



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 9 February 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:44 P.M., 09 February 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS**BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY****■ Batteries: Sustainable Development****Paul Blomfield:**[\[146870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the sustainability of sourcing minerals for batteries in countries where human rights abuses are taking place.

Paul Scully:

There have been no such discussions.

■ Business: Coronavirus**Sajid Javid:**[\[146841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department has taken to support businesses not required to close by law during the covid-19 lockdown but that are significantly affected by restrictions on the retail, hospitality and leisure industry.

Paul Scully:

Local Authorities have been provided with funding via the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). The ARG is a discretionary scheme aimed at supporting businesses including those that have not been mandated to close but which have had their trade adversely affected by the restrictions that have been put in place to tackle Covid-19 and save lives. Eligibility for the ARG is set locally, and guidance makes clear that Local Authorities may use this funding for grants or for other related business support as they see fit.

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a further £500m top up to ARG in January, in addition to £1.1bn already allocated in November 2020.

Mike Wood:[\[912067\]](#)

What assessment his Department has made of the effect of state aid limits on the distribution of covid-19 support for businesses in the hospitality and retail sectors.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is keeping under close review the impact of subsidy control rules on the ability of businesses to access Covid-19 support and will publish new guidance as and when the circumstances require it.

■ Carers: Leave

Ms Harriet Harman:

[\[146755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish a response to the consultation on carers' leave.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to delivering the manifesto commitment to introduce a new right to an additional week of leave for unpaid carers.

The consultation on Carer's Leave ran from March to August 2020, setting out detailed policy proposals to create a new employment right for one week's unpaid leave. The consultation received a significant number of responses, demonstrating the importance of this issue.

The Government response to the consultation will be published in due course, setting out the way forward.

■ Conditions of Employment

Chris Stephens:

[\[149261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the UK being ranked by UNICEF 34 out of 41 OECD countries for family friendly policies; and if he will take urgent steps to support people on parental leave during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

We have a strong tradition of supporting working families in the UK and our parental leave arrangements are generous and flexible.

We go much further than the EU minimum and employed women in the UK have access to up to 52 weeks of Maternity Leave, 39 weeks of which are paid. Where the mother does not intend to use her full maternity entitlements, she can share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay with her partner, subject to the parents being eligible for Shared Parental Leave and Pay.

In 2020 we introduced Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay to support parents who suffered the loss of a child. We will also legislate to create a new Neonatal Leave and Pay entitlement to support new parents whose baby needs to spend time in neonatal care, as soon as parliamentary time allows.

The Government is sympathetic to the position that new parents have found themselves in during the pandemic. We have taken steps to support new parents by passing emergency legislation which ensures that parents who are furloughed during the period that is used to determine entitlement to Maternity, Adoption and other family-related statutory pay do not lose out. This legislation ensures that entitlement to pay and the rate of pay that parents receive is based on their normal earnings, not their furlough pay.

■ Conditions of Employment: Parents

Ms Harriet Harman: [\[146754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish the results of the Parental Rights Study 2019.

Paul Scully:

As part of the evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and Pay scheme we have undertaken large, representative, surveys of employers and parents and a qualitative study of parents who have taken SPL.

Alongside this we are assessing responses from the consultation on high-level options for reforming parental leave and pay. Together, all of these will give us a fuller picture of how well the current system of parental leave and pay is working for parents and employers.

We intend to publish the findings of all of the research that we have commissioned – including the “Parental Rights Study” - later this year alongside the evaluation report itself and the Government Response to the consultation.

■ Consumers: Protection

Mike Amesbury: [\[147043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of strengthening protections for consumers from unfair contracts and cancellation clauses.

Paul Scully:

Under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, all terms of written contracts must be fair and transparent. If terms in a consumer contract are assessed by a court as unfair, they will not be binding on the consumer, even if the consumer has “accepted” them.

The Government is working closely with Citizens Advice and the Consumer Protection Partnership, which brings together key partners within the consumer protection framework, to examine ways to make it easier for consumers to cancel unwanted subscriptions and avoid them facing unreasonable charges.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

Colum Eastwood: [\[149357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the ability of businesses to make the first repayments of the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme due in April 2021.

Paul Scully:

Many businesses have already begun paying off their Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) facility. While the Government covers the interest due on CBILS loans for the first twelve months of the loan, repayments of capital are

required during this period unless the lender chooses to grant additional forbearance measures.

CBILS lenders are able extend the repayment period for CBILS facilities where this is needed, to a maximum of 10 years. CBILS term extensions are offered at the discretion of lenders, and for forbearance purposes only.

Colum Eastwood: [\[149358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of businesses that will be unable to make their first repayment of the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme due in April 2021.

Paul Scully:

Many businesses have already begun paying off their Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) facility. While the Government covers the interest due on CBILS loans for the first twelve months of the loan, repayments of capital are required during this period unless the lender chooses to grant additional forbearance measures.

CBILS lenders are able extend the repayment period for CBILS facilities where this is needed, to a maximum of 10 years. CBILS term extensions are offered at the discretion of lenders, and for forbearance purposes only.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Northern Ireland

Colum Eastwood: [\[149359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many loans have been made under Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme to businesses in (a) Foyle constituency and (b) Northern Ireland; and what value of those loans was.

Paul Scully:

A breakdown on the number of loans provided through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme as of 10 January 2021 is in the table below.

REGION	NUMBER OF LOANS OFFERED	VALUE OF LOANS OFFERED (£)
Foyle	64	21,789,006
Northern Ireland	1,501	496,806,683

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Third Sector

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[149270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will ensure that the successor scheme to the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme takes into account the specific needs of charities and social enterprises.

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[149271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will ensure that the successor loan scheme to the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme will continue the exemption of creditworthy charities and social enterprises from the over 50 per cent trading criteria.

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[149272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will ensure that the successor loan scheme to the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme will continue the distinct individual guarantee cover and portfolio cap level for charities and social enterprises.

Paul Scully:

Details on the terms of the successor loan scheme will be announced in due course.

The Government takes very seriously the economic impact of Covid-19 on charities and social enterprises.

However, I can confirm that the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme does not feature different guarantee levels (either for individual loans or at the portfolio level) for charities and social enterprises.

■ **Coronavirus: Direct Selling**

Emma Hardy: [\[147021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether door-to-door selling is permitted during the period of covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced in January 2021.

Paul Scully:

Door-to-door sales should not take place during the national lockdown. Sales activities should be conducted remotely (such as by phone, online or e-mail) as set out in the business closures [guidance](#).

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Apprentices**

Wes Streeting: [\[146958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many and what proportion of the staff employed by his Department are apprentices.

Amanda Solloway:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (excluding its Executive Agencies) currently has 97 apprentices. The proportion of apprentices employed by the Department is 1.78%.

■ **Environment Protection: Coronavirus**

Karin Smyth: [\[912060\]](#)

What plans he has to promote a green recovery from the covid-19 outbreak.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We are delivering on our commitment to build back greener. The Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution will create long-term advantage for the UK in low-carbon technologies and services. It will support up to 250,000 green jobs, levelling up regions across the UK, and reinvigorate our industrial heartlands. The Plan will mobilise £12 billion of Government investment to unlock three times as much private sector investment by 2030.

Flexible Working: Coronavirus**Mrs Maria Miller:**[\[912069\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on employers' attitudes towards flexible working.

Paul Scully:

During the pandemic, up to 47% of the workforce have worked from home. While this is not the only form of flexible working, we hope this will have a positive impact on attitudes towards greater flexibility in when and where work is done. We will build on this as we look to make flexible working the default.

Green Homes Grant Scheme**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[149151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the assessment criteria was for defining the primary and secondary measures within the Green Homes Grant; and when those measures will be reviewed.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Primary measures in the scheme were chosen because they support jobs, are cost effective and have a large impact on carbon emissions. These measures tend to be those that householders would not install in the absence of the scheme and so government intervention through the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme will increase uptake. The Secondary measures are those that have a more limited impact on carbon emissions, but which still offer benefits in terms of energy efficiency.

We are keeping the scheme eligibility including eligible measures under review.

Horizon Europe**Ian Paisley:**[\[912075\]](#)

What recent steps his Department has taken to prepare for the UK potentially not associating to Horizon Europe.

Amanda Solloway:

I am delighted that, as part of our deal with the EU, we have agreed to associate to Horizon Europe. This represents a valuable collaboration on science and research to tackle global challenges, and in fields that will benefit UK citizens including the people of Northern Ireland.

■ Hunterston B Power Station

Alan Brown: [\[146926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what information his department holds on the planned shutdown date is for Hunterston (B) nuclear power station; what estimate his department has made of the average electricity generation capacity of that power station; and what plans his Department has to replace that capacity.

Alan Brown: [\[146927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what information his department holds on the planned shutdown date is for Hinkley Point (B) nuclear power station; what estimate his department has made of the average electricity generation capacity of that power station; and what plans his Department has to replace that capacity.

Alan Brown: [\[146928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what information his Department holds on the planned shutdown date for Hartlepool nuclear power station; what estimate his department has made of the average electricity generation capacity of that power station; and what plans his Department has to replace that capacity.

Alan Brown: [\[146929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what information his department holds on the planned shutdown date for Heysham nuclear power station; what estimate his Department has made of the average electricity generation capacity of that power station; and what plans his Department has to replace that capacity.

