including declaration from suppliers, publication of ministerial interests and robust departmental guidance.

These all applied to the procurement of personal protective equipment last year by the Department, including the use of a high priority lane to consider the most credible offers from suppliers which needed to be reviewed with more urgency.

■ Healthy Start Scheme

Munira Wilson:

[147076]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the promotion to parents of Healthy Start scheme vouchers.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: All eligible beneficiaries receive a letter inviting them to apply for Healthy Start, together with a pre-populated application form. The scheme is also promoted through the Healthy Start and Start4Life websites.

The Department is currently developing a digital approach to Healthy Start, to make it easier for families to apply for and use the scheme. We are developing and testing an online application form for Healthy Start to replace the current paper form and a payment card to replace paper vouchers.

Munira Wilson:

[147077]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether uptake targets for Healthy Start scheme vouchers have been met over the last 12 months.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: Healthy Start is a statutory demand-led scheme and is not target driven. Over the last 12 months the number of beneficiaries receiving Healthy Start vouchers has remained stable at around 300,000.

■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Diagnosis**Bob Blackman:**[\[141964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information (a) NHS England and (b) his Department holds on the cost to the NHS for late diagnosis of Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis due to covid-19 related delays over the last 12 months.

Edward Argar:

This information is not held centrally.

■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Health Services**Bob Blackman:**[\[141965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data (a) NHS England and (b) his Department holds on how many delays or cancellations of procedures and investigations there has been over the last 12 months for patients with (i) Crohn's disease and (ii) ulcerative colitis.

Edward Argar:

This data is not held centrally.

■ Influenza**Sir David Amess:**[\[146737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many weekly confirmed hospital admissions to hospital for influenza were recorded through the UK Severe Influenza Surveillance Systems sentinel scheme since January 2019.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: Public Health England records cases of severe influenza with data from a sentinel network of National Health Service trusts.

The attached table shows the weekly number of hospital admissions including admission to Intensive Care Unit/High Dependency Unit for laboratory confirmed influenza cases reported through the sentinel surveillance network, in England by week between January 2019 to January 2021 (ending 24 January 2021) based on International Standardisation Organisation week number system.

Attachments:

1. Weekly Hospital Admissions [PQ146737 FORMATTED TABLE FOR MINISTERIAL CLEARANCE table 1 FINAL.docx]

■ Loneliness: Health

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[144608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect on health and wellbeing of long-term isolation.

Jo Churchill:

PHE has made no recent assessment of the effect on health and wellbeing of long-term isolation.

■ Members: Correspondence

Mr John Baron:

[\[148720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 27th October 2020 and subsequent chase ups of 2 December 2020 and 7 January 2021 on a constituent with case reference JB29598.

Edward Argar:

We are working to provide all Members and external correspondents with accurate answers to their correspondence, as well as supporting the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hon. Member's letter will be answered as soon as possible.

■ NHS: Protective Clothing

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[148855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many FFP3 masks are available to the NHS as at 3 February 2021.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not yet available in the format requested. The operational process to build stockpiles is supported by a range of detailed operational and management information. We currently are working to fully validate this data.

In December 2020, we established a four-month stockpile of COVID-19 critical personal protective equipment (PPE), including FFP3 masks. We are confident we can meet the demand from the National Health Service for FFP3s and other PPE throughout the winter period.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[148856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what scientific evidence was used to determine which NHS workers should be provided with FFP3 masks.

Jo Churchill:

The recommendations on what personal protective equipment (PPE) is required in which settings, including the use of FFP3 masks, is set out in the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidance, which was last updated on 21 January 2021. These recommendations are agreed by an expert group of clinicians and scientists from

across all four nations of the United Kingdom. They are based on the latest clinical evidence and are kept under constant review.

The IPC recommendations are underpinned by the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual practice guide and associated literature reviews and are consistent with World Health Organization guidance for protecting health and social care workers from COVID-19.

■ Obesity: Health Services

Stuart Anderson: [\[143110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what effect the proposed transition to Integrated Care Systems in England will have on the national provision of weight management services.

Jo Churchill:

Local authorities and clinical commissioning groups are responsible for commissioning weight management services. Integrated Care Systems (ICS) are an opportunity for collaborative working between National Health Service organisations, local authorities and other system partners. ICS guidance set out that NHS organisations, in partnership with local councils and others, should take collective responsibility for managing resources, delivering NHS care, and improving the health of the population they serve. NHS England is working closely with ICS to support their ambitions around obesity.

Alex Norris: [\[148890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 130818 on Obesity: Health Services, whether future expansions to weight management services will include expansions to (a) tier 3 and (b) tier 4 weight management services; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Norris: [\[148891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 131418 on Obesity: Health Services, what discussions his Department has had on timelines for the announcement and implementation of further measures to expand weight management services as part of the Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives strategy, and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Further details about the expansion of weight management services announced as part of 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives' will be available shortly.

■ Older People

Barry Gardiner:

[\[138845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people aged 80 years and over did the NHS have recorded as living in each NHS region in England as of 1 January 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The following table shows the number of patients registered at a general practice who were aged 80 years old or over as of 1 January 2021, by region.

REGION	NUMBER OF PATIENTS
London	301,046
South West	355,808
South East	505,103
Midlands	552,288
East of England	360,621
North West	348,910
North East and Yorkshire	446,897
Total	2,870,673

■ Ophthalmic Services: Medical Records

Rosie Cooper:

[\[141943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made in ophthalmology services on the NHSX commitment to ensure that shared care records will be fully rolled out across the NHS in 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Work continues to meet the commitment for national coverage of basic shared records by September 2021. Over half of National Health Service trusts and general practices in the country are already connected to some form of shared care record with plans for the remainder to be connected by September 2021 with funding and other support from NHSX. The timing of support for ophthalmology services will vary according to local clinical priorities and existing systems.

■ Social Services: Protective Clothing

Helen Hayes:

[\[146964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 106435 on Social Services: Protective Clothing, what plans his

Department has to review the order limits on the Personal Protective Equipment portal; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the order limit on social care providers' ability to meet their PPE needs.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: To ensure accessible, resilient and secure distribution routes for personal protective equipment (PPE), the order limit on items available via the PPE portal was updated and increased from mid-September. This ensured that social care providers in England will be able to meet the increased need for PPE which has arisen from the COVID-19 pandemic. We will provide free PPE for COVID-19 requirements to Care Quality Commission-registered care homes and domiciliary care providers via the PPE portal until the end of June 2021.

We keep order limits under review to ensure these reflect the latest available public health guidance, COVID-19 trends, PPE requirements modelling, analysis and provider feedback.

■ **Spectacles: VAT**

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[145827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of (a) removing or (b) reducing VAT on prescription lenses.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 February 2021]: No specific discussions have taken place.

VAT relief is already provided on the dispensing, measuring and fitting of prescription glasses and on fees in relation to the fitting of safety spectacles. In addition, medical tests including sight tests are exempt from VAT.

■ **Tobacco: Regulation**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[148066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Public Health England's investigation into potential breaches of the prohibition of characterising flavours in the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016, when Public Health England plan for (a) testing to begin on products of interest and (b) that investigation to conclude.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has asked Public Health England to conduct testing analysis of cigarettes as part of its investigation into possible breaches of the prohibition of characterising flavours in tobacco products. This work should conclude in the summer. There are currently no plans to publish the results of the investigation. We understand that industry is complying with the investigation.

Alex Norris:

[\[148892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the tobacco products that are under investigation for possibly breaching the prohibition on characterising menthol flavours will be taken off the market until that investigation has concluded.

Alex Norris:

[\[148893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of industry compliance with the Public Health England investigation into the sale of potentially illegal menthol cigarettes; and when he plans to publish the results of that investigation.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has asked Public Health England to conduct testing analysis of cigarettes as part of its investigation into possible breaches of the prohibition of characterising flavours in tobacco products. This work should conclude in the summer. There are currently no plans to publish the results of the investigation. We understand that industry is complying with the investigation.

HOME OFFICE

■ Airguns

Karin Smyth:

[\[147915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 1 February 2021 to Questions 143826 on Airguns: Scotland and 143828 on Airguns, whether the arrangements considered by her Department that apply to the controls on air weapons in Scotland and Northern Ireland included a review of the data on the number of air weapons incidents there between 2015-16 and 2017-19.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government looked at the controls on air weapons in Scotland and Northern Ireland when considering the review of air weapons regulation in England and Wales. Responsibility for air weapons regulation and publication of data related to this is devolved in Scotland, and Northern Ireland has separate firearms controls, which can make it difficult to draw firm conclusions to inform the case for potential changes in England and Wales.

We published the outcome of the review, and proposals for new controls, in the firearms safety consultation on 24 November 2020. The consultation will close on 16 February, after which the Government will publish its response, including in relation to air weapons controls. It is of course open to those responding to the consultation to set out their views on the case for, or against, the introduction of licensing arrangements for air weapons.

■ Animal Experiments: Coronavirus

Sir David Amess:

[\[146735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of animals that will be used in experiments relating to the covid-19 outbreak based on the details provided in the project licences that have so far been granted or amended for that purpose.

Victoria Atkins:

The number of animals used in experiments relating to the Covid-19 outbreak will be incorporated in the annual statistics of scientific procedures on living animals in Great Britain for 2020. However, data will not be collected that identifies the number of animals used in experiments specifically related to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Home Office project licences last for 5 years and set the maximum number of animals that are authorised for use during that licence period, making estimates very difficult to calculate accurately.

Sir David Amess:

[\[146736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the number of animals used in experiments relating to the covid-19 outbreak will be included in the statistics of scientific procedures on living animals in Great Britain for 2020.

Victoria Atkins:

The number of animals used in experiments relating to the Covid-19 outbreak will be reported in the annual statistics of scientific procedures on living animals in Great Britain for 2020.

However, data will not be collected that identifies the number of animals used in experiments specifically related to the Covid-19 outbreak. The use of animals for Covid-19 research falls within a range of purposes in the published data and may be recorded under the categories of basic research, translational research or regulatory research.

■ Asylum: EU Countries

Fleur Anderson:

[\[148934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps have been taken to ensure the smooth transfer of accepted Dublin III family reunion cases to the UK in addition to the guidance issued now that the Dublin Regulation will no longer govern the way in which transfers happen between sending states and the UK.

Chris Philp:

The 'savings' provisions, as set out in Schedule 2, Part 3 of the Immigration, Nationality and Asylum (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, allow a Dublin Regulation family reunion request made before the end of the Transition Period at 11pm 31 December 2020 to continue to be processed after that time.

We continue to cooperate collaboratively with sending States for the transfer of individuals under the Dublin Regulation we accepted under these provisions.

■ **Asylum: Napier Barracks**

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[147875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers who have claimed to be under 18 have been accommodated at Napier Barracks; and how long were they accommodated at that location.

Chris Philp:

None

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[147956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for its policies of the arrest of members of the press covering the recent Napier Barracks protest.

Chris Philp:

Decisions on arrests are an operational matter for the police. They do so in line with their duties to keep the peace, to protect communities, and to prevent the commission of offences, working within the provisions of the legal framework set by Parliament.

The Government is clear that freedom of the press is an absolute priority. That is why the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport set up the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists last year which brings together representatives from government, journalism, policing, prosecution services and civil society. The Committee will publish its National Action Plan shortly.

Holly Lynch:

[\[148842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been moved out of Napier Barracks after testing negative for covid-19.

Holly Lynch:

[\[148843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the outcome was of Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group's recent infection control assessment of Napier Barracks.

Chris Philp:

We take the wellbeing of asylum seekers extremely seriously. We provide them with safe, suitable, Covid-secure accommodation where they receive three meals a day, all paid for by the taxpayer.

We have been following public health advice at all times and the accommodation at Napier remains safe, suitable and Covid-secure. This has included putting in place a range of infection control measures and configuring the site so that social distancing can be maintained.

Despite our best efforts and the robust measures in place at our sites, a number of asylum seekers accommodated at Napier recently tested positive for coronavirus.

It was also incredibly disappointing that a number of individuals refused coronavirus tests and had refused to self-isolate or follow social distancing rules, despite repeated requests to do so.

In line with advice from Public Health England and as part of our outbreak management plan, the Home Office moved a number of asylum seekers out of the site who had not tested positive for coronavirus. The purpose of this move was to allow others at Napier to self-isolate more easily and facilitate a deep clean of the site.

An independent rapid review was also recently conducted to assure ourselves of the extensive COVID-19 protocols in place to safeguard the health and safety of asylum seekers during the pandemic. The Home Office is currently reviewing and acting upon the recommendations of the review and, as previously stated, will seek to publish a summary of the recommendations in due course. We will also hold round tables with stakeholders to discuss the recommendations, actions taken and proposed next steps.

We continue to work closely with our provider and partners to identify opportunities for enhancement, as we do across our entire accommodation estate.

Zarah Sultana: [\[148929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what reports the Government has commissioned to assess the suitability of Napier Barracks as a centre for asylum seeker accommodation.

Zarah Sultana: [\[148930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish any reports commissioned to determine the suitability of Napier Barracks as a centre for asylum seeker accommodation.

Zarah Sultana: [\[148932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what complaints her Department has received on the conditions of asylum seekers in Napier Barracks made by current or former residents at those barracks.

Zarah Sultana: [\[148933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how complaints on the conditions of asylum seekers in Napier Barracks are (a) investigated and (b) responded to.

Chris Philp:

As required by law, we provide asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute with accommodation which is safe, secure and fit-for-purpose, paid for by the taxpayer.

We welcome independent scrutiny of our sites, processes and procedures; and routinely facilitate inspections from relevant bodies to assure ourselves of the ongoing safety and suitability of the accommodation and services we provide.

The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) recently launched a call for evidence on the use of hotels and military barracks as contingency asylum accommodation. The Home Office have received a formal notice of inspection from the ICIBI. The Home Office will work with the ICIBI and his inspection team to facilitate full access to our asylum accommodation estate.

An independent rapid review was also recently conducted to assure ourselves of the extensive COVID-19 protocols in place to safeguard the health and safety of asylum seekers during the pandemic.

The Home Office is currently reviewing and acting upon the recommendations of the review and, as previously stated, will seek to publish a summary of the recommendations in due course. We will also hold round tables with stakeholders to discuss the recommendations, actions taken and proposed next steps.

The Home Office will continue to carefully review the operation of the site and will make any improvements necessary. We continue to work closely with our provider and partners to identify opportunities for improvement, as we do across our entire accommodation estate.

Asylum seekers who are accommodated at Napier receive an induction which outlines the process for raising complaints. A booklet available in ten languages detailing the process is also issued to new arrivals.

All asylum seekers have access to a 24/7 AIRE (Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility) service provided for the Home Office by Migrant Help, where complaints or concerns can be raised, including reporting issues with their accommodation. Migrant Help will then refer the report to the relevant accommodation provider through a designated point of contact.

Community support workers at the site can also support asylum seekers in accessing the AIRE service to raise a complaint. Providers' staff will make clear to asylum seekers that registering a complaint will not affect their asylum claim.

The provider will then seek to resolve any complaint, within five working days of receipt, and will inform the service user and Migrant Help of the action taken and any subsequent action necessary.

As part of our robust contract compliance measures, providers are required to regularly report to us on complaints handling and support any audits or quality reviews that we may undertake.

The Home Office does not publish statistics relating to complaints raised by those accommodated at Napier Barracks.

Rosie Duffield:

[\[911953\]](#)

What steps the Government is taking to protect asylum seekers housed at Napier Barracks, Folkestone, from covid-19 infection.

Chris Philp:

We take the welfare of asylum seekers extremely seriously and accommodation at Napier Barracks was configured in accordance with public health advice with a range of infection control measures in place. Despite our best efforts a number of those accommodated at the site have tested positive for coronavirus and an outbreak management plan was put in place.

Following the serious disturbance caused by some asylum seekers on site recently, immediate steps were taken to reconfigure accommodation to maintain outbreak management and allow for self-isolation of all those remaining on site.

■ Asylum: Penally Camp

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[148013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 1 February 2021 to Question 143914 on Asylum: Penally, what steps she is taking to ensure that the facilities at Penally Camp are (a) adequately heated, (b) hygienic and (c) covid-19 compliant.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[148014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 1 February 2021 to Question 143913 on Asylum: Temporary Accommodation, what steps she has taken to ensure that the suitable dispersed accommodation is (a) adequately heated, (b) hygienic and (c) covid-19 compliant.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[148015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 1 February 2021 to Question 143912 on Asylum: Penally, what her planned date is for discontinuing the use of Penally Training Camp.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office and Clearsprings Ready Homes have worked intensively with the Welsh Government, Public Health Wales, Hywel Dda University Health Board, Dyfed-Powys Police and other partners as we have stood up and are now operating on the site.

The site at Penally was immediately available to be used to house asylum seekers and is safe, warm, secure, habitable, fit for purpose and correctly equipped in line with existing contractual requirements for asylum accommodation.

Clearsprings Ready Homes is also taking action where appropriate to augment what is in place, taking account of feedback from service users and others, for example by providing additional heating and entertainment. Work with local faith leaders to provide further support and provision to meet religious needs is also underway.

An independent rapid review was also recently conducted to assure ourselves of the extensive COVID-19 protocols in place to safeguard the health and safety of asylum seekers during the pandemic. The Home Office is currently reviewing and acting upon the recommendations of the review and, as previously stated, will seek to publish a summary of the recommendations in due course.

The Penally training camp is temporary, contingency accommodation whilst we continue to address the issues putting pressure on our asylum system.