Alan Brown: [\[146930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what information his department holds on the planned shutdown date for Dungeness (B) nuclear power station; what estimate his department has made of the average electricity generation capacity of that power station; and what plans his Department has to replace that capacity.

Alan Brown: [\[146931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the planned shutdown date is for Torness nuclear power station; what the electricity generation capacity is of that power station; and what plans his Department has to replace that capacity.

Alan Brown: [\[146932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the planned shutdown date is for Heysham II nuclear power station; what the electricity

generation capacity is of that power station; and what plans his Department has to replace that capacity.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The shutdown of nuclear power stations is a matter for the operator and the Office for Nuclear Regulation. EDF Energy's published closure dates and the generating capacity for these stations is set out in the following table.

POWER STATION	EDF ENERGY'S PUBLISHED CLOSURE DATE	GENERATING CAPACITY
Hunterston B	2022	965 MW
Hinkley Point B	2022	955 MW
Hartlepool	2024	1,180 MW
Heysham 1	2024	1,155 MW
Dungeness B	2028	1,050 MW
Torness	2030	1,185 MW
Heysham 2	2030	1,230 MW

As set out in the government's Energy White Paper, to meet our target of net zero emissions by 2050, we will need to have a significant expansion of renewable generation complemented by nuclear power, carbon capture usage and storage (CCUS) and flexibility providing technologies.

We also have the capacity market mechanism which ensures the right incentives are in place to deliver the level of electricity required.

■ **Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries**

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[\[147101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of uncompetitive electricity prices on the UK steel sector's ability to compete internationally.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government is committed to minimising energy costs for businesses to ensure our economy remains strong and competitive. The ability for our industries to be able to compete across Europe and globally is a priority for this Government.

The Government has put moving to a cleaner, greener economy at the heart of its Industrial Strategy, especially with our commitment to Net Zero. Our aim is to work with the steel sector and help them to reduce carbon emissions. We will continue to support the steel sector in achieving these aims through the various funds available such as the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund and Clean Steel Fund.

We estimate that reduction in the various renewable costs for eligible energy intensive industries, including steel, will save them around £400m a year in electricity costs. We have also extended the schemes to compensate certain energy intensive industries for indirect emission cost to the end of the next financial year in order to minimise disruption to existing recipients whilst we conduct a review. Between 2013 and 2019, total compensation paid to the steel sector was over £480m.

We welcome the recent report by UK Steel - "*Closing the Gap*" - regarding electricity prices and will give its recommendations careful consideration.

■ Overseas Students: Visas

Matt Western:

[\[149317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on ensuring that employers are aware that (a) international postgraduate students and (b) other international students studying remotely will still be eligible for a post-study work visa if their degree does not finish during the 2020-21 academic year.

Amanda Solloway:

BEIS is working closely with the Home Office and the Department for Education on visas, including the new Graduate route to attract and retain talent. Students will normally be expected to undertake their studies in the UK to be eligible for the Graduate route. However, if students are required to either continue their current studies or commence a new course by distance or blended learning due to Covid-19, they will still be eligible to switch into the Graduate route on a concessionary basis if they spent some time studying outside the UK, provided they meet the other eligibility criteria.

The Government have published guidance which covers these temporary concessions for students and student sponsors, and an introductory guide for employers that provides an overview of the new immigration system and the steps employers can take to prepare.

Successful applicants on the Graduate route, scheduled to be launched in summer 2021, will be able to stay and work, or look for work, in the UK at any skill level for a maximum period of two years. Graduates will be able to switch into skilled work once they have found a suitable job.

■ Overseas Workers: EU Countries

Janet Daby:

[\[147106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a work visa that professionals can use to travel to the 27 EU states with one document.

Paul Scully:

There is no precedent in a Free Trade Agreement for EU Member States offering a single visa for work.

However, in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), the UK and EU did agree a range of facilitations for those travelling temporarily for work (Mode 4). The commitments agreed between the UK and the EU guarantee market access to business travellers in a wide number of sectors, waive work-permits for a range of short-term business visits, and provide for a minimum standard for how service providers should be treated when working in the other Party. We have also agreed commitments that will make it easier for professionals engaged in cross-border trade to apply for visas.

Commitments in the Mode 4 chapter are in addition to the EU already having legislated to allow UK nationals to travel visa-free for short stays of up to 90 days in any 180-day period. This will allow UK nationals travelling to, and within, the Schengen Area to undertake a limited range of activities, such as tourism, or attending business meetings, or cultural and sports events.

■ Parental Leave: Coronavirus

Chris Stephens:

[\[149263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will extend paternal leave to support people who have lost access to health services, baby groups and childcare support as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Government is sympathetic to the unique challenges that new parents have faced because of COVID-19 and the social distancing measures that we had to put in place to protect lives and the NHS. We recognise that these restrictions have meant that some parents have been, or still are unable to participate in activities normally available to them, such as baby groups.

The Government is not minded at this stage to extend Paternity Leave and Pay entitlements. We believe current entitlements to Paternity Leave and Pay and Shared Parental Leave and Pay are generous enough to allow fathers to care for the child and support the child's mother or adopter. Fathers have access to two weeks of Paternity Leave and Pay and through Shared Parental Leave and Pay, they can share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay with the mother if she does not intend to use her full maternity entitlements.

We understand that social distancing guidelines have made finding childcare more challenging. Parents who are unable to find suitable childcare can contact their local authority where they will receive advice on available settings. In addition, parents of children aged under 14 are now able to form 'childcare bubbles' to allow friends or family from one other household to provide informal childcare. Early Years settings (including nurseries and childminders) also remain open during the new national lockdown.

The NHS has made arrangements to ensure that new parents were supported throughout the pandemic. Operating digitally where possible, community health

services have continued to provide support, prioritising higher needs families, and NHS mental health services also remained open.

■ Paternity Leave

Edward Miliband: [\[146798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish his Department's estimate of the take up of shared parental leave by fathers (a) on the latest figures available as (i) an absolute number and (ii) proportion of those fathers eligible and (b) for each quarter since the introduction of that policy as (i) an absolute number and (ii) a proportion of those eligible.

Edward Miliband: [\[146799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish his Department's estimate of the number of fathers who were eligible for shared parental leave in the latest quarter; and how many new fathers are ineligible for that leave because they do not meet criteria on work history or status.

Paul Scully:

Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and Pay was introduced in December 2014 for the parents of children due or adopted from 5 April 2015. The scheme enables eligible working parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay in the first year, where the mother does not intend to use her full maternity entitlements.

At the time of introduction, we estimated that c. 285,000 fathers or partners would be eligible for SPL a year and between 2 and 8 per cent of them would take up the entitlement.[1] Information provided by employers to HMRC in respect of claims for Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) suggests that take up is broadly in line with our initial forecast. Table 1 below shows the number of individuals in receipt of ShPP per quarter.

Table 1: Individuals in receipt of Statutory Shared Parental Pay based on the total number of individuals in that quarter

	STATUTORY SHARED PARENTAL PAY (TOTAL NUMBER OF CLAIMANTS[1] IN THAT QUARTER)
Q1 15/16	1,500
Q2 15/16	1,900
Q3 15/16	2,200
Q4 15/16	3,000
Q1 16/17	3,100
Q2 16/17	3,300
Q3 16/17	3,000

	STATUTORY SHARED PARENTAL PAY (TOTAL NUMBER OF CLAIMANTS[1] IN THAT QUARTER)
Q4 16/17	3,300
Q1 17/18	3,400
Q2 17/18	3,700
Q3 17/18	3,300
Q4 17/18	3,400
Q1 18/19	3,600
Q2 18/19	4,200
Q3 18/19	4,000
Q4 18/19	4,100
Q1 19/20	4,500
Q2 19/20	5,500
Q3 19/20	4,600
Q4 19/20	4,800
Q1 20/21	4,200
Q2 20/21	2,600

Notes

1. Data collected uses HMRC Real Time Information (RTI) system and was extracted in December 2020. RTI is subject to revision or updates, and so there may be small fluctuations in figures reported, and these figures should not be considered "final". This may especially be the case for the first two-quarters of 2020/21.
2. Figures have been rounded to the nearest hundred.
3. The table shows the number of individuals in receipt of ShPP per quarter, based on the total number of individuals in that quarter irrespective of when the payment first started. Quarterly figures should not be added together to make a yearly count of individuals in receipt of Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) due to double counting claimants from quarter to quarter.
4. For the 2015-16 tax year, those receiving Additional Statutory Paternity Pay (ASPP) for children born before 6 April 2015 cannot be distinguished from those claiming Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) within RTI data.

5. Data for individuals in receipt of Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) includes both mothers and fathers in receipt of ShPP, however fathers, on average, make up over three-quarters of all ShPP recipients.
6. This data represents individuals in receipt of Shared Parental Pay only, so those who take unpaid Shared Parental Leave are not included.

Eligible parents can also take unpaid SPL so information relating to claims of ShPP only gives a partial picture of take up. We are currently evaluating the Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme, which includes large scale, representative surveys of employers and parents, and a qualitative study. We are currently analysing the data from the research that we commissioned and will report on the evaluation of the scheme later this year.

We do not hold estimates of the number of fathers eligible for SPL by quarter, however in 2013 we estimated that c. 285,000 fathers or partners would be eligible for SPL a year.[2] We will update and publish an estimate of the number of parents who are eligible for SPL and an updated estimation of take-up rates for the scheme when we report on the evaluation.

[1] *Impact Assessment of Shared Parental Leave and Pay, BIS 2013*
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2013/256/pdfs/ukia_20130256_en.pdf

[2] See footnote 1

■ Postgraduate Education: Coronavirus

Kerry McCarthy:

[149172]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with UK Research and Innovation on funded extensions to research studentships for postgraduate students whose research has been affected by the covid-19 pandemic.

Amanda Solloway:

In order to support students that have been most impacted, UKRI has made over £62 million of financial support available, and it is estimated that this funding is available for up to 12,000 students.

UKRI have recently provided an update by UKRI CEO Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser on its decision-making in providing support for the research system. In this, they note that in making these difficult decisions, they have tried to balance the immediate needs of all current students against those of early career researchers, technicians and Principal Investigators, as well as students' future needs. You can read the full update [here](#).

We are grateful for the steps students have already taken in adapting their projects to continue their research in these circumstances. I meet regularly with Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser, to monitor how the pandemic is affecting UKRI-funded PhD students and the wider research system. We will continue to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 and UKRI continues to listen and respond carefully as the situation evolves.

■ Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund and Small Business Grants Fund: West Midlands

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[146791]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding has been allocated through the (a) Small Business Grant Fund and (b) Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund to businesses in the West Midlands.

Paul Scully:

In March 2020, the Government put forward an initial and unprecedented package of support to help businesses with their ongoing business costs in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19. This included the Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund (RHLGF). These schemes closed in August last year.

Over the lifetime of the two schemes, more than £11.12 billion was paid out to 906,620 businesses in England. In the West Midlands region, Local Authorities have reported to the department that a total of £1.11 billion was paid to 94,265 business premises under these schemes.

A full breakdown of grant funding allocated to and distributed by each Local Authority is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-grant-funding-local-authority-payments-to-small-and-medium-businesses>.

■ Small Businesses: Billing

Sarah Atherton:

[912064]

What steps his Department is taking to tackle late payments to small businesses.

Amanda Solloway:

We recently strengthened the Prompt Payment Code and have consulted on new powers for the Small Business Commissioner. The Commissioner is very active in highlighting these issues and to date has intervened to recover £7.8 million for small businesses experiencing payment issues.

■ Small Businesses: Contracts

Chris Law:

[146914]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Law Commission and the Scottish Law Commission's 2015 Joint Consultation Paper, Unfair Terms in Contracts?, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recommendations made in that Paper on protecting small businesses from unfair contract clauses.

Paul Scully:

Following the joint consultation paper, the Department held two calls for evidence relating to the protection of small business when buying goods and services. As a result, it has decided not to intervene in the contractual relations agreed between businesses outside of certain sectors such as groceries and pubs. The second call

for evidence led to the establishment of the Small Business Commissioner by the Department.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus

Mike Amesbury: [\[147042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of compensating people who have lost money as a result of weddings being cancelled due to covid-19 restrictions and the venue refusing to refund in full.

Paul Scully:

No assessment has been made. Guidance from the Competition and Markets Authority in relation to wedding services affected by Covid-19 can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wedding-services-coronavirus-covid-19-cancellations-and-refunds>.

Mike Amesbury: [\[147044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department has made in ensuring that wedding venues provide refunds where events have not gone ahead as a result of the covid-19 restrictions.

Paul Scully:

The Competition and Markets Authority has produced a statement to help consumers and business understand how the law operates when contracts for wedding services have been or will be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The statement is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-refunds-cma-warns-wedding-firms-over-unfair-practices>.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Census: Coronavirus

Rachel Hopkins: [\[149366\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will outline the (a) safety measures and (b) guidance that will be issued to the enumerators recruited to undertake the 2021 census.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[149367\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what items of personal protective equipment (PPE) will be provided to the enumerators of the 2021 census; and what the cost to the public purse is of that PPE.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[149368\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Office for National Statistics plans to take to help prevent the transmission of covid-19 via the (a) collection, (b) processing and (c) storage of paper census forms.

Julia Lopez:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA's response to PQ 149366 , 149367 , 149368 [Final UKSA's response to PQ 149366 , 149367 , 149368 (1).pdf]

■ Civil Servants: Leave**Ms Harriet Harman:**[\[146750\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what provision there is for civil servants to take paid leave to care for their children of primary school-age and under when the child is ill.

Julia Lopez:

Within the Civil Service, policies on time off are delegated to departments. Departments can decide whether to offer paid special leave in these circumstances, or whether a combination of annual, flexi and special leave is more appropriate.

■ Civil Servants: Northern Ireland**Stephen Farry:**[\[147092\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that employees can transfer from the UK civil service to the Northern Ireland civil service.

Stephen Farry:[\[147093\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for equality of not allowing transfers from the Northern Ireland civil service to the UK civil service.

Stephen Farry:[\[147094\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that recruitment to public service and non-public service posts are open to (a) people from Northern Ireland with an Irish identity and (b) EU/EEA nationals and others with indefinite right to remain.

Julia Lopez:

The UK Government is working to increase the interchange and rotation of officials between posts within the Civil Service, including those working for the UK Government, agencies and public bodies, and the devolved administrations, as well as with the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Northern Ireland civil servants who were originally appointed on merit through fair and open competition may freely transfer to posts in UK Government Departments. Appointments to the Northern Ireland Civil Service are regulated by the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commissioners.

With regards to working in the Civil Service, as set out previously, there is no change to the eligibility requirements for individuals who are Irish nationals following the UK's exit from the EU, and they are eligible for all non-reserved posts. The Government has committed to maintaining the rights and opportunities of those with status under the EU Settlement Scheme to be eligible for employment in non-reserved posts within the Civil Service.

■ Government Departments: Contracts

Rachel Reeves: [\[147833\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the value is of service credits applied to contracts awarded without tender since 1 March 2020 for failure to meet performance standards; and how much has been returned to the public purse to date.

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[148056\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the total value of service credits applied to the contracts awarded for consultancy spend across all Government Departments since 1 March 2020.

Rachel Reeves: [\[148764\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he made of a company's vulnerability to cyberattacks when awarding contracts relating to the Government's covid-19 response.

Rachel Reeves: [\[148765\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to reintroduce open tendering processes when awarding contracts relating to the Government's covid-19 response.

Julia Lopez:

This Government recognises that outsourcing is an important component in a "mixed economy" of public service provision and that the private sector has played a crucial role in the country's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, including in relation to the development and procurement of the Government's world-leading vaccine programme. Under the terms of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, departments and other public authorities are able to use various applicable procedures. Public authorities across the United Kingdom including the devolved administrations and local authorities have made use of direct awards - this includes Leeds City Council. Similar approaches were adopted by many other countries, including Japan, Finland and New Zealand. It is unrealistic to suggest that the government ought to have run a full public procurement competition for PPE and other critical contracts at the height of the pandemic. The minimum number of days a competitive award could take place under the current rules is 25 days. This would have hugely slowed down the buying of vital PPE supplies.

Further to the Outsourcing Playbook, available on gov.uk, and as has been the case under successive administrations, public sector contracting authorities are responsible for their own commercial decisions, such as the award and monitoring of contracts. Regarding cyber security, details of the Cyber Essentials scheme is available on gov.uk. The requested information on service credits is not held centrally.

I note that the Hon Member has not yet replied to the letter by my Rt Hon Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster of 20 November 2020. As a courtesy, I will ensure that a further copy of the letter is sent to her office to ensure she has a chance to reply to the points raised.

■ Public Sector: Procurement

John Spellar:

[\[146766\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Julia Lopez:

The end of the Transition Period provides an historic opportunity to overhaul our outdated public procurement regime. Cabinet Office undertook an extensive programme of stakeholder engagement during 2019 to identify where improvements could be made and the recently published Green Paper Transforming Government Procurement shapes those findings into concrete proposals.

■ UK Relations with EU

Angus Brendan MacNeil:

[\[149185\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason the Government (a) is asking for grace periods from the EU and (b) did not ask in June 2020 for an extension to the transition period.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Honourable Member to the letters my Right Honourable Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster sent to Vice-President Maros Sefcovic on [2 February 2021](#), and to Mike Russell MSP on [14 June 2020](#).

The Government was elected in 2019 on a manifesto which was clear that we would leave the EU in January 2020 and that the transition period would end on 31 December 2020.

■ UK Relations with EU: Northern Ireland

Rachel Reeves:

[\[149217\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, under what circumstances the Government would trigger Article 16 of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

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](#).

DEFENCE■ **BAE Systems: Samlesbury**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[148722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether BAE Systems Samlesbury contains US-personnel only areas.

Jeremy Quin:

BAE Systems has an advanced defence aerospace manufacturing and technology facility at Samlesbury which undertakes work on the F-35 Lightning programme. Its operating practices are a matter for the company.

■ **Defence Equipment: Procurement**

Jack Lopresti: [\[146848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the (a) value to the economy of the production contracts for the (i) Warrior Capability Sustainment, (ii) AJAX, (iii) Mechanised Infantry Vehicle and (iv) Challenger II Life Extension programmes and (b) proportion of each capability that is or will be produced by UK companies.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 28 January 2021 to Question 142767 to the hon. Member for Tewkesbury (Mr Laurence Robertson).