At present, the Home Office will continue to regularly move small numbers of people out of Penally into suitable dispersal accommodation in line with business as usual processes and will continue to route new people into Penally in line with public health guidance.

It remains our intention to move all individuals in contingency accommodation into suitable dispersed accommodation as soon as practicable.

In order to reduce the use of such contingency accommodation, we have been working closely with local authorities and devolved administrations to identify opportunities to increase the amount of dispersal accommodation available and to support those that are no longer eligible for asylum support to 'Move-on' from asylum accommodation.

We expect the highest standards from our providers and dispersed accommodation provided must be fit for purpose and compliant with the Decent Homes Standard, in addition to standards outlined in relevant national or local housing legislation.

All Asylum seekers in dispersal accommodation have their essential needs and costs met by the Home Office and the contracted providers— such as heating, electric and water and a weekly cash allowance.

Our providers are contracted to respond to and rectify maintenance issues between 4 hours and a 21-day period depending on the category of the issue. Further information can be found here in the statement of requirements:

<http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-1112/AASC - Schedule 2 - Statement of Requirements.pdf>

All asylum seekers have access to a 24/7 AIRE (Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility) service provided for the Home Office by Migrant Help where they can raise any concerns or maintenance issues with their dispersal accommodation. The AIRE provider is then responsible for referring the report of the maintenance issue to the Provider, through a designated point of contact.

Our providers have put in place a range of measures and additional support to enable households to comply with public measures on social distancing and self-isolation. This has included food parcels and other items for people who are unable to leave the house, provision of telephony for those who are isolating and do not have a telephone, as well as increased welfare contact for those who are isolating.

For those in dispersal accommodation, service user essential living needs - including for cleaning and sanitary items - are met through a weekly cash allowance which has been increased during the pandemic.

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[148923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer on 18 January 2021 to Question 136619, what criteria is being used to determine how asylum seekers are being selected to leave Penally Camp; and how many people will be leaving each week.

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[148924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2021 to Question 138518 on Asylum: Military Bases, what work her Department has carried out with the Local Health Board in Pembrokeshire to ensure that every asylum seeker has access to health care as required; and whether the management at that site have introduced any restrictions to that access.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office will continue to regularly move small numbers of people out of Penally into suitable dispersal accommodation in line with business as usual processes and will continue to route new people into Penally in line with public health guidance.

■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation

David Linden: [\[911945\]](#)

What assessment she has made of the adequacy of the temporary accommodation provided by her Department for asylum seekers.

Chris Philp:

Asylum seekers are provided with safe, warm, suitable accommodation that is fit for purpose and correctly equipped in line with existing asylum accommodation standards and contractual requirements. This includes accommodation recently used by our Armed Forces.

The Home Office expects the highest standards from its accommodation providers and works closely with partner organisations, including health and public health bodies, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of supported asylum seekers in all our accommodation.

■ Au Pairs: Visas

Sir Charles Walker: [\[148738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of temporarily extending the Tier 5 visa two year limit for au pairs currently in the UK who have had their work and travel opportunities curtailed by the response to the covid-19 restrictions; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has put in place temporary arrangements to ensure visas due to expire are extended to enable people to remain legally in the UK until the point when restrictions are eased and a return to their home countries is possible. These safeguards ensure no person will lose their legal status in the UK and it is therefore not necessary to extend the two-year limit on any of the T5 routes.

As has been the case since 2008, the UK's points-based immigration system does not include a dedicated visa route for au pairs, so there is no set time limit for one. The visa being referred to by the Hon Member may be the Youth Mobility Scheme which grants those aged 18-30 from participating countries up to 2 years in the UK during which they can study or work, with their employment not restricted to being an Au Pair or any other role.

■ British Nationality: Assessments**Holly Lynch:**[\[144733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the most number of times is that someone has taken the Life in the UK citizenship test before passing from the most recent data available.

Kevin Foster:

The highest number of times an individual has taken the Life in the UK test is 118 times in 2015 and 2016. This is a unique case and the vast majority of customers pass by their 3rd attempt.

Whilst the test provider does not disclose which answers they got wrong if they fail they are advised which parts of the handbook they need to study in more depth to help them pass future tests.

■ Catalytic Converters: Theft**Nickie Aiken:**[\[148914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to set up a serial number registration scheme to tackle the theft of catalytic converters from cars.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government recognises the negative impact this crime has on industry and the public, causing distress and disruption to victims. We continue to work closely with police and motor manufacturers through the National Vehicle Crime Working Group, established by the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for vehicle crime and overseen by the Government's Crime and Justice Taskforce, to understand what more can be done to tackle the theft of catalytic converters.

The Government is committed to reducing both the opportunity for these crimes to occur and the ability to profit from acquisitive crime. We are working with the police to identify where and how stolen goods are sold and are examining ways to ensure property is identifiable and traceable.

We are committed to providing funding to set up the National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership, ensuring national co-ordination of policing and law enforcement partners to tackle metal theft. Through this, the partnership has already started sharing intelligence and providing training to police forces, and the partnership will also enable intelligence sharing between police and industry partners such as transport, power, and telecommunications, to target offenders and implement crime prevention measures.

■ Children in Care: EU Nationals

Catherine West:

[145828]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that local authorities are supporting eligible children in their care to apply to the EU Settlement scheme.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has put in place a support model to ensure the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) is accessible for all, including looked after children. The Home Office has engaged extensively with relevant stakeholders such as the Department for Education, Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Children's Services to assess the needs of this group and ensure they are supported. This engagement continues and all parties are committed to ensuring local authorities are supported throughout the process.

To help local authorities prepare for the launch of the EU Settlement Scheme, the Home Office made several recommendations. Identifying the eligible cohort of children and care leavers was one of the recommendations, along with identifying resource to manage this work stream. The Home Office has also produced an information pack to assist local authorities with responsibilities for looked after children.

The Home Office is committed to continue engaging with local authorities as they undertake their responsibilities to ensure all eligible looked after children and care leavers are supported to make an application to the EUSS. The Home Office will ensure caseworkers liaise with and support applicants to get the status they require.

The Home Office is directly engaging with local authorities, social workers, and those making applications on behalf of looked after children, children in care and care leavers to provide support and information. We will work with supporting organisations to assist with the evidence which could be provided and apply evidential flexibility where possible.

Additionally, the Home Office has been holding monthly teleconferences for local authority staff who are undertaking this work. The teleconferences provide a forum to obtain information, ask questions and raise issues. A designated help line number has also been made available for local authority staff to contact trained caseworkers in the Home Office should they need to discuss any aspect of the EU Settlement Scheme, be it a specific case issue, or a matter of general information.

■ Crime Prevention

Simon Fell:

[\[911937\]](#)

What steps her Department is taking to prevent acquisitive crimes.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government recognises the devastating impact acquisitive crime can have on individuals, businesses and the wider community.

This Government is committed to tackling these crimes and preventing them from being committed in the first place and we are working closely with police, industry and other Government Departments to understand what more we can do.

■ Crime: Victim Support Schemes

Graham Stringer:

[\[911943\]](#)

How many meetings she has had with the Mayor of Greater Manchester since the recent publication of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services' report, An inspection of the service provided to victims of crime by Greater Manchester Police.

Priti Patel:

It is the Mayor's responsibility to ensure Greater Manchester Police act immediately and effectively to provide victims of crime, especially the vulnerable, with the high-quality service they deserve.

The Policing Minister met the Deputy Mayor and acting Chief Constable on 15 December to discuss the appalling findings and the force's improvement plan. We are closely monitoring progress ahead of the Inspectorate's reinspection.

■ Crimes of Violence

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[911949\]](#)

What resources she is making available to police forces nationally to help tackle violent crime.

Priti Patel:

The Government is proposing a total police funding settlement of up to £15.8 billion in 2021/22, which is an increase of up to £636 million compared to 2020/21.

Additionally, over two years, in the 18 areas worst affected by serious violence, we have invested over £100m to surge police capacity and £70m into multi-agency Violence Reduction Units.

■ Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[911946\]](#)

What steps she is taking to ensure that domestic abuse services receive adequate support to meet increased demand as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Atkins:

Mr Speaker, with your permission, I would like to group this question with question 31.

Throughout this pandemic, we have worked with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and charities to protect those for who home is not a safe space. We have paid £25.76 million to domestic abuse organisations from the funds allocated in the first wave of the pandemic, in order to support their helplines and other services. That includes £20,512 for Your Housing Group, based in the honourable lady's constituency, to provide additional bedspaces.

We have also allocated an additional £11 million to domestic abuse and sexual violence services to help them to deal with increased pressures as a result of the pandemic.

Karin Smyth:[\[911952\]](#)

What additional funding she plans to allocate to domestic abuse helplines to help meet demand during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Victoria Atkins:

Throughout this pandemic, we have worked with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and charities to protect those for who home is not a safe space. We have paid £25.76 million to domestic abuse organisations from the funds allocated in the first wave of the pandemic, in order to support their helplines and other services. That includes £20,512 for Your Housing Group, based in the honourable lady's constituency, to provide additional bedspaces.

We have also allocated an additional £11 million to domestic abuse and sexual violence services to help them to deal with increased pressures as a result of the pandemic.

■ Extradition: EU Countries**Damian Collins:**[\[148760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what grounds EU member states are able to refuse an extradition request from the UK; and what provisions are in place to prevent people with UK convictions who have fled the UK to the EU escaping justice.

Kit Malthouse:

Under the UK-EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement a requested person cannot be surrendered if their fundamental rights are at risk, if extradition would be disproportionate or if they are likely to face long periods of pre-trial detention. Some EU Member States operate on the fundamental principle that they cannot extradite their citizens outside of the EU. In this context the provisions of the agreement provide for a path to justice in each case. For example, where someone has been convicted in the UK, if they are arrested in their state of nationality, the authorities there can decide to enforce the sentence at home.

■ Immigrants: Employment

Martyn Day:

[\[146945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what representations her Department has received on the use of specialist digital technology to facilitate safe and secure online right to work checks; and whether her Department plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing that technology.

Martyn Day:

[\[146946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of (a) the potential benefits of the temporary removal of physical right to work checks for (i) employers and (ii) employees and (b) whether a permanent transition to an online system could (i) support post covid-19 economic recovery and (ii) encourage participation in the labour market.

Martyn Day:

[\[146947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's decision to move to a system of online right to work checks during the covid-19 outbreak, what plans her Department has to make an assessment of the potential effect of that move on (a) employers and (b) people seeking work.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office's online right to work checking service has been in operation for over two years. It enables employers to undertake free digital checks on prospective employees with a biometric residence card, status under the EU Settlement Scheme or the new Points-Based System. The online service is more secure than physical document checks and relies on real-time information from the Home Office about an individual's status.

Since its inception, the service has been used by employers over 150,000 times and feedback from employers and user groups has been positive.

The online right to work checking service is part of our wider ambition to develop a border and immigration system which is "digital by default" for all migrants, including evidence of immigration status. Over time this means we will increasingly replace physical and paper-based products and services with accessible, easy to use online and digital services. As part of this, we continue to work closely with employers and employers' groups, including on the merits of specialist technology, such as Identity Document Validation Technology, in conducting checks.

In March 2020, we introduced an adjusted right to work checking process to support businesses through the pandemic. We are currently conducting a review of the process to ensure the current and future checking regimes meet the requirements of employers through the unique circumstances presented by the pandemic, whilst maintaining the security and integrity of our system in the long-term.

■ Immigrants: Health Services

Jim Shannon:

[\[911947\]](#)

If she will waive or reduce the cost of the Immigration Health Surcharge for people and families on low incomes coming to the UK under the British National (Overseas) visa scheme.

Kevin Foster:

BN(O) status holders and their dependants must pay the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS). Applicants pay the appropriate amount of IHS depending upon the length of leave they apply for (either 30 months or 5 years). Like other nationals coming to the UK, it is only right they contribute to our healthcare system. IHS Income goes directly into our brilliant NHS.

■ Immigration: Afghanistan

Jessica Morden:

[\[147783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what step she is taking to expedite existing applications for the ex-gratia scheme for Afghan interpreters who served alongside the armed forces.

Kevin Foster:

Those who apply for and are approved for relocation under the ex gratia scheme for Afghan locally engaged staff are brought to the UK as soon as suitable accommodation has been sourced and support arrangements are in place.

The application and relocation process for those being considered under the ex gratia scheme has inevitably been impacted by COVID-19, but the Home Office is working closely with all parties to ensure, wherever possible, applications are processed in a timely manner.

■ Immigration: Brexit

Angela Crawley:

[\[911941\]](#)

What assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the immigration system since the end of the transition period.

Kevin Foster:

The Government has successfully delivered one of the key promises made to the British people at the last election.

Freedom of movement has ended and a new points-based system is in place. This means we can attract those people with the skills this country needs to support our economic recovery and build back better.

■ Immigration: Married People

Stephen Farry:

[147091]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the 2019-20 financial year can be used instead of the 2020-21 financial year to assess the £18,600 income threshold with regard to self-employed British citizens applying for a spouse visa who have experienced financial disruption due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

We have made several relevant adjustments to the Minimum Income Requirement to support those affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, including self-employed British citizens who are sponsoring their spouse or partner under the family Immigration Rules.

A temporary loss of annual income due to COVID-19 between 1 March 2020 and 31 May 2021 will generally be disregarded when assessing self-employment income, along with the impact on income from the same period for any future applications. Income received via the Coronavirus Self-Employment Income Support Scheme will also be taken into account.

These adjustments are among a range of measures put in place by the Home Office to support those affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. These are set out for customers on GOV.UK and are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents>.

■ Immigration: Veterans

Dan Jarvis:

[147852]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to record the (a) number and (b) success rate of visa applications from non-UK born veterans following their discharge from the armed forces.

Kevin Foster:

Non-UK born veterans, following their discharge from the armed forces, can apply for immigration status on a variety of routes. To capture numbers would require a manual trawl of data and to do so would incur disproportionate cost. There are therefore no plans to identify these individuals separately within our published statistics.

The number and success rate of visa applications from Non-UK born veterans following their discharge from the armed forces are grouped together with other categories 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>

■ Journalism: Arrests

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[147957]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effect on freedom of the press of arrests of journalists in Kent and Northern Ireland covering protests.

Kit Malthouse:

Decisions on arrests are an operational matter for the police. They do so in line with their duties to keep the peace, to protect communities, and to prevent the commission of offences, working within the provisions of the legal framework set by Parliament.

The Government is clear that freedom of the press is an absolute priority. That is why the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport set up the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists last year which brings together representatives from government, journalism, policing, prosecution services and civil society. The Committee will publish its National Action Plan shortly.

■ Marriage of Convenience

Jessica Morden:

[147781]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2021 to Question 142848, whether her Department holds data on the number of cases of marriage by deception as opposed to sham marriages that were reported in the UK in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020; what the average time taken was for her Department to respond to those reports in each of those years; and in how many of those cases the perpetrator of marriage by deception was removed from the UK in each of those years.

Kevin Foster:

Whilst Home Office Immigration Enforcement publishes information relating to the number of allegations it receives each quarter, allegations relating specifically to marriage fraud are not reported upon separately and it is not possible to provide information relating to the number of these allegations received in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Where a relationship has broken down and the UK sponsor of the relationship has reported this to the Home Office, action may be taken to cancel the former partner's leave to remain.

In some of the cases where relationship breakdown is reported, an allegation may also be raised indicating the reason for the breakdown is because the UK sponsor became aware it was deceptive at the outset. Whilst figures are collated for the number of cases in which leave is cancelled on account of the breakdown of a relationship, the Home Office does not differentiate between the causes of the breakdown and, as such, there is no reporting which captures allegations of

deception separately from the overall number of relationship breakdowns declared to the Home Office.

Any British citizen who believes they are a victim of immigration marriage fraud, and believes they were deceived into marriage in order for their partner to obtain some form of leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom, can make a request for this to be investigated and action taken where appropriate.

In some cases it can be difficult to establish a person entered into a relationship in order to abuse the immigration system. However, all allegations will be assessed and investigated further where appropriate.

■ **Modern Slavery Act 2015**

Jamie Stone:

[147954]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effectiveness of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 in increasing transparency of the future cobalt supply chain.

Victoria Atkins:

In 2020, the UK Government funded NGO PACT to conduct a series of workshops to review the prevalence of modern slavery in mines, and international commercial awareness of these issues. In FY 20/21, the UK has continued to fund programmes, including through PACT, to raise awareness of the risks of, and solutions to, modern slavery in supply chains for a range of minerals.

Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires certain businesses in all sectors, including the mining and electronics sectors, with a turnover of £36m or more to report annually on the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

The prevalence of modern slavery and complexity of global supply chains means that it is highly unlikely that any sector or company is immune from the risks of modern slavery. The Government therefore encourages businesses to take a targeted approach to preventing modern slavery based on where their risks are most salient and severe, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on business and human rights. The annual reporting requirement contained in section 54 is also designed to encourage companies to demonstrate year on year progress in their actions to mitigate their modern slavery risks.

To increase transparency and accelerate progress to tackle modern slavery, the Government recently announced an ambitious package of changes to strengthen and future-proof section 54, including a requirement for organisations to report against specific topics, such as due diligence, the introduction of financial penalties for organisations which fail to meet their statutory obligation to publish a statement, and the creation of a Government modern slavery statement registry to make all statements available in one place.