Attachments:

1. 142767 - Defence Equipment; Procurement [142767 - Defence Equipment Procurement.docx]

■ **Intellectual Property: Universities**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[146795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is planning on taking to protect UK intellectual property in UK universities.

Jeremy Quin:

Defence's Science and Technology Strategy 2020 highlights the importance both of protecting and securing technologies that are essential to national security and of collaborating closely with academia. Defence will continue to work across Government and with universities to protect IP and the products of research generated in the UK.

A range of legislative measures is in place, such as UK Strategic Export Controls and the Academic Technology Approvals Scheme, that protect research and our national security interests.

The Government has also developed bespoke advice, 'Trusted Research', to help UK universities and research institutions make informed decisions about international collaboration and, in doing so, protect their own researchers and academic values, and has also published comprehensive security guidelines.

As well as remaining closely aligned with these initiatives, Defence is considering specific measures that may be needed to safeguard academic activities contracted or sponsored by Defence.

■ **Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Procurement**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[148723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the recent purchase of Cobham by Advent International, what information his Department holds on whether work previously undertaken within Cobham's UK facility on the F-35 programme is now planned to be undertaken in the US; and what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of that takeover on the per unit value of the F-35 programme attributed to the UK defence industry.

Jeremy Quin:

No manufacturing work related to the F-35 Lightning programme has been transferred overseas as a result of the takeover of Cobham by Advent International and there are no current plans to do so. As such, the takeover has had no impact on the per unit value of F-35 work attributed to the UK Defence industry.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[148724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the single largest component of the F-35 aircraft is, by value, which is manufactured solely in the UK.

Jeremy Quin:

UK industry provides approximately 15% by value of every F-35 aircraft to be built and is responsible for manufacturing and assembling significant elements of the F-35 aircraft. These include the lift fan for the F-35B produced by Rolls-Royce and the aircraft aft-fuselage, which is manufactured BAE Systems.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[148728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) current and (b) forecasted arrangements are for the (i) forward and (ii) depth maintenance facilities for the F-35 aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

F-35 Lightning 'forward' maintenance is undertaken at Squadron facilities at RAF Marham and on board the Queen Elizabeth Aircraft Carriers when aircraft are embarked.

F-35 'depth' maintenance is split between 'medium' and 'heavy' level depot maintenance. All 'medium' depot maintenance is undertaken within the purpose-built F-35 Maintenance and Finish Facility at RAF Marham, while 'heavy' level maintenance is undertaken within the F-35 Program Depot Facilities.

We remain engaged with the F-35 Joint Program Office regarding future heavy level maintenance capacity, to ensure availability as required for the UK F-35 fleet.

■ Navy and Merchant Shipping: Training

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[149148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what arrangements exist for (a) liaison and (b) training between the Royal Navy and the Merchant Fleet for protecting the latter in the event of (i) terrorist attack, (ii) piracy and (iii) an outbreak of hostilities between states; and if he will make a statement.

James Heapey:

The Royal Navy (RN) has a global Maritime Trade Operations (MTO) capability with the ability to deploy personnel and resources quickly to support industry in the event of conflict or against a specific maritime security threat. This capability provides timely advice on Maritime Security Incidents to industry and additionally provides deconfliction between the military and the maritime trade.

While industry follows International Maritime Organisation protocols to ensure safety at sea during times of threat, the RN also conduct training scenarios with industry vessels on a regular basis to practice emergency procedures and reporting. Tactics to escort merchant shipping remain in both the UK and NATO doctrine to should there be a requirement in times of hostility. The RN also conduct Merchant Navy liaison courses and a mutual exchange scheme to allow wider familiarisation and experience of both RN and commercial shipping operations.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Broadband

Justin Madders:

[\[147899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many properties in the UK are connected to broadband via Exchange Only lines.

Matt Warman:

According to Ofcom's 2018 Connected Nations report, 3% of UK broadband lines are exchange only lines. Given the continued deployment of alternative networks, Ofcom estimates that the number of premises that can only receive broadband from such lines is around 1%.

■ Entertainers: Work Permits**Ruth Jones:**[\[147050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish correspondence between the (a) Government and the EU and (b) his Department and other Government departments on work-permit free travel for musicians and other performers.

Caroline Dinenage:

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

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

Whilst both sides published their draft proposals for the future relationship, with the UK's available [here](#), neither side published their draft schedules for the services and investment title – which included the list of permitted activities for short-term business visitors – prior to the agreement's conclusion. Publishing correspondence and details exchanged between parties related to the development of legal text for trade agreements during the course of the negotiation would not be appropriate, as both parties exchanged this information in confidence.

■ Facebook: Retail Trade**Sarah Olney:**[\[146987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has made an assessment of the effect on public health of Facebook Marketplace sales continuing as normal during the covid-19 lockdown period.

Caroline Dinenage:

DCMS has made no such assessment.

■ Gambling Act 2005 Review**Craig Whittaker:**[\[149196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent estimate he has made of the financial contribution of the gambling industry to (a) the economy and (b) sport in the UK.

Craig Whittaker: [149198]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the gambling review is evidence-led.

Craig Whittaker: [149200]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure a balance between people who enjoy gambling responsibly and protecting the vulnerable against gambling-related harm as part of the gambling review.

Nigel Huddleston:

The gross gambling yield (GGY) of the gambling industry in Great Britain between April 2019 and March 2020 was £14.2bn (including the National Lottery). The industry contributed £8.3bn to the UK economy in 2019 (including lotteries), accounting for 0.4% of Gross Value Added (GVA), and paid £3bn in duties in 2019/20. It provides funding to sport in the UK via sponsorship, media rights and the horseracing betting levy.

The government launched the Review of the Gambling Act 2005 in December with a Call for Evidence, which runs until 31 March. The Review aims to make sure that the Act is fit for the digital age and that the balance is right between respecting the freedom of adults to choose how they spend their money and leisure time and protecting vulnerable people and communities from harm. More information about the Call for Evidence and how to make a submission is available here:

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

■ Gambling: Internet

Craig Whittaker: [149195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Gambling Commission to ensure their consultation on remote customer interaction is considered in parallel with the Government's Review of the Gambling Act 2005.

Craig Whittaker: [149197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the size of the illegal gambling market in the UK.

Craig Whittaker: [149199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to tackle and reduce demand for illegal online gambling.

Kenny MacAskill: [149345]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will undertake a risk assessment of the potential increase in unregulated betting activity on sport as a result of the Gambling Commission's affordability proposals.

Nigel Huddleston:

Data released by the Gambling Commission in May 2020 suggested that the scale of the black market had remained low and stable, with little variation in the number of complaints it had received about illegal gambling websites over the previous 12 months. The Commission's enforcement approach includes working with web hosting companies and search engines to remove sites or prevent them appearing on searches, and working with payment providers to prevent payments to unlicensed operators. It also has powers to prosecute or refer issues to partner agencies such as HMRC where necessary.

The government's Review of the Gambling Act 2005 has called for evidence on issues around unlicensed gambling, and we are aware of the recent report commissioned by the Betting and Gaming Council. We are also consulting on a proposed uplift to Gambling Commission licence fees, which will strengthen the resources it has to identify the scale of and tackle illegal gambling.

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 Gambling Act Review. Following a one month extension to allow extra evidence to be submitted, the deadline for submissions is now 9 February.

■ Gaming: Coronavirus**Alex Cunningham:**[\[149236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether adult gaming centres are classified as non-essential retail under covid-19 guidance; and whether those centres will reopen once the covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

The government has published guidance to help businesses understand how to make workplaces Covid-secure and help tackle the spread of the virus. Adult Gaming Centres should follow the [shops and branches](#) guidance in addition to Bacta's specific guidance for [FECs and AGCs](#) to ensure they can operate as safely as possible when they are open.

The shops and branches workplace guidance was intended as guidance for those businesses on how they could operate safely when the regulations permitted them to do so after the first national lockdown and beyond. It does not have a direct bearing on the timing for reopening of the businesses included in the guidance.

As announced by the Prime Minister, we intend to publish our plan for taking the country out of lockdown in the last week of February. That plan will depend on the continued success of our vaccination programme, and on a sustained reduction in Covid-19 cases and hospitalisations.

■ Internet: Disinformation**Chi Onwurah:** [\[148775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the proportion of online misinformation that is circulated via online advertising.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government takes the issue of misinformation and disinformation very seriously. That is why we stood up the Counter Disinformation Unit in March 2020 to bring together cross-Government monitoring and analysis capabilities and work closely with social media platforms to quickly identify and help them respond to potentially harmful content on their platforms.

We welcome steps taken by platforms to tackle mis/disinformation related to Covid-19, including the introduction of new policies or steps to ban misleading advertising. In a meeting with the Digital Secretary and Health Secretary in November 2020, platforms also agreed to the principle that no user or company should directly profit from COVID-19 vaccine misinformation.

As part of the government's Online Advertising Programme, we held a call for evidence last year on the extent to which consumers are exposed to harmful or misleading advertising online, and whether the scale and speed of online transactions is creating challenges for the existing regulatory system. We will launch a public consultation on measures to enhance the regulation of online advertising in the UK later this year.

■ Internet: Safety**Chi Onwurah:** [\[148774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 130724, what assessment he has made of the ease by which skills required by Ofcom for online harms can be obtained; and what the planned timescale is for recruiting those staff.

Caroline Dinenage:

We are working closely together with Ofcom to identify how they can build the full range of necessary capabilities. We will ensure that they have the resources and skills to effectively carry out their functions as the online harms regulator.

Ofcom is already the regulator for video sharing platforms established in the UK. It is now stepping up its preparations for its new online harms responsibilities. As part of this, Ofcom will ensure it has the right skills through training and hiring of specialists in areas such as data and digital technology.

■ Social Media: Antisemitism**Bob Blackman:** [\[147825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will issue guidance to Ofcom, on (a) adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

definition of antisemitism and (b) on analysing the behaviour of social media companies on antisemitism.

Caroline Dinenge:

As the UK's communications regulator, Ofcom is independent from government. Regulatory decisions are a matter for Ofcom. Ofcom can have regard to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism when determining complaints about antisemitic material broadcast on television and radio services.

The Government is committed to tackling racism, including the spread of antisemitic content online. In December 2020, we published the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation, which sets out new expectations on companies to keep their users safe online. Under a new legal duty of care, in-scope companies, including social media, will need to tackle illegal antisemitic content and activity on their services.

In addition, companies providing high-risk, high-reach services will need to set clear terms and conditions stating what legal but harmful material they accept (and do not accept) on their service. This may include antisemitic hate speech, which does not meet the threshold of a criminal offence. Companies will need to enforce these terms and conditions consistently and transparently, and could face enforcement action if they do not. All companies in scope will be required to have effective and accessible user reporting and redress mechanisms.

The Online Safety Bill, which will give effect to the regulatory framework outlined in the Full Government Response, including the appointment of Ofcom as the regulator, will be ready this year. There are no plans to issue guidance to Ofcom on analysing the behaviour of social media companies on antisemitism.

■ **Sports: Coronavirus**

Jon Trickett:

[\[148693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, which (a) sports and (b) institutions have received funding from Sport England's £50 million covid-19 grassroots sport support funding issued as part of Sport England's 10 year plan announced on 26 January 2021.

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 £100million support fund for local authority leisure centres.

Sport England has also provided £220million directly to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through this pandemic, via a range of funds including their

£35million Community Emergency Fund. This sector support was recently boosted by an extra £50million to help grassroots sports clubs and organisations as part of Sport England's new strategy Uniting the Movement. This funding is yet to be allocated and Sport England will provide further information in due course.

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

Jon Trickett:

[\[148694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much each sport has received from the £50 million fund as part of Sport England's 10 year plan announced on 26 January 2021.

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 £100million support fund for local authority leisure centres.

Sport England has also provided £220million directly to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through this pandemic, via a range of funds including their £35million Community Emergency Fund. This sector support was recently boosted by an extra £50million to help grassroots sports clubs and organisations as part of Sport England's new strategy Uniting the Movement. This funding is yet to be allocated and Sport England will provide further information in due course.

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

Jane Stevenson:

[\[149335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to allow people to attend live sports events once covid-19 vaccination priority groups 1-4 have been vaccinated; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

The government remains committed to working towards the safe return of spectators to stadiums as soon as it is safe to do so.

The supply of vaccines and hitting vaccination targets for priority groups is the immediate priority for the Government. Transmission data is evaluated so the impact of vaccine rollout can be determined.

Government continues to proactively engage across the sector, to maintain a complete picture of the impact of Covid-19, and are working closely with DHSC and public health experts alongside sporting national governing bodies to determine the next steps in the readmission of fans into stadia and viably increasing spectator capacities without compromising public safety. We also remain in close contact with

the Sports Technology Innovation Group (STIG), formed of sporting bodies and health experts, to assess the latest thinking and high-tech solutions that could enable further spectators to return.

EDUCATION

■ Adoption Support Fund

Mike Amesbury:

[\[147041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the need for reform of The Adoption Support Fund to ensure that regional adoption agencies have ring-fenced grants to provide long-term therapy for people who need it.

Vicky Ford:

The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) has provided over £184 million to 64,000 families since its introduction in 2015, with the fund continuing over the 2021/22 financial year. The department works closely with regional adoption agencies and local authorities on the delivery of the ASF.

■ Apprentices: Publicity

Sajid Javid:

[\[146840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to promote apprenticeships and the organisations that support them during National Apprenticeship Week 2021.

Gillian Keegan:

The annual National Apprenticeship Week is taking place between 8 and 14 February 2021 and is a celebration of apprenticeships. The theme "Build the Future" will shine a light on the amazing work being done by employers and apprentices across the country. The week will also recognise how employers of all sizes have stepped up to the challenge during this unprecedented time.

National Apprenticeship Week brings together apprenticeship ambassadors, MPs, training providers, apprentices, parents and employers to highlight the work being done across the whole apprenticeship community and to promote apprenticeships and their impact.

Throughout the week, I will be taking part in a series of virtual events, including career fairs, interviews, conferences, and roundtables. I will be meeting with apprentices and employers from a range of industries such as hospitality and financial services, and taking part in several awards ceremonies which recognise and celebrate the achievements of apprentices.

We are encouraging employers and stakeholders to promote the great work of their apprentices through virtual events and social media, whilst highlighting the many benefits apprenticeships bring to their business. These include building the skills and

knowledge required for a rewarding career and showcasing how apprentices of all ages and backgrounds are helping to transform businesses across the country.

We are sharing the message about how to get involved in National Apprenticeship Week with all employers and education providers on the apprenticeship service through regular emails and webinars. We also share information via our networks of ambassadors, account management teams and through intermediary organisations which has a potential reach of over 6 million employers.

Furthermore, we have been promoting the National Apprenticeship Week 2021 toolkit since December 2020 to support the apprenticeship community with planning their activity for the week. Further information on National Apprenticeship Week and our developed toolkit can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/955827/National_Apprenticeship_Week_2021_toolkit.pdf.

■ Assessments: Coronavirus

Adam Holloway:

[146810]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to assess external students for 2021 public examinations, including students sitting resits, in the event that they are studying independently with no oversight from teachers.

Nick Gibb:

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

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has asked the Chief Regulator at Ofqual to find a clear and accessible route for private candidates, and those not in school this year, to be assessed and receive a grade. To ensure our approach is developed with the sector, the Department and Ofqual have now concluded a 2-week consultation on how to fairly award all pupils a grade that supports them to progress to the next stage of their lives, including consulting specifically on four different approaches for private candidates to receive a grade.

The Department has consulted on the following options: for private candidates to complete the papers set by the exam boards for use in schools and colleges, for private candidates to work with a school or college willing to assess the standard at which they are performing, using the same type of evidence the school and college is considering for its students, and for the exam boards to run normal exams for private candidates to take in the summer or autumn of 2021.

We are working at pace to provide further clarity to the sector and will publish the results of the consultation by the end of February.

The Department and Ofqual have strongly encouraged all our stakeholders, including private candidates and their parents, to respond to the consultation. The Department will continue to engage with a range of relevant stakeholders when developing plans

for our policy on GCSE, AS and A level assessments in 2021, as will the exams regulator Ofqual.

■ Children: Day Care

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[147070]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the role of the wraparound childcare sector in supporting children's mental health during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The government recognises the vital importance of supporting the mental health of children and young people, particularly throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. In September 2020, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) launched its £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme. It has supported education staff to respond to the emotional and mental health pressures some children and young people may be feeling as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. In addition, DHSC also launched a campaign in September through the Every Mind Matters website to raise awareness of the guidance and tools available to support children and young people's mental wellbeing. Public Health England continues to update and promote the Every Mind Matters website. The government has also provided over £10 million of additional funding to mental health charities to support adults and children.

We also recognise the value the wraparound childcare sector offers in this regard, in terms of supporting children and young people's general wellbeing and the positive effects it can have on their mental health through the enriching social opportunities they provide.

Given the valuable support this sector can provide, the government has therefore ensured that before and after-school clubs, holiday clubs and other out-of-school settings have been able to stay open for all children eligible to attend school on-site, and during the national lockdown for vulnerable children and young people, as well as the children of critical workers. We have also published protective measures guidance for the sector, to ensure they can offer this provision as safely as possible, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

We have also made clear that schools should be continuing to offer before and after-school provision for those pupils eligible to attend for on-site provision, where it is feasible for them to do so, given the importance of this provision for supporting parents to work, and providing enriching activities for children that improve their wellbeing and support their education. We have provided guidance for schools to support them to resume this provision. A copy of the guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak#types-of-setting>.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[147073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the effect on levels of inequality of the closure of businesses in the wraparound childcare sector due to their ineligibility for Government support.

Vicky Ford:

In line with the requirements placed on the department by the public sector Equality Duty, we continue to examine the impacts on people with protected characteristics in regards to the government's policy on restrictions or closures of businesses during the COVID-19 outbreak.

However, as outlined in the guidance on 'Protective measures for holiday and after-school clubs, and other out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak' wraparound childcare providers can currently remain open for face-to-face provision for all children eligible to attend school for on-site provision. This includes:

- children of critical workers, where it is reasonably necessary to enable their parents to work, search for work, attend education or training, or attend a medical appointment; and
- vulnerable children and young people.

Further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak#equality>.

The department does not hold a central register of all wraparound provision and so is not able to give an assessment of the number of business closures in the wraparound childcare sector and therefore the effect of this on levels of inequality.