The new Government modern slavery registry, which is due to launch early this year, will provide increased visibility of the action organisations are taking to prevent modern slavery and will empower investors, consumers and civil society to scrutinise how organisations are developing and improving their response over time.

These measures, including requiring organisations to publish their statement on the Government modern slavery registry, require primary legislation and will be introduced when parliamentary time allows.

■ Offences against Children

Tony Lloyd:

[\[911944\]](#)

What steps she is taking to tackle the grooming of children and young people.

Victoria Atkins:

On the 22 January, the Government published the Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy, which sets out a system-wide response to all forms of child sexual abuse.

The strategy details the government's work to tackle child grooming, including supporting local prevention initiatives, piloting innovative approaches to law enforcement, and work to improve data on the characteristics of offending.

■ Refugees: Resettlement

Carol Monaghan:

[\[147914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has for the continuation of refugee resettlement after the conclusion of the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme.

Chris Philp:

The UK will continue to welcome refugees through resettlement following the completion of the VPRS. This commitment, alongside a future firm and fair asylum system, will ensure we continue to offer safe and legal routes to the UK for vulnerable refugees in need of protection. Our focus will remain on helping people directly from regions of conflict and instability.

■ Retail Trade: Abuse and Violence

Grahame Morris:

[\[911955\]](#)

Whether she plans to bring forward legislative proposals on protecting shopworkers from abuse, violence and threats.

Victoria Atkins:

A wide range of offences already exist which cover assaults against any worker, and a change in the law is not needed.

The current sentencing guidelines include an aggravating factor for an assault committed against a person who is providing a service to the public, such as a shop worker. In these circumstances a more severe sentence can be given.

■ Tuberculosis: Screening

Claire Hanna:

[911950]

What progress she has made on establishing a TB test centre in Northern Ireland to support people applying for a British National (Overseas) visa.

Kevin Foster:

Those who have been in a country at risk of tuberculosis within the last six months must apply for the BN(O) route with a valid TB test certificate. This includes those who have come to the UK via Leave Outside the Rules at the border.

My officials are working with clinics across Northern Ireland in order to to approve one as soon as possible.

■ Visas

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[148671]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish the findings of her Department's review into Tier 1 investor visas granted between June 2008 and April 2015.

Kevin Foster:

The review of Tier 1 (Investor) visas granted between June 2008 and April 2015 remains ongoing and the review will be published in due course.

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[148672]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Tier 1 (Investor) visa applicants in the last three years have been refused or curtailed under the general grounds of refusal due to concerns about the applicant or third party from whom the funds came being involved, complicit or otherwise engaged in corruption or illicit finance.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not collate nor publish figures on the number of Tier 1 Investor applications refused in relation to concerns about the applicant or third party from whom the funds came from being involved, complicit or otherwise engaged in corruption or illicit finance specifically.

The most recent published data on Tier 1 (Investor) visas may be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2020>

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[148673]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Tier 1 (Investor) visa applicants in the last three years have been interviewed in the course of their Tier 1 (Investor) application or in consideration of curtailment of their Tier 1 (Investor) status owing to their alleged or actual involvement, engagement, or association with corruption.

Kevin Foster:

We do not collate or publish figures on the number of Tier 1 (Investor) visa applications interviewed as part of the consideration of an application or in consideration of curtailment of their Tier 1 (Investor) status owing to their alleged or actual involvement, engagement, or association with corruption.

Tackling serious and organised crime is a critical part of the Government's wider crime reduction agenda; we are committed to disrupting and dismantling the highest harm criminal enterprises.

The most recent published migration statistics can be viewed:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-statistics>

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Affordable Housing: Insulation****Shabana Mahmood:****[145767]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to support leaseholders with (a) payment holidays, (b) interest relief and (c) other support measures for people who have purchased a home via a Government backed affordable home ownership scheme which has subsequently required remediation work as a result of faulty cladding and/or fire safety failures.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has continued to engage with leaseholders of all kinds at Ministerial and official level, including shared owners, to understand their concerns on a range of issues and discuss various policies.

It is unacceptable for leaseholders to have to worry about the cost of fixing historic safety defects in their buildings that they did not cause.

The Government is determined to remove barriers to fixing historic defects and identify financing solutions that help to protect leaseholders, whilst also helping to protect the taxpayer. We will provide an update as soon as we are in a position to do so.

■ Building Safety Fund**Hilary Benn:****[147737]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether decisions on Building Safety Fund allocations are on hold while Ministers consider how state aid rules might apply; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

As set out in the answer provided on 20 January 2021 to the Hon Member's question 138396, European Union State Aid rules no longer apply in the United Kingdom, and the Department is considering the implications of the new subsidy control regime in

regard to the Building Safety Fund and will be providing an update to applicants shortly. In the interim, we continue to process applications to the Building Safety Fund and allocations are not on hold. Funding decisions being made will adhere to the new subsidy control regime. Details of allocations from the Building Safety Fund for the period up to 15 January 2021 can be found in the Building Safety Fund Registration Statistics at www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-registration-statistics.

Mike Amesbury:

[148901]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reasons buildings have been found ineligible for funding after registering for the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

The eligibility requirements for the Building Safety Fund, against which all registrations are assessed, are set out in the published prospectus which is available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings. Unsuccessful registrants are told which of the criteria for the Building Safety Fund they have not been able to demonstrate. If registrants feel that the decision reached is not in line with the published criteria, an appeal form is available on the Building Safety Fund page.

■ Buildings: Insulation

Thangam Debbonaire:

[147909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the last time the Cladding Joint Inspection Team met; and how many enforcement actions that team has taken in each month since 2018.

Christopher Pincher:

Information and data on enforcement action on buildings with unsafe ACM cladding systems taken by local authorities and fire and rescue services and the support provided by the Joint Inspection Team is included in the latest Building Safety Programme Data Release, which is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/aluminium-composite-material-cladding#acm-remediation-data> and is updated monthly. The Joint Inspection Team has supported local authorities in carrying out inspections on 18 buildings with unsafe ACM cladding systems (including 2 in December 2020), and currently has 1 further inspection organised. Responsibility for enforcement actions remains with the local authority.

■ Evictions: Homelessness

Mick Whitley:

[148008]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on levels of homelessness of ending the eviction ban on 21 February 2021.

Eddie Hughes:

Legislation to ensure bailiffs do not serve eviction notices or carry out evictions in all but the most serious cases is currently in place.

Landlords are currently required to provide tenants with six months' notice before eviction in all but the most serious cases, and the courts have put in place new rules and arrangements in possession cases to respond to the pandemic.

This Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support to protect renters whose income has been affected throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, to help prevent people getting into financial hardship, we have increased the local housing allowance rate to the 30th percentile of local market rents in each area. In addition, the furlough scheme has been extended until the end of April to support tenants to pay their rents.

■ Help to Buy Scheme: Insulation**Shabana Mahmood:****[145764]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many (a) Help to Buy equity loans and (b) Help to Buy ISAs have been awarded to people purchasing a home which has subsequently required remediation work as a result of faulty cladding and/or fire safety failures in (i) Birmingham, Ladywood constituency and (ii) England, in each of the last three years.

Shabana Mahmood:**[145765]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the value is of (a) Help to Buy equity loans and (b) Help to Buy ISAs awarded to people purchasing a home which has subsequently required remediation work as a result of faulty cladding and/or fire safety failures in (i) Birmingham, Ladywood constituency and (ii) England in each of the last three years.

Shabana Mahmood:**[145766]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the risk of default for people awarded (a) Help to Buy equity loans and (b) a Help to Buy ISA to purchase a home which has subsequently required remediation work as a result of faulty cladding and/or fire and safety failures.

Christopher Pincher:

Information on the number of Help to Buy equity loan properties with ACM cladding can be found in the NAO's report entitled *Investigation into remediating dangerous cladding on high-rise buildings*, which is available at <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Investigation-into-remediating-dangerous-cladding-on-high-rise-buildings.pdf>. Data at constituency level is not available.

Homes England does not assess the risk of default for this cohort as the homes can be valued and redeemed as normal.

There is no information available regarding purchases made using Help to Buy ISAs or Lifetime ISAs concerning homes bought in high-rise buildings. Neither is there any

information available concerning the effect of cladding and/or fire safety issues on homes with Help to Buy equity loans other than for ACM cladding, as stated above.

■ **High Rise Flats: Slough**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[147971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, by which date the Government plans to ensure that there are no (a) cladding, (b) fire breaks and compartmentation issues present on the Rivington Apartments residential building in Slough.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[147972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, by which date the Government plans to ensure that there (a) are no missing or incorrectly installed cavity barriers, (b) are no structural combustible sheathing boards and (c) is no combustible material in the cavity of the Ibex House residential building in Slough.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government does not publicly disclose information about individual buildings. Government support is focused on cladding because unsafe cladding acts as an accelerant to fire spread, and funding will remove the biggest obstacle to remediation proceeding.

The Government is clear that building safety is the responsibility of building owners and has given expert advice on a range of safety issues to provide clarity. To help increase the pace of remediation, the Government has made £1.6 billion of public funding available for the remediation of unsafe cladding on high rise residential buildings. In addition to funding the removal of unsafe cladding, Government is also providing expert technical and pre-tender financial support for successful fund applicants. Where building owners have still failed to act, despite support, we have supported enforcement action.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[147973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, by which date the Government plans to ensure that there will be no cladding or other structural fire risks present as to prevent the issuing of an EWS1 certificate on or within the West Central residential building in Slough.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[147974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, by which date the Government plans to ensure that there will be no cladding or other structural fire risks present as to prevent the issuing of an EWS1 certificate on or within the Lexington Apartments residential building in Slough.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[147975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, by which date will the Government plans to ensure that there were be no cladding or other

structural fire risks present as to prevent the issuing of an EWS1 certificate on or within the Kingswood House residential building in Slough.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[147976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, by which date the Government plans to ensure that there will be no cladding or other structural fire risks present as to prevent the issuing of an EWS1 certificate on or within the Foundry Court residential building in Slough.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[147977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, by which date the Government plans to ensure that there will be no cladding or other structural fire risks present as to prevent the issuing of an EWS1 certificate on or within the Nova House residential building in Slough; and whether he plans to provide funding to Slough Borough Council to support fire safety improvements in that building.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government does not publicly disclose information about individual buildings. The EWS1 form is not a building safety certificate. It is a process requested by valuers, on behalf of mortgage lenders, to understand potential financial risk and to inform a property valuation.

The Government is clear that building safety is the responsibility of building owners and has given expert advice on a range of safety issues to provide clarity. To help increase the pace of remediation, the Government has made £1.6 billion of public funding available for the remediation of unsafe cladding on high rise residential buildings. In addition to funding the removal of unsafe cladding, Government is also providing expert technical and pre-tender financial support for successful fund applicants. Where building owners have still failed to act, despite support, we have supported enforcement action.

■ Homelessness: Employment

Jon Trickett: [\[146782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of recent research by Shelter which has found that 55 per cent of homeless families in England are in work.

Eddie Hughes:

This Government is committed to tackling homelessness and fully enforcing the Homelessness Reduction Act.

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

In April 2020 we increased the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants so that they are set at the 30th percentile of market rents. This is an important policy that will benefit 1.5 million people and the average

claimant will gain an additional £600 per year in increased housing support. Next year these rates will be maintained at their increased level.

■ **Homelessness: Greater London**

Ms Harriet Harman:

[146745]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many families and individuals have become homeless in (a) Camberwell and Peckham, (b) Southwark and (c) London as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Eddie Hughes:

The causes of homelessness are multiple and complex. The Government has taken comprehensive action to prevent people getting into financial hardship through extending the furlough scheme to April, and boosting the welfare safety net by billions of pounds. We have also established an unprecedented package of support to protect renters. This includes legislating through the Coronavirus Act 2020 to delay when landlords can evict tenants, a 6 month stay on possession proceedings in court and a pause on bailiffs enforcing eviction notices.

Relevant homelessness data can be found here, the most recent being published as recently as 28 January: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>.

Ms Harriet Harman:

[146746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many homeless families are being housed in accommodation without access to kitchen facilities in (a) Camberwell and Peckham, (b) Southwark and (c) London.

Ms Harriet Harman:

[146747]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that all temporary homeless accommodation has accessible cooking, washing, and cleaning facilities.

Eddie Hughes:

Reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation is a priority for this Government. This is why we are investing more than £700 million to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping this year.

Chapter 17 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance, which concerns the suitability of accommodation is clear that all temporary accommodation must be suitable in relation to the applicant and to all members of their household who normally reside with them, or who might reasonably be expected to reside with them.

Consideration of whether accommodation is suitable will require an assessment of all aspects of the accommodation in the light of the relevant needs, requirements and circumstances of the homeless person and their household.

Housing authorities have a continuing obligation to keep the suitability of accommodation under review, and to respond to any relevant change in circumstances which may affect suitability.

Local authorities must ensure there is a right of appeal and applicants may ask for a review on request of the housing authority's decision that the accommodation offered to them is suitable.

Relevant homelessness data can be found here, the most recent being published as recently as 29 January: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>.

■ Homelessness: Temporary Accommodation

Jon Trickett:

[146785]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many homeless people and rough sleepers have been housed in temporary accommodation since 4 January 2021 as part of the Everyone In Scheme.

Eddie Hughes:

We have taken unprecedented steps to protect rough sleepers during the pandemic. This work has not stopped, and our COVID-19 emergency accommodation survey data has shown that through Everyone In, by November we had supported around 33,000 people with nearly 10,000 in emergency accommodation and over 23,000 already moved on into longer-term accommodation.

Our latest statutory homelessness statistics for July to September 2020 in England provide data on the number of households in temporary accommodation arranged by local authorities under homelessness legislation and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-emergency-accommodation-survey-data-november-2020>.

■ Housing: Insulation

Ben Lake:

[147959]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a scheme of support similar to that offered by the Government for properties affected by precast reinforced concrete to help homeowners affected by deficient cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has made £1.6 billion of funding available to support the remediation of high rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding in England. This will deal with some of the highest risk and highest cost safety defects in our existing high rise stock, protecting leaseholders from the vast majority of these costs.

However, Government funding is not the only means of funding remediation. The Government expects building owners to meet costs without passing them on to leaseholders wherever possible, through their own resources or by recovering costs

from applicable warranty schemes or from the developers or contractors who were responsible for the installation of unsafe cladding, as is happening with more than half of the private sector buildings with Aluminium Composite Material cladding.

The Government is accelerating work on a long-term solution. We are determined to remove barriers to fixing historic defects and identify financing solutions that help to protect leaseholders, whilst also helping to protect the taxpayer. We will provide an update as soon as we are in a position to do so.

■ Independent Faith Engagement Review

Stuart Anderson:

[\[145882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress has been made on the Independent Faith Engagement Review; and when his Department plans to publish the results of that review.

Eddie Hughes:

In October 2019 the Government announced that Colin Bloom had been appointed as the Faith Engagement Adviser at the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government.

As Faith Engagement Adviser, Colin Bloom is leading a review into how the Government should best engage with faith groups in England. In October 2020 Colin Bloom launched a Call for Evidence, posing a series of questions about the Government's engagement with faith groups. The Call for Evidence closed on the 11 December and received over 20,000 responses, demonstrating the timely nature of this review.

The review is ongoing, and will be published in summer 2021.

■ Leasehold: Service Charges

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[145861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government is taking steps to regulate (a) management fees for leasehold properties and (b) the companies that administer those fees.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[145862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he is taking steps to limit the annual increase in management fees incurred by leaseholders in leasehold properties.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[145863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he is taking steps to improve the rights of leaseholders in challenging, scrutinising and appealing management fees.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[145864]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to introduce a cap on annual increases in leaseholder management fees.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to ensuring that those living in the leasehold sector are protected from abuse and poor service. We believe very strongly that any fees and charges should be justifiable, transparent, and communicated effectively and that there should be a clear route to redress if things go wrong.

We are considering under what circumstances such fees or charges are justified and if they should be capped. The Government established an independent working group of housing experts, chaired by Lord Best, to consider fees and charges alongside the regulation of property agents. The working group has presented its final report to Government (see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulation-of-property-agents-working-group-report>) and we are considering the recommendations in the report carefully.

■ **Local Government: Meetings**

Daisy Cooper:

[148927]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will bring forward proposals to amend The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 to ensure that the provisions permitting virtual meetings of local authorities do not expire on 7 May 2021.

Luke Hall:

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

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Apprentices**

Kate Green:

[147107]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and what proportion of the staff employed by his Department are apprentices.

Eddie Hughes:

At 31 January 2021, 1.4 per cent of the total staff, or 34 of 2434, employed within the Department were employed as apprentices. The Civil Service continues to publish data on its apprenticeship targets; the data for which can be found below for 2018/19 and 2019/20. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-apprenticeship-data-2018-to-2019><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-apprenticeship-data-2019-to-2020>

■ Parish Councils: Grants

Kate Hollern:

[147868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the ability of parish and town councils to apply for grant funding.

Luke Hall:

The Government does not have powers to offer Section 31 grants directly to parish and town councils, which are instead often funded in part through a precept collected from within the council tax paid by their residents. The Secretary of State has written to principal authorities and asked them to discuss the funding support for parish councils from within the support we have provided them. We continue to encourage parish and town councils to work with their principal authority (district or unitary council) where they are delivering vital services that have been impacted by COVID-19.

In the expectation that parish and town councils continue to show restraint when setting council tax precept levels, the Government has proposed to continue with no referendum principles for town and parish councils in 2021-22. The Government will take careful account of the increases set by parishes in 2021-22 when reviewing the matter ahead of next year's settlement.