We acknowledge that the wraparound childcare sector, like many sectors, is facing unprecedented financial pressures as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. It is for this reason that the government has made a range of financial packages of support available for businesses to access throughout the current crisis. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>. Depending on their circumstances, businesses may be eligible for tax relief, business loans or cash grants through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme. A £594 million discretionary fund for councils and the devolved administrations to support local businesses that may not be eligible for other support, during the current national lockdown announced on 4 January 2020, has also been made available.

Given the important role these providers offer in terms of support for working parents, and enriching activities for children, we have also encouraged all local authorities to consider using local grants made available to them to bolster this part of the childcare sector in their areas. This includes the discretionary funding already mentioned, as well as the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme. The expanded HAF

programme, which comprises a £220 million fund to be delivered through grants to local authorities, will give children eligible for free school meals the option to join a free holiday-time programme that provides healthy food and enriching activities during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays this year.

■ **Extended Services: Coronavirus**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[147060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to financially support the wraparound care sector during the covid-19 pandemic.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[147061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the funding available to the wraparound care sector on the ability of businesses within that sector to remain financially viable during the covid-19 pandemic.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[147065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to provide financial support to the wraparound care sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The department does not currently hold a central register of wraparound providers. Therefore, we are unable to make an accurate assessment of the financial viability of providers. However, we do understand and 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 and the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, as well as a £594 million discretionary fund for councils and the devolved administrations to support local businesses that may not be eligible for other support, during the current national lockdown.

We are also still encouraging all local authorities to consider using local grants that have been made available to them during the COVID-19 outbreak to support the wraparound childcare sector in their areas and to safeguard sufficient childcare provision for all families, but particularly those with vulnerable children and children of critical workers. This includes the expanded Holiday Activities and Food Programme, 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.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[147066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure the safety of vulnerable children unable to attend wraparound care due to the closure of businesses

in the sector resulting from their ineligibility for Government financial support during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

During the period of national lockdown announced on 4 January 2021, primary, secondary, alternative provision, special schools, further education providers, and wraparound childcare providers and other out-of-school settings for children have been able to remain open to vulnerable children and young people.

We are committed to ensuring the safety and protection of vulnerable children and young people. Work is being co-ordinated across government to address the increased needs of vulnerable children and young people and their families.

Throughout all restrictions to date, children's social care services and early help services have continued to support vulnerable children and young people and their families. We will continue to ensure this is the case during this period of national restrictions. There are a range of exemptions to national restrictions which allow key services to operate including childcare, contact between birth parents and children in care, therapy, or other forms of support, as well as other essential youth services, such as 1-to-1 youth work and support groups.

We also recognise the value the wraparound childcare sector offers to our children and young people, in terms of the enriching activities they provide and, in particular, the valuable support they provide to our critical worker parents, and vulnerable children. That is why we have encouraged all local authorities to consider how they could use local grants made available to them by government to help bolster this part of the childcare sector in their areas, to safeguard sufficient childcare provision for children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

This includes discretionary funding, such as the £594 million fund provided by government to local authorities to help them support local businesses affected by the new lockdown restrictions, as well as 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. This is further to the wider financial support packages that government has made available throughout the COVID-19 outbreak to support private businesses, which includes tax relief, business loans or cash grants through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employed Support Scheme.

■ **Extended Services: Finance**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[147062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will provide targeted funding to wraparound care providers to ensure they can continue to provide support to (a) key workers, (b) vulnerable children and (c) working families throughout the UK.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[147064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy of funding for the wraparound care sector and (b) effect of closures in that sector on the (a) learning and (b) development of children.

Vicky Ford:

The department does not hold a central register of all wraparound provision and is therefore not able to give an assessment on the effects of children's learning and development due to the closure of providers.

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

We have also made clear that schools should be continuing to offer before and after-school provision for those pupils eligible to attend for on-site provision, where it is feasible for them to do so. We have provided guidance for schools to support them to resume this provision, available here:

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

However, we recognise that the wraparound childcare sector, like many sectors, is facing unprecedented financial pressures, as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. It is for this reason 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, and the Self-Employed Support Scheme, as well as a £594 million discretionary fund for councils and the devolved administrations to support local businesses that may not be eligible for other support during the current national lockdown announced on 4 January 2020. Further information on these financial packages is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>.

Given the value this sector offers to our children and young people, as well as to working parents, we have also encouraged all local authorities to consider using local grants, made available to them by the government, to bolster this part of the childcare sector in their areas and safeguard sufficient childcare provision. This includes making use of grants, such as the discretionary funding already mentioned, as well as funding provided as part of the holiday activities and food programme. The expanded programme, which comprises a £220 million fund to be delivered through grants to local authorities, will give children eligible for free school meals the option to

join a free holiday-time programme that provides healthy food and enriching activities during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021.

In addition, the department has engaged and met with representatives from the sector on a regular basis to discuss the impacts of COVID-19. We will continue to do so to help inform the government's ongoing response to the outbreak, and how we may continue to best support the sector going forward.

■ **Post-18 Education and Funding Review**

Charlotte Nichols:

[147081]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to implement (a) the recommendation on interest rates on student loans and (b) other recommendations of Post-18 review of education and funding: independent panel report, published on 30 May 2019.

Michelle Donelan:

We set out an Interim Conclusion to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding on 21 January 2021, that addressed some of the recommendations made in the independent panel's report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding.

We continue to consider the recommendations, including those pertaining to higher education fees and funding, very carefully and will set out a full and final conclusion at the next comprehensive spending review.

■ **Pre-school Education: Coronavirus**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[149319]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that early years providers are covid-19 secure.

Vicky Ford:

Keeping children and staff safe is our utmost priority. The department has published 'Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak' guidance and 'Education and childcare settings: national lockdown from 5 January 2021' guidance for early years settings to follow, which can be accessed via these links: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures> and https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/958670/Education_and_childcare_settings_national_lockdown_from_5_January_2021.pdf.

The public health advice in the guidance includes a Public Health England-endorsed system of controls, building on the hierarchy of protective measures that have been in use throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. When implemented in line with a revised risk assessment, these measures create an environment where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced for children and staff.

The system of controls provides a set of principles that, when followed, will effectively minimise risks. All elements of the system of controls are essential. All settings must cover them all, but the way different settings implement some of the requirements will differ based on their individual circumstances.

Setting leaders will be best placed to understand the needs of their settings and communities, and to make informed judgments about how to balance delivering high quality care and education with the measures needed to manage risk.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Sir Alan Campbell:

[\[146789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of all children repeating a full academic year as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Government recognises that extended school and college closures have had a huge effect on children and young people's education, which will take more than a year to make up. On 27 January 2021, the Government announced a further £300 million of new funding for high quality tutoring to help children and young people catch up. The Government will be working in collaboration with the education sector to develop specific initiatives for summer schools and a COVID-19 premium to support catch up, alongside developing a long-term plan to support pupils to catch up over the course of this Parliament. Further detail on this funding and support will be confirmed in due course.

■ Schools: Governing Bodies

Afzal Khan:

[\[147045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many school governors there are in (a) Manchester Gorton constituency, (b) the North West and (c) England.

Afzal Khan:

[\[147046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many school governors are from (a) Black, (b) Asian and (c) minority ethnic backgrounds in (i) Manchester Gorton constituency, (ii) the North West and (iii) England.

Nick Gibb:

Governance records are stored on 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS). This is a self-service website that schools are able to complete and update. As school governance roles are filled by volunteers, it is not mandatory for them to register their details on GIAS, and the Department holds 183,784 active governance records. The National Governance Association (NGA) estimate the number of school governors and trustees in England to be 250,000.

There were 276 active governance records for schools in the Manchester Gorton constituency on GIAS as of February 1 2021.

There were 25,994 active governance records for schools in the North West region on GIAS as of February 2021.

There were 183,784 active governance records for schools in England on GIAS as of February 2021.

The Department does not hold data on the ethnicity of school governors in England, but findings from the latest NGA annual school governance survey indicated that 4% of governors and trustees within their membership are from an ethnic minority background. In addition, 18% of volunteers who signed up with the Department-funded Inspiring Governance governor recruitment programme, and 20% of those matched to school governor roles by the programme, were from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background.

■ Students: Loans

Catherine West:

[149309]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2021 to Question 137261, whether the Government plans to publish further guidance on this matter; and whether the Government has made an assessment of the potential effect of interest-payable loans as a barrier to Muslim students.

Michelle Donelan:

The government remains committed to ensuring that all individuals with the potential to benefit can access higher education and will provide an update on Alternative Student Finance in due course.

The government undertook equalities assessments on access to student finance for individuals of Muslim faith in November 2015 when introducing regulations to move from a system of maintenance grants to loans. Further analysis was published in May 2016 during the passage of the Higher Education and Research Bill. The assessments can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482110/bis-15-639-student-finance-equality-analysis.pdf and https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/524226/bis-16-281-he-research-bill-equality-analysis.pdf.

■ Supply Teachers: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Mike Amesbury:

[147040]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of ensuring that supply teachers are placed on furlough by their agencies when they are unable to work.

Nick Gibb:

Schools in England will continue to receive their budgets for the coming year as usual, regardless of any periods of partial or complete closure. Schools may continue to engage supply staff where they are required and decisions on staffing are made at the local level.