If a parish or town council operates a leisure facility that is outsourced to an external provider, then the parent local authority was eligible to bid to the Sports England National Leisure Recovery Fund (NLRf) on its behalf. Applications to the fund are currently being assessed and the results should be known by late February.

Parish and town councils are also not excluded from the COVID-19 business grant programme where they operate hereditaments that meet the criteria set out in guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-business-support-grant-funding>.

■ Rents: Arrears

Dan Carden:

[147988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the The Public Health (Coronavirus) (Protection from Eviction) (England) Regulations 2021, what impact assessment was carried out prior to the decision to change the definition of substantial rent arrears from nine months' arrears at the date on which the order for possession was granted and which pre-date 23 March 2020, to six months' arrears at the date on which the order for possession was granted.

Christopher Pincher:

We decided to redefine the definition of substantial rent arrears to rent arrears of more than six months in order to balance the effect of ongoing restrictions on the enforcement of evictions on landlords with the need to continue to protect tenants.

As a result of measures taken in response to the pandemic, we assess that the majority of cases which will fulfil the criteria of this exemption will involve rent arrears that pre-date 23 March 2020. In these cases, landlords may have been waiting over a year without rent being paid.

Measures taken include a requirement for landlords to give tenants longer notice periods before starting possession proceedings in most cases, and the six month stay on possession proceedings in the courts which ended on 21 September 2020. We have also taken into account the amount of time it takes for a case to reach the enforcement stage and the new arrangements that have been put in place in the courts to deal with the resumption of possession proceedings.

■ **Sleeping Rough: Veterans**

Jon Trickett:

[\[146786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 11 December 2020 to Question 124131, how many ex-military personnel were sleeping rough as at (a) 1 January 2020 and (b) 1 December 2020.

Eddie Hughes:

I refer the Hon Member to the previous answer to Question 124131 on 11 December 2020.

■ **Towns Fund**

Steve Reed:

[\[147866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding from the Towns Fund has been paid to each of the qualifying towns for that fund.

Luke Hall:

So far, each of the 101 towns has received capacity funding of £140,000, £162,019 or £173,029 depending on population size. In September 2020, each town also received a capital grant of £500,000, £750,000 or £1 million as part of £81.5 million accelerated funding to help towns respond to the immediate challenges of Covid-19.

In October 2020, we announced offers of Town Deals to the first seven towns. The first payments will be made once full business cases have been agreed for projects within those deals, and paid annually thereafter. This includes projects put forward to be fast-tracked. The majority of the remaining towns have now submitted their Town Investment Plans and these are being assessed by officials in the Department.

Furthermore, on 26 December 2020, we announced that up to £830 million has been allocated from the Future High Streets Fund. 15 areas have been awarded £255 million, with a further 57 areas to receive provisional funding of £576 million. This is a major boost for local high streets. The investment will support areas to recover from the pandemic and help transform underused town centres into vibrant places to live, work and shop.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Pilot Schemes

Jon Trickett:

[\[146783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish detailed plans on the pilot programme for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

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

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

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

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Arms Trade: India

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[148880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Government is taking steps to ensure that no UK made weapons or arms are exported to India where such weapons may be used in repressing the ongoing farmers protests in that country.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Arms exports require an export licence, and all export licence applications are assessed against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the "Consolidated Criteria").

The Consolidated Criteria take into account our obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty and other relevant rules of international law. They provide a thorough risk assessment framework and require us to think hard about the possible impact of providing equipment and its capabilities.

These are not decisions we take lightly and HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

■ Fossil Fuels: Finance

Caroline Lucas:

[\[145772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the implications of the Prime Minister's announcement on 12 December 2020 that the UK

will end international finance for fossil fuels for the approval of those fossil fuel projects already in UKEF's pipeline.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[145773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will put on hold the approval of fossil fuel projects in UKEF's pipeline until the new policy relating to the Prime Minister's announcement on 12 December 2020 that the UK will end international finance for fossil fuels and support the sector's transition to green technology and renewable energy is adopted.

Graham Stuart:

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, taking into consideration relevant factors including climate change. During this period, UK Export Finance (UKEF) will apply government's current policy and continue to consider applications for support in the oil and gas sector.

■ Overseas Trade: Israel

Craig Tracey:

[\[146961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent steps the Government has taken to support bilateral trade with Israel.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement entered into force on the 1st January 2021. The agreement provides an ambitious framework to continue to grow our future trading relationship, which totalled £4.9 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q3 2020. We are now working with Israeli counterparts on the implementation of our agreement and to scope where there is a shared ambition to deepen our bilateral trade relationship. This includes the opportunity to reinstate plans to host a United Kingdom-Israel Trade and Investment Conference.

■ Overseas Trade: Israeli Settlements

Stephen Timms:

[\[148675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how consumers can recognise before purchase products from the illegal Palestinian settlements; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom does not recognise the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including settlements, as part of Israel. Certain products, such as food, originating from settlements must be labelled as such. Our retained EU legislation is clear that information on origin and provenance of goods must not be misleading and should be provided if failure to do so would itself be misleading to consumers.

■ Trade Agreements: Cameroon

Emily Thornberry:

[148745]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the answer of 2 February 2021 to Question 144971 and with reference to the publication of the Memorandums of Understanding with the Solomon Islands and Samoa, St Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, Kenya, and Canada, for what reason the Memorandum of Understanding agreed with Cameroon has not been published to date.

Emily Thornberry:

[148746]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2021 to Question 144971, whether an Economic Partnership Agreement with Cameroon had been formally signed prior to the Memorandum of Understanding taking effect from 1 January 2021.

Greg Hands:

I refer my Right Hon. Friend for Islington South and Finsbury to the answer I gave on 2 February 2021, UIN:144971. In this case, negotiations with Cameroon were not concluded until 24 December. In order to prevent trade disruption and fulfil our trade continuity objective, we secured a temporary bridging mechanism with Cameroon to continue the effects of our trading arrangements for the time needed until both parties can sign and fully ratify the Agreement.

We are working to conclude this process as quickly as possible. The text of the agreement will be laid in Parliament under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act (CRaG) and the corresponding Memorandum of Understanding published on GOV.UK once the formal process of signing the Agreement is complete.

■ Trade Agreements: Ghana

Tulip Siddiq:

[148860]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to secure a free trade agreement with Ghana.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom and Ghana have finalised negotiations on a trade agreement, which will provide duty-free, quota-free access for Ghana to the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom and Ghana have issued a joint statement at:

gov.uk/government/news/ghana-uk-joint-statement-ghana-uk-trade-partnership-agreement.

■ Trade Agreements: USA

John Lamont:

[145849]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she will next meet with the US Trade Representative; and what will be discussed at that meeting.

Greg Hands:

The Secretary of State for International Trade looks forward to meeting with the US Trade Representative at the earliest opportunity, date subject to Senate confirmation processes.

We expect the meeting might cover the UK's ambitious trade agenda with our largest trading partner, promoting free, fair and sustainable trade. We would expect this to include the UK-US Free Trade Agreement; priorities on the global stage such as reform of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), digital and environmental trade; and the swift resolution of trade disputes that are an unhelpful backdrop to the UK-US trade relationship.

JUSTICE■ **Courts: Coronavirus****Alex Cunningham:**[\[147842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases of covid-19 have been confirmed among the (a) staff, (b) judiciary, (c) jurors and (d) users of each court from 21 January 2021 to the most recent day for which that information is available.

Chris Philp:

We follow all Public Health and Government COVID-secure guidelines and have put measures in place to keep all court and tribunal users safe. When Government or Public Health guidance changes our measures are updated, an approach which is endorsed by Public Health England and Public Health Wales.

The table below sets out the number of new confirmed COVID-19 cases reported to HMCTS among (a) staff, (b) judiciary, (c) jurors and (d) users between 21 January 2021 and 26 January 2021. The positive test data after the 26 January 2021 will be artificially low, due to the time taken for individuals to take a test, receive test results, and then communicate this to HMCTS (which is then recorded against the date initially reported). The table only includes court locations within the HMCTS estate where we have learnt about a new positive case within the dates given above. All other court sites have not reported any new cases between these dates. There should be no assumption that a positive case indicates that there has been transmission within a court building.

HMCTS employs around 19,800 staff (payroll and non-payroll). There are around 19,400 judicial office holders covering all jurisdictions, including coroners and magistrates. The population of jurors fluctuates each week, but we estimate around 4,000 jurors attend weekly.

For staff and agency staff in HMCTS as a whole (including tribunals), positive test rates are falling in line with national numbers. For the 7 days prior to the 26 January 2021, staff rates including tribunals were at 361.7 per 100,000 against a national figure of 288 (378.9 in London).

Comparability with national statistics will be affected by our staff locations (staff are not evenly distributed across the country) and when the numbers are changing rapidly the difference between incident date (our figures) and date of positive test (national figures) becomes relevant. However, overall, the trend is not dissimilar to national averages time.

Note that courts without any confirmed positive cases in the time period are not listed.

COURT LOCATIONS	STAFF	JUDGES	JURORS	COURT AND TRIBUNAL USER
BIRMINGHAM CIVIL AND FAMILY JUSTICE CENTRE	1			
BIRMINGHAM CROWN COURT	1	1		
BIRMINGHAM MAGISTRATES COURT	1			
BLACKPOOL COUNTY COURT AND FAMILY COURT	1			
BOLTON COMBINED COURT				1
BRISTOL MAGISTRATES COURT				1
CANNOCK MAGISTRATES COURT	1	1		
CANTERBURY COMBINED COURT CENTRE	1			
CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT			1	
CENTRAL FAMILY COURT (First Avenue House)	1			
CHELMSFORD COUNTY AND FAMILY COURT				1
CROYDON CROWN, COUNTY COURT AND FAMILY COURT			1	
DONCASTER JUSTICE CENTRE NORTH	1			1
DURHAM JUSTICE CENTRE	2			
GUILDFORD MAGISTRATES COURT AND FAMILY COURT	1			
IPSWICH MAGISTRATES COURT	1			
LEEDS COMBINED COURT CENTRE	2			1
LEICESTER MAGISTRATES COURT		1		

COURT LOCATIONS	STAFF JUDGES	JURORS	COURT AND TRIBUNAL USER
LIVERPOOL CIVIL AND FAMILY COURT	2		
LIVERPOOL CROWN COURT	1		
LUTON AND SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE MAGISTRATES COURT AND FAMILY COURT	1		
LUTON JUSTICE CENTRE	1		
MAIDSTONE COMBINED COURT CENTRE	1		
MANCHESTER CROWN COURT (CROWN SQUARE)		1	
MANSFIELD MAGISTRATES AND COUNTY COURT	1		
MEDWAY MAGISTRATES COURT AND FAMILY COURT	1		1
MERTHYR TYDFIL COMBINED COURT CENTRE	1		
MILTON KEYNES COUNTY COURT AND FAMILY COURT	3		
MOLD JUSTICE CENTRE			1
NEWTON AYCLIFFE MAGISTRATES COURT AND FAMILY COURT			1
NORTH SOMERSET MAGISTRATES	1		
NOTTINGHAM COUNTY COURT AND FAMILY COURT	1		
NOTTINGHAM MAGISTRATES COURT	1		
PRESTON COMBINED COURT CENTRE			1
READING MAGISTRATES COURT AND FAMILY COURT			1
ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE - East Block	2		
ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE - QUEENS BUILDING	1		
SEFTON MAGISTRATES COURT			1

COURT LOCATIONS	STAFF JUDGES		JURORS	COURT AND TRIBUNAL USER
SNARESBROOK CROWN COURT			1	
SOUTHWARK CROWN COURT	1			1
ST ALBANS MAGISTRATES COURT	1			
STAFFORD COMBINED COURT CENTRE				1
STAINES MAGISTRATES COURT AND FAMILY COURT	1			
STOKE-ON-TRENT COMBINED COURT	1			
TEESSIDE COMBINED COURT CENTRE				1
THAMES MAGISTRATES COURT	1	1		
WANDSWORTH COUNTY COURT AND FAMILY COURT	1			
WEST HAMPSHIRE MAGISTRATES COURT				1
WEST LONDON FAMILY COURT	1			
WESTMINSTER MAGISTRATES COURT	2			
WIRRAL MAGISTRATES COURT	1			
WOLVERHAMPTON COMBINED COURT CENTRE			1	
WOOLWICH CROWN COURT			1	
WORCESTER MAGISTRATES COURT				1
YEOVIL COUNTY, FAMILY AND MAGISTRATES COURT		1		
Grand total	42	5	6	16

Alex Cunningham:

[148767]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the letter sent to the hon. Member for Stockton North on 25 January 2021 on Covid-19 Health and Safety in Courts, for what reasons HMCTS Response and Recovery Team will contact Public Health England only when there are five or more positive cases within a 14-day window.

Chris Philp:

The HMCTS Response and Recovery Team follows PHE guidance on when to report cases to them. This guidance is available here:

<https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/reporting-an-outbreak/resources/Institutions-Action-Cards/>

In line with what is required of us by Public Health England (PHE), we alert local authority public health teams whenever the threshold for reporting is reached and act on their advice. This means that our policies, and how they are implemented at an operational level, are repeatedly reviewed by multiple experts who are independent of HMCTS.

The first PHE threshold for referral to local Health Protection Teams was two or more positive cases in 14 days. We followed this guidance until 20 November 2020 when it increased to five or more cases in 14 days (for England only) and adjusted our referral process accordingly. As of 18 December, the guidance removed the threshold of five or more cases, and now includes the following criteria for referral:

- you've taken the action outlined but are still seeing more cases
- you're thinking you might need to close because of the number of people affected
- somebody in your workplace has been admitted to hospital; You're getting significant interest from local media

We follow the updated guidance, including referring cases under the five or more threshold, but also continue to refer any incident where the threshold of five or more positive cases in 14 days is met.

■ Legal Aid Scheme: Contracts

Karl Turner:

[R] [\[147829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many firms of solicitors held a (a) civil and (b) criminal legal aid contract as at 1 February 2021.

Alex Chalk:

Please note for the figures provided that some firms may have more than one office. There are currently 1,109 firms who hold a Criminal Legal Aid Contract. There are currently 1,447 firms who hold a Civil Legal Aid Contract. This data is correct as at 1 February 2021.

The Legal Aid Agency frequently reviews market capacity to make sure there is adequate provision around the country and moves quickly to ensure provision where gaps may appear.

■ Ministry of Justice: Apprentices

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[147817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of staff employed by his Department are apprentices.

Alex Chalk:

As of 31 March 2020, the Civil Service has achieved a total of 2.1% of its total workforce as apprentices against the legislative target for the public sector of 2.3% by March 2021. The Ministry of Justice has achieved 1.68% of the total staff employed within the department.

The Ministry of Justice's Apprenticeship Strategy, designed to meet the allocated targets, consists of three strands:

- Promoting the use of Cabinet Office-approved apprenticeships programmes to develop professional skills;
- Designing and delivering operational apprenticeship standards for specific operational roles; and
- Promoting the use of apprenticeships as an entry route/development of career pathways for staff at all levels of the organisation.

This target is a percentage of the total workforce so the percentage attained will change in line with workforce fluctuations over time, making it challenging to predict when a department will meet it. The data for 2018/19 can be found [here](#). The data for 2019/20 can be found [here](#).

Departments are committed to increasing the number of apprentices across the Civil Service and continue to work towards the 2.3% target.

■ Prison Sentences**Sir Christopher Chope:****[148677]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners in England are currently serving sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection; and when those prisoners will be released.

Lucy Frazer:

Prison population data, broken down by sentence type, are published quarterly. As of 31 December 2020, the number of prisoners in England and Wales serving a sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) who have not yet been released was 1,849, down from 2,134 on 31 December 2019. (This does not include those serving an IPP sentence who have previously been released but are now back in custody following recall.) IPP prisoners continue to have a high chance of a positive outcome from Parole Board hearings. In 2019/20 72% of Parole Board hearings resulted in either a recommendation for a progressive transfer to an open prison or release.

A prisoner serving an IPP sentence will be released only when the independent Parole Board concludes that the risk they present to the public is capable of being safely managed by the National Probation Service and its partner agencies in the community.

■ Prisoner Escorts: Coronavirus

Alex Cunningham: [\[147844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether PECS prison custody officers contract payments have been amended in response to the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on their work.

Lucy Frazer:

PECS contractors and PECS custodial staff have continued to be paid in accordance with the contractual payment mechanism. The intention of the payment mechanism is to ensure that the PECS contractors fixed, and semi-fixed costs are met, and they have the capacity available to meet changes in demand.

A reduction in the number of prisoners handled has not resulted in a similar reduction in costs.

The contract allows for rate cards for over hours worked. Due to COVID related absences and an increase in custodial recovery work Custodial Staff have been able to obtain overtime hours on top of their contractual pay, if required to work over their contracted hours.

■ Prisoners on Remand: Remote Hearings

Alex Cunningham: [\[147841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of moving to video remand hearings on the take-up of legal representation by defendants appearing in those hearings.

Chris Philp:

The MoJ and HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) are evaluating HMCTS Reform to understand what effects the programme has had. Research will be commissioned as part of these evaluations. This will include research on Video Remand Hearings.

Alex Cunningham: [\[147843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the (a) financial cost of running video remand hearings for police forces, to date and (b) number of police staff needed to manage the video remand hearing process.

Chris Philp:

COVID-19 has been the biggest peacetime challenge that our justice system has faced. Video Remand Hearings (VRH) have been an important tool to free up court capacity for trials which must take place in person. During this unprecedented time all parts of the criminal justice system have been required to operate in new ways to keep the public safe and ensure that justice is delivered.

I am aware of concerns over financial and resourcing pressures on police forces making use of video remand hearings. My Department is urgently engaging with the

police and Home Office to agree a way forward on how we can support video remand hearings in the future, both financially and in terms of resourcing requirements.

■ Remote Hearings

Alex Cunningham:

[\[147845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether HM Courts & Tribunals Service has provided funding to police forces to assist in the running of video remand hearings.

Chris Philp:

By December 2020, the majority of police forces had withdrawn from operating Video Remand Hearings (VRH) due to the significant pressure it places on the staffing resource in police custody suites. HMCTS has since secured a commitment from most forces to continue to operate VRH for suspected and confirmed cases of Covid-19.

HMCTS is working with MoJ and the Home Office to explore any potential funding opportunity which could enable VRH to continue operating in key local justice areas where the withdrawal of VRH has had the greatest negative impact.

■ Remote Hearings: Prisoner Escorts

Alex Cunningham:

[\[148768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to his letter sent to the Justice Committee on 20 January 2021, for what reasons primary legislation is required to enable PECS officers to assist with video remand hearings; and what the planned timescale is for introducing that legislation.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[148769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to his letter to the Justice Committee on 20 January 2021, if he will publish any documents relevant to the joint work completed by the Ministry of Justice and Home Office on video remand hearings referred to on page 2 of that letter to assist hon. Members in understanding the basis for the proposed change to legislation.

Chris Philp:

Video Remand Hearings (VRH) were rolled out over summer 2020 to help reduce footfall in courts and therefore the risk of transmission of Covid-19. Whilst PECS officers were deployed to help with administrative tasks in relation to VRH, the circumstances where PECS officers may have custodial responsibility for defendants and exercise their powers are set out in primary legislation (section 80 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991). A change of that legislation is therefore required to specifically confer PECS officers with custodial responsibility for defendants whilst in police stations. This limits their immediate ability to completely facilitate a full remand hearing via video until the change is made. The government is exploring bringing forward appropriate legislation when parliamentary time allows.

■ Retail Trade: Crimes of Violence

Alex Cunningham:

[\[148770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, in what proportion of convictions for assaults against retail workers the sentence was increased on account of the aggravating factor of offence committed against those working in the public sector or providing a service to the public in each of the last three years.

Chris Philp:

Everyone should feel safe at work which is why assaults on retail workers, doing vital work for the country and the economy, are simply unacceptable. However, centrally held information on assault offences does not identify whether the victim was a retail worker, nor whether any aggravating factors were taken into account in sentencing. This information may be held on court records, but to be able to identify cases in which a sentence was increased on account of the aggravating factor of the offence committed against those working in the public sector or providing a service to the public would require accessing individual court records, which would be of disproportionate cost.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[148870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to (a) extend existing notices of intention to marry and (b) waive the fee for a further notice of intention to marry for couples whose wedding ceremonies have been cancelled due to covid-19 restrictions.

Alex Chalk:

The Government acknowledges the significant upheaval that Covid-19 is causing for couples who were looking to marry at this time.

The requirement to solemnize a marriage within twelve months of giving notice to marry is set out in primary legislation, which does not provide for extending this period. It would require primary legislation to change this. The Law Commission is currently undertaking a broader review of the law on marriage ceremonies. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is also considering whether a revised scheme should allow rules to adapt to the situation of a national emergency. While that work cannot provide solutions for the current pandemic it could lead to a reformed and more resilient scheme for weddings in future.

The notice fee is usually £35 per person and is paid to local authorities for the service they provide in the taking of the notice and entering it into the notice book. Local authorities are able to waive, reduce or refund fees on compassionate grounds or in cases of hardship. It is for each local authority to determine depending on the individual circumstances.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Ports: Northern Ireland

Rachel Reeves:

[\[148763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment his Department made of the risks to security at Northern Ireland ports during preparations for the end of the transition period on 1 January 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government worked closely with the devolved administration in Northern Ireland and security partners to understand and mitigate against security related risks in preparation for the end of the transition period. We will continue to work with our partners to understand any emerging issues and work together to address them.

TRANSPORT

■ Airports: Quarantine

Maria Eagle:

[\[148711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the planned timescale is for the length of time that the compulsory hotel based covid-19 quarantine policy will be in place; and what steps he plans to take to compensate airport operators for loss of business during that time.

Robert Courts:

The Government will keep all our measures under constant review, including quarantine measures for international travellers and how long these are required for.

The Government recognises that the aviation sector has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Firms can continue to draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor, including a Bank of England scheme for firms to raise capital, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Time to Pay flexibilities with tax bills, financial support for employees, VAT deferrals, and the recently-launched Airports and Ground Operations Support Scheme. If businesses find themselves in severe and urgent financial difficulties, even following these unprecedented support measures, then we remain open to discussion about bespoke financial support, but only as a last resort. Any intervention would need to be on terms to protect the interests of taxpayers.

■ Allan Cook

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[\[147712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he was informed that Allan Cook was resigning early as Chairman of HS2 Ltd.

Andrew Stephenson:

Allan Cook CBE, Chairman of HS2 Ltd, issued his resignation on 31 January 2021. Allan will fulfil his 6-month notice period. I wish to thank Allan for the dedication he has shown in his role of Chairman.

I will set out in due course plans to identify the new Chairperson via an open and fair process.

■ **Aviation: Quarantine****Maria Eagle:**[\[148708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the need to mitigate the effect of covid-19 quarantine measures on the aviation industry; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

The Government recognises that the aviation sector has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Firms can continue to draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor, including a Bank of England scheme for firms to raise capital, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Time to Pay flexibilities with tax bills, financial support for employees and VAT deferrals.

If businesses find themselves in severe and urgent financial difficulties, even following these unprecedented support measures, then we remain open to discussion about bespoke financial support, but only as a last resort. Any intervention would need to be on terms to protect the interests of taxpayers.

The Department for Transport works closely with HM Treasury on matters related to aviation.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Scotland****Jamie Stone:**[\[147953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much and what proportion of the plug-in vehicle grant has been allocated to Caithness, Sutherland, and Easter Ross.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department holds data on plug-in vehicle grants but this database does not provide the geographic breakdown required.

Up to the end of September 2020, an estimated £0.2m was provided to new plug-in car grant eligible models that were registered for the first time to an address in Caithness, Sutherland, and Easter Ross, which was 0.03% of the estimated total for the UK.

Note that the plug-in car grant provides a discount on the price of brand new low-emission vehicles through a grant the government gives to vehicle dealerships and manufacturers when consumers purchase an eligible vehicle model – the grant is

therefore allocated based on consumer demand rather than through any geographic formula.

Grants for vehicles other than cars have been excluded here because we do not have an equivalent estimation method readily available.

The financial value has been estimated from car registration data by applying the amount of available grant for eligible models at the time of registration. This estimate does not mean that every car registered received the grant nor that other cars did not receive the grant before the end of September 2020 but had not registered the car yet.

■ Eurostar: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[148873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with his French counterpart on providing financial support to Eurostar during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Ministers and officials, working with other Government Departments, have engaged extensively with Eurostar since March 2020 in relation to their financial situation.

We continue to engage, at both official and Ministerial level, with Eurostar and the French government regarding Eurostar's financial situation and any potential support proposals.

■ Ferries: Repayments

Sarah Olney:

[\[147947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason ferry trips are not included in the Government's refund guarantee for cancelled Christmas rail and coach trips.

Robert Courts:

The preparations and communications the Department made for Christmas travel were focussed towards road and rail passengers as these sectors were deemed at greatest risk of possible congestion. They were explicitly encouraged to pre-book, unlike the ferry sector where, on domestic routes, it is less likely to require pre-booking.

For international ferry routes, the existing compensation requirements under EU law applied where services had been cancelled by the operator and passengers should have been offered either a rebooking or a refund. For domestic ferry routes, existing compensation requirements also applied which we expect operators have honoured.

■ Freight: Irish Sea

Grahame Morris:

[\[148759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his Department's guidance on Category 1 goods that can be transported on government-secured freight capacity

contracts, updated on 1 February 2021, what estimate he has made of the (a) volume of freight moved and (b) number of sailings to date under each contract with operators in the Irish Sea.

Robert Courts:

There has been minimal disruption to the flow of freight and Category 1 goods following the end of the transition period. Volumes have been relatively low compared to the same period in previous years, although some hauliers continue to arrive at ports without the necessary COVID-19 and customs paperwork. We continue to monitor for potential disruption that may affect the flow of essential Category 1 goods.

Government secured freight capacity is provided by four ferry operators (Brittany Ferries, DFDS, P&O and Stena Line) across 9 routes, operating from 8 ports (Poole, Portsmouth, Newhaven, Felixstowe, Harwich, Tilbury, Teesport, Hull) to mainland Europe. There is no GSFC secured between England and the island of Ireland.

Hauliers carrying Category 1 Goods who wish to use the land bridge to reach Ireland are still eligible to access GSFC to enter England from mainland Europe.

■ **High Speed 2 Railway Line**

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[\[147714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the cost is of the (a) policing of and (b) damage and delays to the works caused by the environmental protests along the route of Phase 1 of HS2 to date.

Andrew Stephenson:

The costs for construction sites to operate safely, including, where necessary, the safe removal of trespassers, form part of existing contracts between HS2 Ltd and its supply chain. Due to the levels of protestor activity experienced, an additional £49 million of security costs across the HS2 project has been expended up to December 2020. The impact to the schedule of trespassers and in some cases concerted vandalism has not yet been fully assessed but we expect this to be within the overall estimated cost range of the project.

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[\[147715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on land HS2 plans to acquire permanently along the route of HS2 Phase 1 that was not notified to the local residents before the Government's permission for the project to proceed.

Andrew Stephenson:

Powers to acquire land permanently on Phase One are set out in the High Speed Rail (London - West Midlands) Act 2017. All land and property within the defined borders as set by the Act can be subject to compulsory purchase. Residents are notified of any access, temporary or permanent acquisitions required in line with the Act. The programme of land acquisition is a continuing programme and so too are communications relating to it.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Construction

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[\[147713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Environment Agency on the risk of environmental damage caused by HS2 construction work; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Stephenson:

Department for Transport officials, HS2 Ltd and its contractors meet regularly with officials at the Environment Agency in relation to delivery of the HS2 works, and to ensure that any environmental risks are suitably mitigated. I also recently met with the Chair of the Environment Agency, as part of my regular engagement with the project's key stakeholders.

■ Hitachi Rail Europe: London North Eastern Railway

Ian Mearns:

[\[147823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with Hitachi Rail UK Ltd on the potential effect of redundancies at Bounds Green and Craigentenny Train Maintenance Centres on the rail operator LNER.

Ian Mearns:

[\[147824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the financial costs of the potential redundancies at Hitachi Rail UK Ltd's Bounds Green and Craigentenny Train Maintenance Centres will be borne by Hitachi Rail Ltd or the public purse.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

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

The negotiations between Hitachi Rail and LNER are currently ongoing and so any potential cost to the taxpayer is yet to be confirmed.

We are in regular contact with both Hitachi Rail and LNER and are monitoring their ongoing discussions with regards to this matter closely. We are working with both parties to ensure that any redundancies at Hitachi Rail does not adversely impact LNER. However, these discussions are ultimately a commercial and contractual matter for both parties to negotiate. LNER and Hitachi will need to work together to resolve this issue in a manner that ensures the best outcome for passengers, employees and the taxpayer.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: EU Countries

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[147760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 January 2021 to Question 140757, if the Government will publish the official text that was included in the UK's proposed exemption for specialist hauliers to new limits on movements in the EU.

Rachel Maclean:

The Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) between the UK and the EU allows UK hauliers to undertake up to 2 additional laden journeys within the EU after a laden international journey from the UK, with a maximum of 1 cabotage movement outside Ireland. These rules will also apply to specialist hauliers, such as hauliers who carry equipment for musicians and other performers.

Our assessment is that the TCA will allow for the vast majority of haulage operations that were being undertaken by UK hauliers before the end of the transition period. However, UK operators will not be allowed to undertake more than 2 movements within the EU before returning to the UK. This limitation also applies to movements of goods covered by an ATA carnet. This issue was discussed in detail as part of the negotiations, including specific proposals for liberalised access for certain specialist transport sectors, but the EU was unwilling to agree more flexible arrangements. Unfortunately, we are not able to release the full content of the negotiation papers.

The Department for Transport is in regular contact with the road haulage industry and is working closely with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy to support the creative industries sector.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Working Hours

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[148737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many instances of drivers exceeding the limits set out in the retained EU drivers' hours rules have been reported in January 2021 following the relaxation of enforcement of those rules.

Rachel Maclean:

For the temporary and limited relaxation of the enforcement of the retained EU drivers' hours rules; which ended on 21 January 2021, the Department received 28 notifications from operators indicating that they may be using the domestic relaxation. To date only 5 operators have confirmed that they had actually used the relaxation, but the Department is seeking information from others.

The relaxations were extended to 31 March 2021, as risks to critical supply chains due to Covid-19 remain, and disruption to these supply chains could occur at very short notice. The Department has made it clear that the relaxations should only be used where necessary, otherwise the normal drivers' hours rules are to be followed.

To date the Department has received 9 notifications from operators indicating that they may be using the domestic relaxation.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: EU Countries

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[147761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he last held discussions with his EU counterparts on an exemption for specialist hauliers to new limits on movements in the EU.

Rachel Maclean:

The Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) between the UK and the EU sets out the rules which apply to the international movement of goods.

Although the agreement provides for the vast majority of haulage operations that were being undertaken by UK hauliers before the end of the transition period, UK operators will not be allowed to undertake more than 2 movements within the EU before returning to the UK. These rules also apply to specialist hauliers, such as hauliers who carry equipment for musicians and other performers.

Specific arrangements for the specialist haulage sector were discussed in detail as part of negotiations, but the EU was unwilling to agree more flexible arrangements as of now.

The Department for Transport is in regular contact with the road haulage industry and is working closely with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy to support the creative industries sector.

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[147762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent representations he has received on the negotiation of a cultural exemption for specialist hauliers to new limits on movements in the EU.

Rachel Maclean:

The Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) between the UK and the EU allows UK hauliers to undertake up to 2 additional laden journeys within the EU after a laden international journey from the UK, with a maximum of 1 cabotage movement outside Ireland. These rules will also apply to specialist hauliers, such as hauliers who carry equipment for musicians and other performers.

The Department for Transport is in regular contact with the road haulage industry and is working closely with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy to support the creative industries sector.

■ Motorcycles: Training

Jonathan Edwards: [\[148756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when Compulsory Basic Training and inspection for motorbikes and scooters drivers will recontinue.

Rachel Maclean:

Compulsory basic training (CBT) for learner moped and motorcycle riders is suspended during the current lockdowns in England, Scotland and Wales. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) will follow the relevant administrations' instructions and advice about when easing of the current COVID-19 restrictions will allow CBT to restart safely. The DVSA will tell all motorcycle approved training bodies when that is.

Jonathan Edwards: [\[148757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to temporarily waive the two year limit on Compulsory Basic Training for motorbikes and scooters during the covid-19 lockdown and until inspections are able to recontinue.

Rachel Maclean:

The two-year validity period of a compulsory basic training (CBT) certificate is set out in legislation. It is in place to ensure learner moped and motorcycle riders can ride safely on their own, with L-plates, while they practise for a full moped or motorcycle test. The Government has no plans, on road safety grounds, to waive that two-year validity period.

■ Railways: Exhaust Emissions

Helen Hayes: [\[147937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with his Department on the potential effect of rail infrastructure projects on reducing national carbon emissions.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I have had no recent direct discussions with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy on this issue. Officials from both departments regularly discuss the role of the railway in delivering the Government's commitment to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

■ Railways: Iron and Steel

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[147000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to increase the amount of UK-made steel that will be used in planned rail infrastructure projects and the general maintenance of the rail network.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department is working closely with the UK steel industry to ensure UK manufacturers and fabricators have clear visibility of future opportunities to supply our major rail infrastructure projects and understand how they can bid for future work. Cabinet Office issued updated procurement policy guidance in 2016 for central government departments on how to ensure a level playing field for UK steel producers when conducting procurement activities. This guidance has been fully adopted by DfT for all in scope projects.

■ Railways: Season Tickets

Sarah Olney:

[147946]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on the level of (a) income generation and (b) Treasury funding of the introduction of flexible season tickets on the railways.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Passenger demand has fallen dramatically over the last year and its recovery is uncertain. Due to this and a potential shift in passenger behaviours, rail income in the future is also uncertain. Any flexible season ticket products will aim to encourage and support passengers returning to the railway when it is safe to do so. We are continuing to work closely with industry to develop a solution and will provide further details in due course.

■ Railways: Voucher Schemes

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[147965]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will extend the validity of Rail Travel Vouchers beyond twelve months due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department and rail industry are currently considering the validity of Rail Travel Vouchers in the context of local and national travel restrictions due to COVID-19.

These considerations follow the extensive support provided to the rail industry throughout the COVID pandemic, to protect jobs and keep services running for passengers including key workers.

■ Railways: West Midlands

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[147746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve rail services in the West Midlands.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Passengers in the West Midlands will see the introduction of two new fleets of electric and diesel trains on local services commencing later this year. Cross Country is also adding carriages to some of its local services into Birmingham in 2021.