If supply staff employed via employment agencies are unable to work due to COVID-19, their employment agency can place them on furlough and use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to claim for 80% of their wages, including during school holiday periods, provided that the eligibility criteria are met. Information on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is available here:

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

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

Employers can now flexibly furlough their employees for the hours the employee would usually have worked in that period, whilst also being able to work outside of the hours they are furloughed. Employees can work for any amount of time, and any work pattern but they cannot do any work for their employer during hours that employers record them as being on furlough. Further information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme#flexible-furlough-agreements>.

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

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Assistance Animals: Republic of Ireland

Stephen Farry:

[147096]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions are taking place with the Irish Government and the European Commission to enable pet and guide/assistance dog movements between Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Victoria Prentis:

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

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

The Government is engaging with the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and Ireland's Department of Agriculture,

Food and the Marine (DAFM) to explore means to streamline pet travel between Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Ireland, recognising the high standards of animal health that the Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Ireland share. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has also written to the European Vice-President seeking to ensure that an agreement can be made to address the barriers imposed on pet travel between Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Ireland. Current guidance on pet travel to Northern Ireland is available on DAERA's NIDirect website, and to Ireland on DAFMs website.

In the meantime, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland have recently published guidance on a pragmatic enforcement approach to pets entering from Great Britain. NI-based pets/assistance dogs returning to Northern Ireland from Great Britain can continue to use an NI-issued EU Pet Passport to re-enter Northern Ireland and will not need an animal health certificate.

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

■ Avian Influenza

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[149349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many instances of avian flu were identified in sites in (a) England, (b) Scotland and (c) Wales in the last six months; how many birds died of avian flu in that time period; how many birds were actively culled in response to an avian flu outbreak; how many birds were actively culled in response to a suspected avian flu outbreak; and what methods were used to cull those birds.

Victoria Prentis:

The Animal and Plant Health Agency recorded the following number of instances of avian flu within each nation during the last six months:

England - 17

Scotland - 1

Wales - 1

245,342 birds died of avian flu during this time. This data is only available for the captive birds at the 19 premises where disease was identified. This figure includes the birds culled as part of disease control operations.

In addition, we have recorded the following wild bird positive results for highly pathogenic avian influenza as part of the avian influenza survey of dead wild birds:

2020 – 277

2021 – 19

Avian influenza in wild birds data is available on GOV.UK at the following link:-
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/avian-influenza-in-wild-birds>.

212,646 birds were actively culled in reaction to avian flu outbreaks.

There were four premises declared as Slaughter on Suspicion cases, which were all recategorised as Infected Premises upon CVO confirmation of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N8, and therefore data for these is included above.

There are different methods used to cull birds with avian flu. These are:

- Exposure to CO2/Argon gas mix gas in Containerised Gassing Units
- Percussive blow to the head using percussive poultry killers
- Lethal Injection
- Cervical dislocation
- Free bullet by trained marksmen

■ Avian Influenza: Poultry

Kenny MacAskill:

[149348]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many inspections of poultry farms for compliancy with avian flu measures were undertaken by (a) the Animal and Plant Health Agency and (b) local trading standards in (i) 2020 and (ii) 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) does not undertake specific compliance inspections for Avian Influenza. This is the responsibility of local authorities under the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ), which ensures birds are housed or kept separate from wild birds. Local authorities are currently completing reactive inspections following complaints, and using a risk based approach during such inspections.

There is no requirement for local authorities to record or inform the Scottish Government, Defra or the Welsh Government of any inspections they have conducted. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the local authority to provide the details requested.

APHA does hold data as part of its disease management response. This is on behalf of Defra, the Welsh Government and the Scottish Government and relates to disease surveillance visits in the 3km Protection Zones and 10km Surveillance Zones, and any direct and indirect contact tracing visits which are identified upon confirmation of disease.

This includes a census of premises and stock within the zones, and subsequent inspection and sampling to prove freedom from disease prior to lifting the legal Declaratory Orders in place around infected premises (usually 3km and 10km). An

interactive map of current zones can be found on GOV.UK:

<https://defra.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8cb1883eda5547c6b91b5d5e6aeba90d>

Outside of avian influenza outbreaks, APHA undertakes a routine avian influenza survey on a random and risk-based stratification of registered premises.

■ Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control

Daniel Zeichner:

[149250]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the maximum number of years is that badger culling could continue in England under the consultation proposals on eradicating bovine TB announced on 27 January 2020; and what the maximum number of badgers is that could be culled during this time period.

Rebecca Pow:

Under the proposals in the current consultation, in the years 2021 and 2022, new intensive cull licences will be issued for four years. They could be revoked however, further to a progress evaluation by the Chief Veterinary Officer after two or three years.

The consultation also proposes to restrict new applications for Supplementary Badger Cull (SBC) to a maximum of two years for areas licensed for Intensive Culling (IC) up to 2020 and prohibits the issuing of SBC licenses for areas licensed for IC after 2020. SBCs licenses can already be revoked following a progress evaluation or on reasonable grounds under the Defra "Guidance to Natural England Licences to kill or take badgers for the purpose of preventing the spread of bovine TB under section 10(2)(a) of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992".

We do not yet know how many applications there would be, nor where they would be located. Therefore, we cannot predict the maximum number of badgers that could be culled in this time period.

■ Environmental Land Management Scheme

Gordon Henderson:

[147836]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the promotional publication entitled The Environmental Land Management scheme: public money for public goods, published on gov.uk on 20 October 2020, what steps he is taking to help ensure that farmers have information on preparing for the transition to a new agricultural policy.

Victoria Prentis:

On 30 November 2020 we published our agriculture transition plan document, which sets out more detail on the transition and the Environmental Land Management offer. This is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-transition-plan-2021-to-2024>.

The agricultural transition period started on 1 January 2021 and will run to the end of 2027. Between 2021 and 2027, the Government will gradually phase out Direct Payments and introduce a new system which will pay farmers to improve the environment, improve animal health and welfare and reduce carbon emissions.

We know it is important for farmers and land managers to have clear, definitive information as soon as possible so that they can plan. However, we also want to make sure we are designing and delivering things that work on the ground. That means we need to learn and adapt as we go, building on the 74 tests and trials underway or completed to date, involving over 3,000 farmers and other land managers, and piloting extensively the new environmental schemes we are developing.

We will be publishing detailed information on the first phase of piloting the Sustainable Farming Incentive in spring 2021. We will also be consulting on the details of delinking and our planned lump sum exit scheme, publishing more details of our Farming Investment Fund and consulting on regulation and enforcement, all throughout the early part of this year.

■ Fisheries: UK Trade With EU

Sir Geoffrey Cox:

[\[147764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure that UK fishing businesses are able to gain access to EU markets with minimal delays arising from customs procedures.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is working with other Government departments, industry and EU authorities to ensure smooth trade flow and minimise disruption at the border. To do so, we have established a twice-weekly seafood exports working group to identify issues and resolve across Government. To further support businesses Defra has developed a support package of guidance and training with HMRC, including an online journey that guides fish exporters through each step of the export journey.

■ Fishing Vessels: Wales

Ben Lake:

[\[149318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress he has made on the review of the concurrent fisheries functions which allow a Minister of the Crown to regulate British fishing boats, apart from Welsh fishing boats, in the Welsh zone.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is committed to working with the Welsh Government and the other Devolved Administrations on a review of concurrent fisheries functions in UK law and retained EU law and we will seek to commence discussions shortly.

The Fisheries Act 2020 provides a framework for each administration to license its own vessels wherever they fish, but also provides that a vessel fishing in another

administration's waters should be subject to the same licence conditions as are applied by that administration to its own vessels in its waters.

■ **Game: Birds**

Kenny MacAskill: [\[149346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many animal welfare inspections of game bird farms in England and Wales were undertaken by (a) the Animal and Plant Health Agency and (b) local trading standards in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020; how many of those visits resulted in action being taken against a (A) farm or (B) person; whether improvement notices were issued as a result of those visits; and whether those visits resulted in a second inspection.

Victoria Prentis:

The data held only relates to Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) welfare inspections undertaken. APHA conducted inspections to game birds and the subsequent actions were taken:

	INSPECTIONS	HOLDINGS INSPECTED	ISSUED LETTER	FOLLOW UP VISIT
2019	10	7	3	0
2020	14	9	6	4

Kenny MacAskill: [\[149347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many inspections of game bird farms for compliancy with avian flu measures were undertaken by (a) the Animal and Plant Health Agency and (b) local trading standards in (i) 2020 and (ii) 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) do not undertake specific compliance inspections for Avian Influenza. This is the responsibility of local authorities under the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ), which ensures birds are housed or kept separate from wild birds. Local authorities are currently completing reactive inspections following complaints, and using a risk based approach during such inspections.

There is no requirement for local authorities to record or inform Scottish Government, Defra or Welsh Government of any inspections they have conducted. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the local authority to provide the details requested.

APHA do hold data as part of its disease management response. This is on behalf of Defra, Welsh Government and the Scottish Government and relates to disease surveillance visits in the 3km Protection Zones and 10km Surveillance Zones, and any direct and indirect contact tracing visits which are identified upon confirmation of disease.