The West Midlands network also plans to grow by adding new stations on existing lines to serve communities that lost their rail services during the 20th century. These include three stations on the Camp Hill Line in south Birmingham, and two in the Black Country to serve the towns of Willenhall and Darlaston.

On infrastructure, the Department is working with Network Rail and Midlands Connect to develop an Outline Business Case for the Midlands Rail Hub. This work will further develop infrastructure proposals to enable up to ten additional trains per hour to serve central Birmingham.

■ Regional Airports: Quarantine

Maria Eagle: [\[148709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what meetings he has had with representatives of regional airports on the implementation of the Government's covid-19 quarantine policy; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Eagle: [\[148712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he last met with representatives of (a) Liverpool John Lennon Airport and (b) other regional airports.

Robert Courts:

Ministers and officials have engaged extensively with the Aviation industry, including regional airports, throughout this crisis. We remain committed to an open engagement with the sector and continue to work with industry to establish relationships that will reflect Government's priorities, both in terms of sharing information and giving industry the opportunity to feedback as policy develops, with the aim of helping retain jobs and return the sector to growth as soon as possible.

Maria Eagle: [\[148710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of flights that will be operated (a) into and (b) out of regional airports after the introduction of compulsory hotel based covid-19 quarantine measures on arrival into the UK.

Robert Courts:

Airlines' schedules are subject to change at short notice and it is for that reason that we have not made a formal assessment of the number of flights that will be operated after the introduction of the new managed quarantine measures.

■ Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation: Hydrogen

Alex Sobel: [\[147994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on potential amendments

to the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation to support private investment in green hydrogen production facilities.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department has been considering with industry experts, and colleagues in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, potential changes to the RTFO scheme to further support renewable hydrogen.

Development fuels including hydrogen are strategically important and can deliver higher greenhouse gas reduction emissions.

Any future legislative proposals to amend the RTFO scheme would be subject to both a public consultation and to collective ministerial agreement.

■ Taxis: EU Countries

Lilian Greenwood:

[147827]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish guidance on the rules for UK private hire drivers who enter the EU while giving tours to customers.

Rachel Maclean:

Following the conclusion of the Trade Cooperation Agreement between the UK and EU, the GOV.UK page <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/run-international-bus-or-coach-services-and-tours> has been updated to reflect the current rules for passenger transport services that operate to Europe and other countries.

The UK also acceded to the Interbus Agreement in its own right on 1 January 2021. This provides reciprocal rights for UK and EU operators to provide 'occasional services' (holiday tours and private trips) to and from respective territories.

Lilian Greenwood:

[147828]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment was made of the circumstances of UK-based private hire drivers who give tours to the EU as part of negotiations on the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Rachel Maclean:

During UK-EU negotiations, market access provisions for passenger transport operators were discussed at length. Prior to these negotiations, the Government also discussed provisions with relevant passenger transport stakeholders.

Following the conclusion of the Trade Cooperation Agreement between the UK and EU, the GOV.UK page <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/run-international-bus-or-coach-services-and-tours> has been updated to reflect the current rules for passenger transport services that operate to Europe and other countries. We have also been working with the industry to provide bespoke guidance.

The UK also acceded to the Interbus Agreement in its own right on 1 January 2021. This provides reciprocal rights for UK and EU operators to provide 'occasional services' (holiday tours and private trips) to and from respective territories.

■ Taxis: International Driving Permits

Lilian Greenwood: [\[147826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if private hire drivers giving tours to customers can enter the EU without an International Driving Permit.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to establishing arrangements with EU countries that facilitate motoring with the minimum of bureaucracy. In 2020, all EU countries, as well as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein have confirmed recognition of UK driving licences which means that International Driving Permits will not be required by UK visitors with photocard driving licences from 1 January 2021.

■ Tourism: EU Countries

Sarah Olney: [\[148864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the mutual recognition of qualifications for tour guides accompanying tours into the EU will cover registered driver guides using their own car to conduct tours.

Rachel Maclean:

Now the Transition Period is over, the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive no longer applies to UK nationals. This means that if a UK national wishes to practice a regulated profession in the EU, they will need to meet the legal requirements of the relevant EU Member State. Professionals should consult the European Commission Regulated Professionals Database to understand whether the profession in question is regulated, and secondly, what other licenses or authorisations they may need to work in that profession. It is important to note that the recognition of a professional qualification does not automatically cover the licences to operate vehicles in the EU.

The Government is committed to establishing arrangements with EU countries that facilitate motoring with the minimum of bureaucracy. In 2020, all EU countries, as well as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein have confirmed recognition of UK driving licences which means that International Driving Permits will not be required by visiting UK motorists with photocard driving licences from 1 January 2021.

■ Train Operating Companies: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[148069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on (a) open access operators and (b) people employed by open access operators.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

At present, two open access operators (Grand Central and Hull Trains) have suspended all operations and have indicated that services are unlikely to resume until the current lockdown restrictions are eased. Other Franchise operators continue to

provide services to the North East and Humber regions to ensure rail options remain for those making essential journeys.

In late 2020, Grand Central and Hull Trains both made some redundancies, focussed on catering and retail staff. The Government has not been advised of any further impacts to people employed by open access operators.

The Government has made available a comprehensive package of support measures to businesses across the economy; and open access operators have made extensive use of the furlough scheme since it was put in place.

The Government continues to maintain regular on-going communication and dialogue with open access operators throughout the pandemic, and has sought innovative ways to support open access operators. This has included supporting applications for extensions to track access arrangements, agreeing a deferral of payment to the British Transport Police and reaching an agreement with Grand Central to provide some support to Northern services on a commercial basis.

Officials will continue to monitor this situation and engage with all open access operators during the pandemic.

TREASURY

■ Beer: Excise Duties

Sarah Olney: [\[148868\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking prior to the next Budget to assess the merits of the removal of beer duty.

Kemi Badenoch:

While Government recognises the importance of supporting the beer and pub industry, beer duty raises important revenue for public services such as the NHS and helps to protect public health. Nevertheless, the Government keeps all taxes under review and any major announcements will be made at fiscal events.

■ Business: Government Assistance

Dan Jarvis: [\[147854\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing support to businesses in their first year of trading.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government regularly engages with businesses and representative groups to ensure support provided to businesses is appropriate, including support for those businesses recently established and in their first year of trading.

For example, the British Business Bank's Start-Up Loans programme provides entrepreneurs starting their own businesses with loans of up to £25,000 and 12 months of dedicated mentoring support. At the Spending Review 2020, the

Chancellor announced additional funding for this programme to deliver 1,000 more loans in 2021/22 than were originally funded in the March 2020 Budget.

The Government also offers generous tax incentives to investors in early stage companies looking to grow, in the shape of the Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS) and Seed EIS (SEIS). These are intended to help tackle market failures in young companies' access to finance by helping them raise the capital needed for their long-term growth until they have a sufficient track record to access mainstream markets.

Additionally, further reducing the tax burden on businesses, the Government has lowered the corporation tax rate from 28% in 2010 to 19% today - this is the lowest rate in the G20 and benefits over one million companies, large and small.

In addition to these measures and to support businesses through Covid, the Government has spent over £280 billion to put in place a comprehensive package of support. Businesses may be eligible to benefit from elements of this package including billions of pounds in wage support, government-backed loans and general and sector-specific grants. The Government urges businesses to visit the online Coronavirus Business Support Finder Tool for tailored information on how to access support available to them.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Rachael Maskell:

[\[147925\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the merits of the 30 October 2020 Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme eligibility date to ensure that workers who took on employment after that date are able to access the Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

For all eligibility decisions under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), the Government must balance the need to support as many jobs as possible with the need to protect the scheme from fraud.

Under the CJRS extension, an employer can claim for employees who were employed and on their PAYE payroll on 30 October 2020. The employer must have made a PAYE Real Time Information (RTI) submission to HMRC between 20 March 2020 and 30 October 2020, notifying a payment of earnings for that employee. The 30 October 2020 cut-off date allowed as many people as possible to be included by going right up to the day before the announcement, while balancing the risk of fraud that existed as soon as the scheme became public. Extending the cut-off date further would have significantly increased the risk of abuse because claims could not be confidently verified against the risk of fraud by using the data after this point.

The Chancellor has always been clear that the Government would keep the situation under review, adapting its approach as the context evolved. The Government will set out the next phase of the plan to tackle the virus and protect jobs at Budget.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[147926\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason HMRC is unable to accept RTI reports submitted by businesses in November and December 2020 to secure Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme payments for new employees who took up their roles after 30 October 2020 and before the national lockdown was announced on 4 January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

When the Government announced the extension to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), it prioritised helping the greatest number of people as quickly as possible. The scheme has enabled millions of people to remain employed.

The Government chose 30 October because this date is the day before the extension to the CJRS was announced. Extending the cut-off date beyond 30 October would have meant including employments notified to HMRC after the date that the Government announced the extension to the scheme.

Employers can claim for employees on payroll on 30 October 2020 providing the employer made a PAYE RTI submission to HMRC between 20 March 2020 and 30 October 2020, notifying a payment of earnings for that employee. This allows as many people as possible to be included by going right up to the day before the announcement and balances the risk of fraud that existed as soon as the extension to the scheme became public.

Extending the cut-off date beyond 30 October 2020 would significantly increase the risk of abuse because claims could not be confidently verified using the known RTI employment data after this point.

■ Events Industry: Insurance

Julian Knight:

[\[145798\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support the contingency insurance market for live events.

Julian Knight:

[\[145799\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to ensure that support measures for the contingency insurance industry includes sporting events.

John Glen:

At this stage of the pandemic it is still difficult to provide the certainty the sector needs to plan. It is therefore not the right time to consider an insurance-based solution. However, we are closely monitoring the situation and as the public health situation improves and the path to re-opening becomes clearer, we will work with DCMS to review how to communicate that path and support the sector, including sporting events, to safely reopen.

I am aware that many large events have long lead-in times, so potential support will need to be considered before public health restrictions are relaxed. Officials are working to understand what a viable roadmap would be for the reopening of the

events sector and therefore the right point for considering potential support options, including insurance-based solutions.

■ Extended Services: Finance

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[147063\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on the potential merits of subsidising access to wraparound care for (a) vulnerable children and (b) children of key workers.

Steve Barclay:

The department regularly meets a range of stakeholders, which includes discussion of parent's access to childcare.

The Government appreciates that the wraparound childcare sector, like many sectors, is facing unprecedented financial pressures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is for this reason that the Government has made a range of financial packages of support available for businesses to access throughout the current crisis. This includes tax relief, business loans or cash grants through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employed Support Scheme (SEISS), as well as a £594 million discretionary fund for councils and the Devolved Administrations to support local businesses that may not be eligible for other support, during the current national lockdown.

Additionally, the Government has encouraged all local authorities to consider what local grants could be used to bolster the childcare sector in their areas, to safeguard sufficient childcare provision for children of critical workers and vulnerable children. This includes funding streams such as the Holiday Activities and Food Programme. The expanded programme, which comprises a £220 million fund to be delivered through grants to local authorities, will be expanded to reach all local authority areas over the Easter, summer, and Christmas holidays in 2021.

The Government is also acutely aware of the impact that coronavirus has had on young people. That is why more than £60m of the unprecedented £750m package for the voluntary and charity sector has been directed towards organisations supporting children and young people. This is on top of £200m government investment in early intervention and prevention support initiatives to support children and young people at risk of exploitation and involvement in serious violence, through the Youth Endowment Fund.

In addition to wraparound childcare providers, parents / carers can also utilise the following to support their childcare needs:

- In the most recent national lockdown, the Government has chosen to keep early years settings open for all children. Vulnerable children and children of key workers can also continue to attend access out-of-school settings, for example breakfast clubs and after-school clubs.

- Nannies, which are still able to continue to provide services, including in the home; and
- Parents are also able to form a childcare bubble with one other household for the purposes of informal childcare, where the child is under the age of 14.

Tax-Free Childcare also provides working parents with 20% support on childcare costs up to £10,000. Eligible working families with children under 12 (or under 17 if disabled) will receive up to £2,000 per child per year (or £4,000 per child per year for disabled children) towards their childcare bills.

TFC can be used for activities out of school hours.

Low income working parents may be eligible for support through the Universal Credit childcare offer, which covers up to 85% of eligible childcare costs, or through Working Tax Credit, which covers up to 70% of costs. Both can be used for childcare that is outside school hours.

■ Free Zones: Scotland

John Lamont:

[\[145848\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on freeports.

Steve Barclay:

Freeports will attract new businesses, spreading jobs, investment and opportunity to towns and cities up and down the country.

Last month, I met with the Scottish Government a few days before they publicly announced their intention to work with the UK Government to launch a Freeports bidding process in Scotland before the end of March.

I strongly welcome that announcement and look forward to bringing the benefits of Freeports to Scotland.

■ Fuels: Excise Duties

Sarah Olney:

[\[147945\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the amount that will be raised from fuel duty in each year from 2021 to 2035, assuming no change in duty levels.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) publishes revenue forecasts for all Government taxes. The most recent forecast covers the financial years 2020-21 to 2025-26. For fuel duty, revenue is forecast to be £21.8 billion in 2020-21, £26.7 billion in 2021-22, £29.7 billion in 2022-23, £30.8 billion in 2023-24, £31.2 billion in 2024-25 and £31.7 billion in 2025-26. These figures can be found in Table 3.3 on

http://cdn.obr.uk/CCS1020397650-001_OBR-November2020-EFO-v2-Web-accessible.pdf.

The OBR has not published forecasted tax revenues beyond 2025-26.

■ Future Fund

Hilary Benn: [\[148706\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much and what proportion of investment support has been provided under the Future Fund scheme to firms located in (a) London, (b) the South East and (c) Yorkshire and the Humber, to date .

Kemi Badenoch:

Future Fund data, including the amount and proportion of investment made to the different regions and nations of the UK, is available on the British Business Bank website.

As of the latest update on the 28th January:

- £646.8m or 61% has been invested in London;
- £130.5m or 12% has been invested in the South East
- £30.6m or 3% has been invested in Yorkshire and the Humber

The Future Fund uses a set of standard terms with published eligibility criteria. Applications that meet all the eligibility criteria receive investment, irrespective of location.

■ Gift Aid: Scottish Borders

John Lamont: [\[145847\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much Gift Aid has been paid to charities in the Scottish Borders in each of the last three years.

Kemi Badenoch:

The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ Gyms and Leisure: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq: [\[146971\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing specific financial support packages to gyms and leisure centres during the period of national covid-19 restrictions starting 5 January 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the significant disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on sectors such as leisure and the fitness industry.

During this difficult time the Treasury has worked intensively with employers, delivery partners, industry groups, and other government departments to understand the long-term impact of Covid-19 on all key areas of the economy and continues to do so.

The Government has already announced considerable and unprecedented support for businesses and individuals. Businesses forced to close can claim grants of up to £3,000 per month (worth over £1 billion per month) through the Local Restrictions Support Grants (Closed). Any business in England forced to close due to national or local restrictions can claim grants, via their local authority, of up to £3,000 per month, per business premises, depending on rateable value.

In addition, on 5th January, the Government announced an extra £4.6 billion to protect jobs and support affected businesses as restrictions tightened. Businesses forced to close can claim a one-off grant of up to £9,000. Local authorities in England have also been awarded an additional £500 million discretionary funding to support their local businesses. This builds on the £1.1 billion discretionary funding (worth £20 per head of population) which local authorities in England have already received to support their local economies and help businesses that have been impacted.

The government has introduced the £100 million National Leisure Recovery Fund, to support publicly owned leisure facilities through this crisis.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has been extended until the end of April. This provides a substantial grant for employers to cover 80% of the wages of their employees. As of 13 December, CJRS has supported 9.9 million jobs at the cost of approximately £46.4bn.

We will continue to monitor the impact of government support on public services, businesses, individuals and sectors, including the leisure, gyms and fitness sector, as we respond to this pandemic. The upcoming Budget will be an opportunity to take stock of our wider support and set out the next stage of our economic response to the pandemic; however it must be recognised that it will not be possible to preserve every job or business indefinitely, nor stand in the way of the economy adapting and people finding new jobs or starting new businesses.

■ Hospitality Industry: VAT

Patricia Gibson:

[\[148831\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had discussions with his Cabinet colleagues on extending the hospitality sector's temporary reduction of VAT from 20 to 5 per cent to the service sector.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors, and will run until 31 March 2021.

This policy will cost over £2 billion. The Government keeps all taxes under review, and any future decisions on tax policy will be made at Budget.

■ London Capital and Finance: Insolvency

Jessica Morden: [\[149190\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish the (a) timetable for and (b) details of the compensation scheme for LCF bondholders.

John Glen:

I refer the Honourable Member to my answer given on 4 February to PQ UIN 148019. In my answer I explained that my Written Ministerial Statement of 17 December 2020 set out the three main channels through which London Capital & Finance plc (LCF) bondholders can seek compensation. These are the administration process, the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS), and the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) Complaints Scheme.

My Written Ministerial Statement also set out that, taking into consideration the specific and complex set of circumstances surrounding the collapse of LCF, the Treasury will set up a compensation scheme which will assess whether there is justification for further one-off compensation payments in certain circumstances for some LCF bondholders. The Government will announce further details in due course.

■ Money: Coronavirus

Chris Elmore: [\[148862\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing short term measures to protect the cash system following the national covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Chris Elmore: [\[148863\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the benefits of an industry-wide commitment to membership of LINK and the Post Office Banking Framework ahead of the introduction of legislation protecting access to cash.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that cash remains important to millions of people across the UK and has committed to protecting access to cash for those that need it. The Government published a Call for Evidence on 15 October 2020 seeking views on the key considerations associated with cash access, including deposit and withdrawal facilities, cash acceptance, and regulatory oversight of the cash system. The Call for Evidence closed on the 25 November 2020. The Government is considering responses and will set out next steps in due course.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Treasury has been working closely with regulators and industry to ensure customers continue to have access to essential banking services, while also protecting the safety of staff and customers. This has meant the vast majority of people have been able to access cash through the pandemic.

The Government continues to be fully supportive of the Post Office Banking Framework Agreement. The agreement allows 95% of business and 99% of personal

banking customers to carry out their everyday banking at 11,500 Post Office branches in the UK until December 2022. The terms of future Banking Framework Agreements are commercial decisions between industry and the Post Office. The Government will continue to engage with industry and the Post Office to ensure that all customers, wherever they live, continue to have access to over the counter banking services.

Since 1998, all the major UK banks and building societies have participated in LINK, enabling their ATMs to be used by customers of the other members of the network. Presently, ATMs are the most commonly used means of withdrawing cash. Membership of LINK is a commercial decision.

■ Mortgages: Coronavirus

Robert Halfon:

[\[147822\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to extend the mortgage holiday.

John Glen:

We have extended the period that borrowers can apply for a mortgage holiday to support all homeowners in financial distress. Mortgage borrowers who have not yet taken a payment holiday are able to take a payment holiday for up to six months. Borrowers who have taken an initial payment holiday can top this up to six months. The Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA's) guidance released on 17 November sets out that mortgage holidays (up to a maximum of 6 months) will remain an option for borrowers until 31 March 2021. However, the FCA guidance also notes that all payment holidays will need to end by 31 July 2021.

For borrowers that have already taken a full six months payment holiday, the FCA's guidance sets out that firms should continue to provide support through tailored forbearance options for those borrowers that are facing ongoing financial difficulties. This could include granting new mortgage payment holidays.

■ National Library of Wales: Finance

Ben Lake:

[\[147960\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to Answer of 1 February 2021 to Question 143882 on Public Libraries: Finance, for what reason the funding treatment of the National Library of Wales under the Barnett Formula has changed since 2015.

Kemi Badenoch:

As outlined in the Statement of Funding Policy, where UK government programmes provide services across the UK, the comparability factor will be 0%.

The vast majority of Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) spending in relation to "Central Libraries" goes to the British Library. "The British Library" was established through the British Library Act 1972 which effected a national library for the United Kingdom.

The legal basis for the British Library makes it distinct from other libraries policy and spending. As it is absolutely clear that the legal extent of the British Library is the United Kingdom, it is right that the comparability factor should be 0%.

■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

Chi Onwurah: [\[148786\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to make financial support available for (a) freelancers and (b) other self employed people who have been ineligible for existing covid-19 support packages.

Jesse Norman:

The Government recognises that some of the rules and conditions vital to ensuring that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) worked for the vast majority meant that some people did not qualify for these schemes.

However, the National Audit Office has acknowledged that the SEISS and CJRS have been successful in helping to protect the livelihoods of millions of people and are just two elements of a comprehensive £280 billion package of support

Those not eligible for the SEISS and CJRS may still be eligible for other elements of the support available. The Universal Credit standard allowance has been temporarily increased for 2020-21 and the Minimum Income Floor relaxed for the duration of the crisis, so that where self-employed claimants' earnings have fallen significantly, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings.

In addition to this, they may also have access to other elements of the package, including Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

■ Soft Drinks: Taxation

John Lamont: [\[145846\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much the Soft Drinks Industry Levy has raised since that Levy was introduced.

Kemi Badenoch:

Since its introduction in April 2018, the provisional total for revenue raised from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy up to and including December 2020 is £802 million. This consists of the following amounts raised per financial year:

2018-19: £240 million

2019-20: £337 million

2020-21: £224 million (provisional year to date total covering revenue received between April 2020 and December 2020).

The discrepancy of £1 million between the overall total (£802 million) and the sum of financial year subtotals (£801 million) is due to rounding used by HMRC when producing these statistics.

■ Stock Market: Internet

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[148049\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of trading platforms blocking retail investors from trading GME and AMC stocks while hedge funds have been permitted to continue to trade freely.

John Glen:

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is the UK's financial markets conduct regulator and is responsible for protecting consumers, ensuring market integrity and promoting effective competition. As set out in the FCA's statement of 29 January, broking firms are not obliged to offer trading facilities to clients and may withdraw or suspend services if it is necessary or prudent to do so. The FCA's statement also said that they would take appropriate action wherever they see evidence of UK firms or individuals causing harm to UK consumers or markets.

The Government recognises that the pace and creativity of innovation in UK financial services creates new opportunities for businesses and consumers to participate in markets through technologies such as app-based platforms. However, investors should be aware that investing in securities comes with risks. The FCA's statement of 29 January warned consumers that any losses that result from such investments are unlikely to be covered under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

■ Taxation

Dan Carden:

[\[147989\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a one-off wealth tax as proposed by the UK Wealth Tax Commission in its final report of 9 December 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The Wealth Tax Commission has no connection or link to the Government. The Commission's report offers one perspective about how taxes might be raised in future if necessary, but it is clear that introducing a new one-off wealth tax in the UK would be a hugely complex undertaking and the amount of revenue raised would be highly dependent on the final design of the tax.

The UK does not have a comprehensive, single wealth tax, but it does have several taxes on assets and wealth. These operate across many different economic activities, including the acquisition, holding, transfer and disposal of assets, and income derived from assets. As set out by the Wealth Tax Commission, the UK's taxes on wealth are on par with those of other G7 countries.

The UK's progressive income tax system means the top 1% of income taxpayers are projected to have paid over 29% of all Income Tax, and top 5% are projected to have paid over 50%, in 2019-20.

■ Tourism: Coronavirus

Greg Clark: [\[147802\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of Inbound Tourism Resilience Fund proposal set out in UKinbound's letter of 14 January 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the significant disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on sectors such as tourism.

During this difficult time the Treasury has worked intensively with employers, delivery partners, industry groups, and other government departments to understand the long-term impact of Covid-19 on all key areas of the economy and continues to do so.

We welcome views from external stakeholders such as UKinbound and encourage their continued engagement with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport as the government lead for tourism.

We will continue to monitor the impact of government support on public services, businesses, individuals and sectors, including the tourism sector, throughout this pandemic. The upcoming Budget will be an opportunity to take stock of our wider support and set out the next stage of our economic response; however it must be recognised that it will not be possible to preserve every job or business indefinitely, nor stand in the way of the economy adapting and people finding new jobs or starting new businesses.

■ Veterans: Government Assistance

Dan Jarvis: [\[147853\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the support given to service personnel who retired from the UK armed forces before 1975.

Steve Barclay:

The Treasury is aware of this issue. We understand and sympathise with the position that these veterans find themselves in. Prior to 1975 there were no rights to preserved pensions in any public or private pension schemes. It has been the policy of successive governments not to make retrospective changes to pension schemes.

This Government remains committed to providing support to veterans, demonstrated by the publication of the first ever UK-wide Strategy for our Veterans in 2018 and the creation of the Office of Veterans' Affairs in 2019.

■ War Widows: Pensions

Stephen Morgan:

[\[145123\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the cost of restoring the war widows pension to people who had remarried or cohabited between 1973 and 2005.

Steve Barclay:

My department has not made a recent assessment of the costs. It has been the policy of successive governments that retrospective changes to public service pension and compensation schemes should not be made where benefits have already been awarded. The Government currently has no plans to reinstate war widow(er)s pensions with retrospective effect.

■ Wholesale Trade: Coronavirus Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[146804\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the eligibility of wholesalers for Local Authority Discretionary Funds.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Treasury has engaged closely with other Departments, including the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government throughout the design and implementation of grant support for businesses.

Local authorities in England have received £1.6 billion of discretionary funding through the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) to support their local economies and help businesses impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. This funding is for additional business support, to complement the Local Restrictions Support Grant for closed businesses.

We encourage local authorities to use their ARG allocations to set up a discretionary grant scheme using this funding for those businesses who are affected by closures, but which are not legally closed themselves, such as wholesalers. However, local authorities run the application schemes for the ARG, and will have significant discretion when it comes to deciding which businesses receive payments. Businesses should contact their local authorities for more information.

WALES

■ UK Government Union Capability Independent Review

Nia Griffith:

[\[147779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on the publication of the Dunlop review; and if he will make a statement.

Simon Hart:

I have regular discussions with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on a range of issues relating to the Union, including Lord Dunlop's review of Union Capability.

The UK Government's ambition is to publish the Dunlop Report as soon as possible alongside a full response from the Government. The report is an important contribution to the debate on strengthening the Union, a key Government priority.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Manufactured Goods: Disability

Marion Fellows:

[\[146919\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what plans the Government has to remove the Equality Act 2010 exemption on manufactured goods to ensure that products must be accessible for disabled people.

Kemi Badenoch:

The protections of the Equality Act 2010 do not extend to manufacturing, so there is no exemption to remove. The Act's protections, including for disability, are extensive. Service providers have an anticipatory duty to make reasonable adjustments, including ensuring their facilities and products are accessible to disabled people who wish to use them. What is reasonable will depend on the specific circumstances of the case and will be determined by such factors as practicality, cost and the extent to which people with disabilities are likely to want to use the service.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Budgeting Loans: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[145823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of suspending repayments on budgeting loans during the national covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Will Quince:

Debt recovery, including the recovery of Social Fund Budgeting Loans, was paused for 3 months from April 2020 so that Debt Management staff could support processing in excess of three million new Universal Credit claims following the outbreak of COVID 19.

Those staff have subsequently been able to return to their roles in Debt Management and we have adopted a phased and controlled approach to re-instating debt recovery, allowing us to manage the demand on services.

There are no current plans to re-instate the suspension of debt recovery, but we will keep the situation under review.

We recognise that there will be some people who may be experiencing financial difficulty, and anyone unable to afford the rate of recovery is encouraged to contact DWP so an affordable rate of repayment can be negotiated.

■ Children: Maintenance

Justin Madders: [\[147892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 17 December 2020 to Question 131324 on Children: Maintenance, how many child maintenance overpayments via direct pay have been reimbursed through (a) agreement between payments and (b) the courts.

Justin Madders: [\[147893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many child maintenance overpayments via direct pay there have been since 2018.

Guy Opperman:

The Department does not have information available regarding Direct Pay cases with overpayments. When customers opt to use the Direct Pay service and a balance of unpaid child maintenance accrues or an overpayment occurs, normally customers need to make repayment arrangements between themselves.

The Child Maintenance Service do not record information where reimbursement occurs due to agreement between parents or where they have contacted her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal service (HMCTS) on Direct Pay cases.

A parent can request reimbursement from Child Maintenance Service on a Direct Pay case in certain scenarios. However, there is no available published data on such reimbursements.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Apprentices

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[147816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of staff employed by her Department are apprentices.

Guy Opperman:

3.1 per cent of the department's employees are undertaking an apprenticeship based on the last quarterly figures produced as at 30 November 2020.

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Andy McDonald: [\[147867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how the Health and Safety Executive has categorised covid-19 in the workplace according to 'Table 1 Consequence table' in the Enforcement Management Model (EMM) Operational version 3.2.

Mims Davies:

HSE has decided the category 'significant' in the EMM table best supports inspectors in making sensible, proportionate regulatory decisions. The definition is that the effects are non-permanent or reversible, non-progressive and any disability is temporary. This definition refers to the likely response of the working population as a whole, not taking account of individuals with a particular resistance or susceptibility.

■ Employment: Young People

Seema Malhotra:

[\[148799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with the Prime Minister on his announcement of 30 June 2020 of an opportunity guarantee for young people.

Mims Davies:

The Government recognises that young people have been especially vulnerable during the pandemic and are committed to providing support to help them move into work in these difficult times. Our £30bn Plan for Jobs includes specific interventions targeted at young people.

From September 2020 we started the implementation of the DWP Youth Offer for all 18 to 24 year olds making a claim to Universal Credit and who are in the Intensive Work Search Group.

Our 13-week Youth Employment Programme delivers wrap-around support for many of the Plans for Jobs initiatives, and helps young people to take up work-related training or a job, such as Kickstart, which has so far seen over 100,000 successful applications with over 2,000 young people starting work, a traineeship, an apprenticeship and Sector-based Work Academy Programmes. The Youth Employment Programme is live and our dedicated Work Coaches are delivering the programme to young people.

Youth Hubs are co-located and co-delivered with our network of external partners and have been rolling out nationally, with many hubs providing support digitally to young people during the current restrictions.

Youth Employability Coaches are providing flexible support to young people with significant complex needs and barriers to help them move into employment. We are also offering this group of young people six weeks of in-work support when they find a job.

This programme will provide a guaranteed foundation of support for 18 to 24 year olds in the Intensive Worksearch Regime of Universal Credit. This means that whatever their needs, young people can find the right support, education or training that will ultimately lead to sustained employment.

We will continue to monitor our policies and processes to ensure young unemployed people are effectively supported during the current economic situation.

■ Jobcentres: Staff

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[148925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department has made towards appointing 13,500 additional work coaches.

Mims Davies:

As at 29 January 2021 8,863 Work Coaches have started in the Department.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Seema Malhotra: [\[147859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Kickstart placements were (a) approved by her Department and (b) started by young people in January 2021.

Mims Davies:

By the end of January 2021, for the Department for Work and Pensions' Kickstart scheme, there were (a) more than 100,000 approved across the scheme. And again by the end of January (b) more than 2,000 young people had started a Kickstart job since the scheme launched.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency.

Seema Malhotra: [\[148795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish a list of the employers who have successfully applied to participate in the Kickstart scheme that are providing over 30 placements; and for each of those employers, if she will publish the number of Kickstart scheme placements (a) approved and (b) started.

Mims Davies:

The Department of Work and Pensions will publish a list of successful employers in due course, in line with normal government grant policy.

Seema Malhotra: [\[148796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Kickstart scheme placements have been (a) approved and (b) started by young people to date.

Mims Davies:

As of 4 February 2021, there have been (a) over 100,000 approved job placements and (b) over 2,000 young people starting jobs as a part of the Department for Work and Pensions' Kickstart scheme.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in

any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency.

Seema Malhotra:

[148797]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many work placements her Department plans to create under the Kickstart scheme in the next (a) three, (b) six and (c) 12 months.

Mims Davies:

There will be no cap on the number of jobs that can be created by the Department of Work and Pensions' Kickstart Scheme and we are actively encouraging further applications from employers. The department plans to create as many new jobs for young people as possible.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Disability

Cat Smith:

[143815]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department is planning to collect data on the proportion of jobs created as part of the Kickstart scheme, allocated to young people with a disability.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: The Department of Work and Pensions will track the success of Kickstart amongst young people on the scheme who have a disability or health condition and will aim to do this as part of the evaluation. We plan to do this using a combination of evidence sources including management information (Universal Credit claimants are asked if they have an illness, disability or health condition and we can link to other datasets to see if they are on any kind of disability benefits) and survey data.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Finance

Cat Smith:

[143814]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much of the £2 billion budget for the Kickstart scheme has been allocated to participating businesses.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: There have been over 100,000 job placements approved and offers made for funding from the Department for Work and Pensions' Kickstart Scheme. A Kickstart employer receives funding when a young person starts their placement and periodically through the length of their placement.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Midlands

Mr Andrew Mitchell: [\[147110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many young people have applied for a Kickstart scheme placement in the Midlands.

Mims Davies:

Work Coaches refer suitable candidates to available vacancies, statistics on referrals is not currently available.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Wolverhampton South West

Stuart Anderson: [\[145881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress she has made on delivering the Kickstart scheme for young people in the Wolverhampton South West constituency.

Mims Davies:

As of 19/01/2021 over 100,000 jobs have been approved for the Kickstart Scheme. We are not yet able to break starts data down to constituency level.

Our local Job Centre networks are working with employers and Gateways in all areas, including Wolverhampton South West, to encourage more Kickstart jobs to be created and offering support to help them do so.

■ Kickstart Scheme: York

Julian Sturdy: [\[145788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many residents of the City of York are accessing support through the (a) Kickstart programme and (b) Plan for Jobs measures in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mims Davies:

The requested local data is not available.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Staff

Seema Malhotra: [\[147860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many full-time equivalent work coaches her Department employs; and what the average caseload is for each full-time equivalent work coach.

Mims Davies:

The department employs 20217 Work Coaches and their average workload for IWS (Intensive Work Search) cases is 190. These figures were correct at the date of the last reporting period which was 21/01/2021.

■ Private Rented Housing: Housing Benefit

Vicky Foxcroft: [146948]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the (a) average processing time, (b) approval rate and (c) refusal rate is of requests for Alternative Payment Arrangements from private landlords where their tenant is in receipt of housing benefit.

Will Quince:

There is no target timescale for processing applications for Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs). APAs are available at any point during Universal Credit claims where there is risk of financial harm to a claimant and/or their family.

APAs can help claimants who need additional support with:

- paying housing costs of Universal Credit as a Managed Payment direct to the landlord;
- more frequent than monthly payments; or;
- split payment of an award between partners.

Universal Credit payment timeliness statistics are published in the Households on Universal Credit section on Stat-Xplore. These figures can be broken down by those with APAs and can be found at:

[https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/\(opens in a new tab\)](https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/(opens in a new tab)).

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

Regarding (b) approval rate and (c) refusal rate, the information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate costs.

■ Restart Programme

Seema Malhotra: [148798]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the timetable is for the rollout of the Restart programme; and if she will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

The commercial process commenced on 10th December 2020. We expect contracts to be awarded in Spring 2021, with go live Summer 2021.

Further detail on the scheme will be announced in due course.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Marion Fellows: [148832]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Disability Unit has made of the potential merits of extending the £20 uplift to universal credit to legacy benefit claimants.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is committed to supporting disabled people affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. The temporary Universal Credit Standard Allowance uplift was introduced to support those facing the most financial disruption due to the pandemic. There are no plans to extend this temporary uplift to legacy benefits. Claimants on legacy benefits can make a claim for Universal Credit if they believe that they will be better off.

Claimants should check their eligibility before applying to Universal Credit as legacy benefits will end when they submit their claim and they will not be able to return to them in the future. For this reason, prospective claimants are signposted to independent benefits calculators on GOV.UK. There are special arrangements for those in receipt of the Severe Disability Premium, who are now able to make a new claim to Universal Credit.

The Government will publish the National Strategy for Disabled People this year taking into account the impacts of the pandemic on disabled people. The strategy will focus on the issues that disabled people say affect them the most in all aspects of life.

■ State Retirement Pensions

Hywel Williams:

[\[147754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that all those entitled to a UK state pension receive the full rate of that pension regardless of their country of residence.

Guy Opperman:

The UK State Pension is payable worldwide to those who meet the qualifying conditions. Entitlement to the UK State Pension is based on a person's National Insurance record without regard to nationality. The annual index-linked increases are paid to UK State Pension recipients where there is a legal requirement to do so. For example, where UK State Pension recipients are living in countries where there is a reciprocal agreement that provides for up-rating.

■ Universal Credit: Fines

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[145770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to Answer of 22 January 2021 to Question 134402 on Universal Credit, what assessment her Department has made of the equity of the decision to decrease the maximum deductions limit from 40 per cent to 30 per cent of the standard allowance on the benefits of allowing decision makers to deduct court fines at the minimum of 5 per cent of standard allowance.

Will Quince:

The decrease to the maximum deductions limit relates to a reduction in the overall normal maximum rate of deductions from Universal Credit (UC) from 40% to 30% of the claimant's standard allowance from October 2019. The normal maximum rate of

deductions will reduce to 25% of the claimant's standard allowance in October this year.

Magistrate Courts impose Fines and Compensation orders on offenders, and can instruct the DWP to make a deduction from UC. The rate we can recover court fines is set out in the regulations at a minimum rate of 5% of a claimant's standard allowance and up to a maximum rate of £108.35 per assessment period, as long as there is sufficient UC in payment. Similarly, the maximum deduction for court fines will not exceed 30% of the claimant's standard allowance (25% from October).

■ Universal Credit: Poverty

Drew Hendry: [\[148841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect on relative poverty levels of the decision not to extend the £20 universal credit uplift to employment support allowance claimants.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

If a legacy benefit claimant wishes to apply for Universal Credit, they can do so online. However, we encourage all those who think they may be eligible to use a benefits calculator before applying, as making a Universal Credit claim will cease any entitlement to legacy benefits that an individual might have and they cannot move back to legacy benefits.

■ Winter Fuel Payments

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[148819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whom in her Department constituents can contact for emergency support to arrange the payment of overdue winter fuel payments for 2020-21.

Guy Opperman:

DWP customers can contact The Winter Fuel Payment Freephone helpline on 0800 731 0160 if they wish to raise an enquiry or request an urgent payment.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Local Elections

Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith): [\[HCWS773\]](#)

I am updating Parliament on the Government's plans to proceed with the local elections on 6 May 2021 and the statutory instruments I am laying today on nominations.

Safe and secure elections are the cornerstone of our democracy. The Government has long been clear that there should be a very high bar for delay, but it was responsible to keep the situation under review in order to take into account the views of the electoral community and of public health experts. Having considered these views, the Government confirmed on Friday 5 February 2021 that the range of polls scheduled for 6 May 2021, including council and mayoral elections in England, and the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales, will go ahead as planned. It is important that we give this certainty to the electoral sector and political parties.

The Government has also published a Delivery Plan setting out how the polls will be delivered in a Covid-secure and effective way. It sets out how these polls will proceed, from announcement to results, and then covers the four major areas that we are addressing: public health and social distancing; nominations and campaigning; voting; and the delivery of elections. The Government is providing a package of measures to support statutorily independent Returning Officers to deliver these elections successfully and with the right precautions in place. Those measures include changes to proxy voting rules so that those affected by COVID-19 can still vote; and the provision of indemnity to Returning Officers for COVID-19 risks in respect of these elections.

There will be an estimated £92 million of government grant funding that will be provided to local authorities for the elections; of this, £31 million is an uplift to directly address costs associated with making the elections COVID-19 secure.

I am today providing further detail of the measures the Government intends to take to change temporarily the nominations process, in light of the exceptional circumstances. For potential candidates standing for elected office in the council, mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections, we are introducing measures to reduce the travel and contact involved in completing their nomination form.

The Government has listened to the views of the electoral sector, candidates and political parties that the need to collect a high number of signatures for nomination as a candidate in some types of poll was encouraging an unhelpful and unnecessary amount of interaction, as well as complexity for candidates. While it is essential that candidates in a poll can demonstrate a clear amount of local support, we must balance the importance of democracy with the need to protect people in these unique circumstances. In reaching a decision about the approach to nominations we have consulted with the Parliamentary Parties Panel and considered other cross-party representations.

These statutory instruments, one affirmative and one negative, will therefore make changes to the nomination process to reduce the number of signatures that candidates are required to collect for almost all types of poll due to be held on 6 May, including council elections, mayoral elections and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections. These provisions are time-limited; the elections next May (2022) will automatically revert to the standard rules.

I intend to publish further guidance for candidates, their agents and political parties later this month. The Government will be engaging with Parliamentary Parties Panel on the new guidance and on campaigning provisions, to ensure the views of political parties are taken into account.

The associated documents have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

EDUCATION

■ Capital Update

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):

[\[HCWS768\]](#)

I am confirming details of the first 50 schools to benefit from the new school rebuilding programme announced by the Prime Minister in June 2020, as well as details of a further 21 new free schools.

As part of the Government's plan to drive growth beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, we are committed to investing in infrastructure, skills and innovation. Investing in our school buildings is vital to deliver the world-class education needed to get the country back on its feet.

As set out at the recent Spending Review, we are delivering on our promises by launching a ten-year rebuilding programme, with a commitment to 500 school rebuilding projects over the next decade. This will replace many poor condition and ageing school buildings with modern, energy efficient designs, transforming education for thousands of pupils.

The ten-year school rebuilding programme demonstrates our continued commitment to investing in the school estate and providing a long-term pipeline of projects for the construction sector as we build back better.

The Department for Education will build on its existing construction expertise with a continued focus on innovative modern methods of construction to support more highly skilled jobs and improved productivity. Our market leading frameworks, including a new construction framework later this year, will continue to provide opportunities across the industry and enable small and medium-sized enterprises to benefit from the opportunities that a decade-long pipeline will bring. The construction projects procured through these frameworks will support jobs and create apprenticeships and T-Level placements across England.

The first 50 schools to benefit from this programme have been prioritised based on condition need and will be supported by over £1 billion in capital funding. These first

projects include primary and secondary schools as well as a sixth form college and special and alternative provision settings.

This also represents a substantial investment in schools in the midlands and north of England, with thirty-eight out of fifty projects located in these regions. We expect construction on the first sites to begin from autumn 2021.

The ten-year programme will continue to target school buildings in the worst condition across England and we will set out further plans shortly.

Alongside the rebuilding programme, the Government has committed £1.8 billion in 2021-22 for maintaining and improving the condition of the school estate.

Thousands more children across the country are also set to benefit from a new free school opening in their local area in the years to come, as I have approved 21 successful new free schools, providing over 15,500 new school places once open. In addition, I have approved in principle a further 8 schools, subject to meeting certain conditions.

These schools will help level up opportunity across the country by providing high quality school places in the areas where they are most needed. Ten of the 21 free schools approved will open in some of the most deprived areas – including three in Opportunity Areas, where the Department works to remove barriers that could stop young people from achieving their potential.

These new schools reflect the Government's continued commitment to the free school programme. 249 free schools have now been approved to open in the coming years, spreading the benefits of the free schools programme to even more areas of the country and joining the 558 free schools already open.

We are also investing £10.1 million of funding in schools across England, to allow them to open their existing school sports and swimming facilities outside of the school day.

Funding will be distributed via Sport England's network of county level Active Partnerships. Schools will have the opportunity to bid for this funding in the Summer term.

Further details, including lists of the school rebuilding projects and successful free school applicants, have been published on GOV.UK. Copies will be placed in the House Library.

■ Education Update

The Minister of State for School Standards (Nick Gibb):

[\[HCWS771\]](#)

On Friday 5 February, I laid before Parliament the Education (Coronavirus, Remote Education Information) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021, which require schools to publish information on their website about the remote education they are providing to their pupils. If schools do not have a website, the Regulations set out alternative requirements for ensuring that this information is accessible.

The Regulations come into force on 12 February 2021, which is 7 days after being laid, rather than the 21 days required by convention. This is to ensure parents have the earliest access to the information they need about schools' remote education. The

Department for Education has published a suggested [template](#) that schools may use to present this information.

The requirement for schools to publish this information on their website will not be more onerous than what has already been asked of schools in the guidance, [Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](#). This guidance was updated on 3 December 2020 to include an expectation that schools would publish this same information by 25 January 2021.

On 4 January 2021, the Prime Minister announced that all schools would immediately move to remote education provision for all but vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. The Prime Minister's statement on 27 January confirmed that full return to on-site education will not occur until 8 March at the earliest.

Remote education has become the principal means of delivering the school curriculum. Requiring schools to set out the details of their remote education curriculum will provide parents with key information about schools' plans for ensuring pupils continue their education at home.

The Minister of State for School Standards (Nick Gibb): [\[HCWS772\]](#)

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HOME OFFICE

■ PNC Update

The Minister of State for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse):

[\[HCWS774\]](#)

Further to my statement to the House on the 18 January, this is an update on the work being carried out to recover the records deleted from the Police National Computer (PNC) in error.

The Home Office is taking forward a 4-phase plan to respond to the incident and recover the data:

- Phase 1 has been completed and involved using code to identify and extract the complete list of what had been deleted;
- Phase 2 has also been completed and involved analysis to establish an accurate list of the affected systems and records for each force;
- Phase 3 is ongoing involves recovering the data from the PNC and the IDENT1 (Fingerprint) and National DNA systems;
- Phase 4 will involve work to ensure we are deleting any data that should have been deleted as usual when this incident first began.

Phases 1 and 2 of the work found that a total of 209,550 offence records have been wrongly deleted, which are associated to 112,697 persons' records. Of these 15,089 individuals have had their data deleted in totality. Our analysis has identified that only 195 full fingerprint records were deleted, with all these records relating to cases over 10-years old. We have also confirmed that no records of convictions have been deleted. Our analysis shows that 99.5% of the deleted records were created prior to 2011.

Phase 3 is now well under way and technicians are confident that all the data which has been deleted can be restored. Work to recover that data is moving forward as quickly as is possible, but it is vital that the data is restored safely to protect the integrity of the data. Our current assessment suggests that the work will take approximately 12 more weeks to complete, though clearly, we will accelerate this if we possibly can.

While the data is incomplete, there is the possibility that law enforcement partners will not have access to records and information that could help progress their inquiries and investigations.

Outlined below are details of such mitigation activities:

First, they can search the Police National Database (PND). This is a national intelligence database that holds records of arrests of individuals and contains information that will allow law enforcement partners to judge whether there is biometric information or other key evidence missing from the affected systems. If missing data records are identified, then the investigating officers can request copies of biometric samples and arrest records from the owning organisations.

Second, forces have a wide variety of local systems in place to log calls and to maintain custody records. These are frequently used as the primary system into which information is entered, before it is then integrated into PNC for national use.

Third, the police can also continue to search other relevant national databases, such as the violent offender and sex offender register.

Fourth, where an individual is suspected of a crime and the PNC confirms the existence of a duplicate set of fingerprints then officers can request the set of prints from the force who retain a hard copy.

Fifth, if the police have enough evidence and they believe that the DNA of a suspect is required but cannot find any records on the PNC or other systems, they can arrest suspects and collect their DNA in line with their powers.

Sixth, the Home Office, and our suppliers, have worked to make the incorrectly deleted DNA profiles available to policing whilst the full capability is restored. In order to deliver this mitigation, we have restored the DNA database backups to a temporary, secure location. We have made this data accessible to forces and national agencies this week and setup a business process has been created to enable matching in support of ongoing investigations. During this period all audit and legislative requirements will be met.

Finally, the Home Secretary and I have commissioned an external review led by Lord Hogan-Howe to ensure the necessary lessons are learned to avoid similar incidents in the future.

The review is expected to report by the middle of March. After the review has concluded and been considered by the Home Secretary, a summary will be placed in the Library of the House.

We will provide a further update to the House in due course.

■ Security Update

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): [\[HCWS769\]](#)

On Thursday 4 February, the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) lowered the UK national terrorism threat level from *SEVERE* to *SUBSTANTIAL*. This means that a terrorist attack is still likely.

The decision to change the UK terrorism threat level is taken by JTAC independently of Ministers. JTAC keep the threat level under constant review and conduct a formal review every six months. This is a systematic, comprehensive and rigorous process, based on the very latest intelligence and analysis of internal and external factors which drive the threat.

The decision to lower the threat level from *SEVERE* to *SUBSTANTIAL* is due to the significant reduction in the momentum of attacks in Europe since those seen between September and November 2020. However, the UK national threat level is kept under constant review and is subject to change at any time.

Terrorism remains one of the most direct and immediate risks to our National Security. *SUBSTANTIAL* continues to indicate a high level of threat; and an attack on the UK is still likely. The public should continue to remain vigilant and report any concerns to the Police.

The Government, Police and intelligence agencies continue to work tirelessly to address the threat posed by terrorism in all its forms and the threat level remains under constant review.

WALES

■ Contingencies Fund Advance

Secretary of State for Wales (Simon Hart):

[\[HCWS767\]](#)

I hereby give notice of the Wales Office's intention to seek an advance from the Contingencies Fund. The department requires an advance to meet an urgent cash requirement pending parliamentary approval of the Supplementary Estimates 2020-21.

The Wales Office's net cash limit for 2020-21, approved in the main Supply Estimate, will be reached by mid-February 2021. This is a consequence of meeting in full the funding requirements of the Welsh Government. Significant additional consequential funding for the Welsh Government, arising from announcements made by the UK Government, will be provided in the Supplementary Supply Estimate. This will cover the increased costs incurred by the Welsh Government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Parliamentary approval for additional non-budget expenditure of £3,800,000,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Wales Office. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £3,800,000,000 will be met by a repayable cash advance from the Contingencies Fund.

The advance will be repaid immediately following Royal Assent of the Supply and Appropriation (Anticipation and Adjustments) Bill in March 2021.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Plan for Jobs update

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey):

[\[HCWS770\]](#)

Our Plan for Jobs is an ambitious programme of job creation and support to help people of all ages move into work or gain the skills that will open up job opportunities. I would like to update the House on two of the schemes: SWAPs – our Sector-based Work Academy Programme and our new Job Finding Support service, which went live across Great Britain on 11th January.

SWAPs is helping people in England and Scotland to upskill, retrain and pivot towards surging sectors, including construction, infrastructure and social care to meet local labour markets and employer demand. SWAPs is not currently offered in Wales as there is a similar programme provided by the Welsh Government. Today I am pleased to inform the

House that we are increasing the number of placements on the scheme to 80,000 for the upcoming financial year. This builds on the more than 40,000 starts we have already seen since last April.

I am very excited about this expansion of SWAPs – it will mean work coaches can help many more people open the door to jobs they may not have previously considered and move back into work with new skills, work experience and a guaranteed interview for a job. They will join those who have already started roles through SWAPs, including in care worker jobs with Derby City Council, security roles with the Mercury Group and GMS Group in Birmingham, and banking jobs with Barclays and the Wise Group in Kilmarnock.

These are just a few examples of how SWAPs is helping people gain the right skills and experience to support them into work following the impact of the pandemic and into the jobs employers and the country needs as we look to secure our national economic recovery.

Job Finding Support also launched last month and has made rapid progress to help people quickly bounce back into work. The new digital support service is in operation across Great Britain and we expect this vital service to help up to 160,000 people over the course of the next 12 months

This new light-touch support, provided entirely online, is helping those who have become unemployed and claimed benefits within the past 13 weeks. Many of them will have worked in continuous employment for several years and will not have recent experience of applying for jobs, so Job Finding Support aims to address any skill gaps and help people move rapidly back into work.

Participants receive a minimum of four hours flexible, personalised support, including a mock interview, and at least one digital online group session aiming to help identify their transferable skills and provide sector-specific job advice. Participants will also be helped to fine tune their CV and a Job Finding Action Plan tailored to their needs. Those who fulfil the eligibility and suitability criteria will be referred by Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches, on a voluntary basis.

Our Plan for Jobs is a plan for everyone; creating the opportunity to level up the nation, the opportunity for hope, and the opportunity to build back better.