This includes a census of premises and stock within the zones, and subsequent inspection and sampling to prove freedom from disease prior to lifting the legal Declaratory Orders in place around infected premises (usually 3km and 10km). An interactive map of current zones can be found on GOV.UK:

<https://defra.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8cb1883eda5547c6b91b5d5e6aeba90d>

Outside of avian influenza outbreaks, APHA undertake a routine avian influenza survey on a random and risk based stratification of registered premises.

■ Glass: Recycling

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[149154]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) reduce the amount of flat glass going to landfill and (b) increase the quantity being recycled in the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra has funded Environment Agency/WRAP guidance on the proper [collection](#) and [reprocessing](#) of flat glass with the aim of increasing recycling rates. The Environment Agency is set to review this in May 2021.

The Environmental (England and Wales) Permitting Regulation 2016 includes a statutory permit condition for landfill and incineration permit holders, placing a restriction on plastic, metal, paper or glass separately collected for reuse or recycling from being accepted for landfill or incineration unless it is the result of treatment operations and delivers the best environmental outcome in accordance with the waste hierarchy.

Flat glass is a common waste product from construction and demolition. In the Resources & Waste Strategy 2018, we committed to increasing resource efficiency and minimising waste in the construction sector, through working with the Green Construction Board.

■ Hares

Robert Largan:

[147090]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of mountain hares in the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

Species conservation is a devolved matter. The latest 'Review of the Population and Conservation Status of British Mammals' estimated the population of mountain hare to be around 2,500 in England.

■ Maldives: Fisheries**Sir David Amess:**[\[149147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to promote the Maldives fishing industry ahead of COP26.

Victoria Prentis:

As President of the UNFCCC COP26 in partnership with Italy, the UK is committed to showcasing ambitious action on climate change and inspiring others to do the same. Through our COP26 Presidency the UK will champion and drive forward the protection of marine ecosystems and wider nature-based solutions to improve the ocean's resilience to climate change and support the restoration of habitats critical for adaptation and resilience, alongside carbon sequestration.

As a newly independent coastal State the UK will expand and enhance our efforts to manage fisheries sustainably, protect ecosystems and combat illegal fishing at an international scale through our engagement in Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), other international organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, and directly with individual States. The UK has recently joined five RFMOs, including the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, to which the Maldives is also a party. The UK looks forward to working with the Maldives in these fora.

■ Peat Bogs: Heather Burning**Olivia Blake:**[\[149361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's press release dated 29 January 2021 announcing plans to bring forward legislation to prevent the burning of heather and other vegetation on protected blanket bog habitats, what plans the Government has to help restore peat under 40cm in depth.

Rebecca Pow:

We are committed to restoring and sustainably managing England's peatlands. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer 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.

■ Pigs: Livestock Industry**Sir Geoffrey Cox:**[\[147765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the challenges facing the British pig industry; and what steps

the Government is taking to support pig farmers in the Torridge and West Devon constituency.

Victoria Prentis:

I am very much aware that the pig sector is currently facing a number of challenges due to Covid-19 and global trading conditions. I will be hosting a roundtable with key industry stakeholders to discuss these challenges and will continue to work with the pig industry to address them.

The Government has made available financial assistance via a number of Covid-19 HM Treasury schemes. These can be accessed by the pig sector and we encourage companies impacted by Covid-19, including those in Torridge and West Devon, to investigate if any of these schemes are appropriate for their needs.

■ **Rivers: Fly-tipping and Litter**

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[147750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to remove litter and flytipping from the river network.

Rebecca Pow:

The Litter Strategy for England was published in April 2017, setting out the Government's aim to clean up the country, including our precious waterways, and deliver a substantial reduction in litter and littering within a generation.

The Government is committed to encouraging local solutions for local problems, and this is particularly relevant in dealing with litter and fly-tipping. Our role is to enable and support this local action by providing a clear legal framework of rights and responsibilities, setting national standards and, where possible, making sure that the costs of dealing with these issues are passed to those responsible.

Navigation authorities in England and Wales are responsible for ensuring the canals and rivers that they own and manage are properly maintained and navigable. Local authorities are responsible for clearing fly-tipping from public land, and navigation authorities work closely with them to remove fly-tipping that occurs on waterside land. Councils also have legal powers to take enforcement action. They can prosecute anyone caught fly-tipping or littering or, alternatively, issue a fixed penalty notice.

Navigation authorities may also take steps to remove litter from their waterways as part of routine maintenance with the assistance of their volunteers, as well as in some cases running awareness-raising publicity campaigns. An example of this is the recently re-launched Canal and River Trust 'Plastics Challenge' campaign, which encourages all users of their waterways to pick up a piece of plastic litter and take it home with them to dispose of properly.

It is encouraging to see that there are a growing number of public-spirited individuals and community groups tackling litter all over the country. We have been proud to support and endorse national clean-up days such as the Great British Spring Clean, and the Great British Beach Clean, and we will continue to use our influence to

encourage as many people and businesses as possible to participate in these types of events, whilst following Government guidance on staying safe outside the home.

■ Seas and Oceans: Carbon Capture and Storage

Luke Pollard:

[\[147049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a blue carbon strategy for the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government recognises the important role that blue carbon habitats, such as saltmarsh and seagrass meadows, can play to prevent biodiversity loss and support adaptation and resilience to climate change, alongside carbon sequestration benefits. Some uncertainty remains in quantifying the magnitude and direction of change in blue carbon stores and fluxes for all marine habitats, and we therefore continue to gather evidence to improve assessments.

Marine nature-based solutions, including the protection and restoration of blue carbon habitats, are central to a range of Defra policy areas and will contribute towards achieving the Government's vision for 'clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse ocean and seas'. The existing UK Marine Strategy is vital in achieving this vision and provides the framework for assessing and taking measures to achieve and maintain Good Environmental Status in our seas.

We already have 38% of UK waters in Marine Protected Areas, covering the majority of saltmarsh and seagrass habitat, and our focus is now on ensuring these are effectively protected. We have stated our intention to pilot Highly Protected Marine Areas in Secretary of State waters and we look forward to publishing the Government's response to Richard Benyon's review in due course, including how HPMA's can enhance the protection of blue carbon habitats. A number of coastal habitat restoration initiatives are also underway, including the Restoring Meadow, Marsh and Reef (ReMeMaRe) initiative which was initiated by the Defra group to restore our estuarine and coastal habitats to benefit people and nature.

■ Wines: Small Businesses

Chris Elmore:

[\[146982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support small wine traders.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government recognises our trade in wine with the EU is economically important to UK business and jobs they support. We listened to the concerns raised by MPs and the industry during the negotiations that the introduction of V11 certification arrangements would damage this trade and perhaps especially our smaller more specialised traders. That is why in the new UK/EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement we successfully negotiated a significant simplification to the usual V11 certificate

process. This allows producers or traders to self-certify certificates used in the movement of wine products made in the UK or the EU and moving to the other territory. Importantly, these certificates will not require any form of analysis above providing details of the alcoholic content; addressing another significant concern of the industry.

Moreover, in order to address any trade uncertainty that new certification arrangements would introduce, we provided the safeguard of an easement in certification requirements until 1 July 2021. This allows any wine imported from the EU to continue to arrive on commercial documentation, as it did when the UK was subject to EU rules.

As we look to develop our own domestic wine policy, we will continue to look to introduce simpler arrangements in our trade in wine with the EU and with other countries that supply wine to us. Scope exists to allow existing and simplified V11 certification to be transmitted electronically, which will reduce paper and courier costs. We will look to see how this could be rolled out, but perhaps more fundamentally, we first need to consider whether there is any value in retaining the wine specific certification requirements at all.

■ Zoo Animals Fund

Alex Sobel: [\[147990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will change the criteria of eligibility for the Zoo Animal Fund to support those facing permanent closure within the next 12 months.

Alex Sobel: [\[147991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will widen the eligibility criteria for the Zoo Animals Fund to ensure that zoo licence holders have adequate support.

Victoria Prentis:

Grant payments to zoos begin when they reach their final 12 weeks of financial reserves. Zoos can though apply at any time before reaching this 12 week point to help with their business planning. The Zoo Animals Fund is an envelope of funding to provide for zoos which, due to a coronavirus-related drop in income are experiencing severe financial difficulties and need support in caring for their animals. The aim of the fund is to ensure animal welfare is maintained as a priority, not to ensure that every individual business necessarily remains open. If zoos are downsizing or rehoming their collections the fund can also provide support for this to ensure the animals' welfare. This includes providing support for zoos which are facing permanent closure within the next 12 months in relation to the costs of rehoming their animals. Additionally, we have expanded the range of costs that are eligible so zoos can now claim costs relating to pre-planned essential maintenance and repair works as well as animal care costs. The fund is accessible to all zoos in need of this financial support, as evidenced by the success of small, medium and large zoos in securing grant

funding. At this point in time the eligibility criteria are not in the process of being expanded further though we continue to monitor the effectiveness of the fund to ensure it is meeting its aims - and indeed we have already made changes to make it easier for zoos to apply.

Beyond the Zoo Animals Fund, the Government has provided a package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support businesses, including zoos, through this period of disruption caused by COVID-19. Zoos are eligible to apply for a range of support schemes including the Job Retention Scheme, VAT deferral, Business Rates Relief, the Business Interruption Loan, the option to reclaim the costs of Statutory Sick Pay and grant funding.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ British Nationals Abroad: Death

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[147007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's role is in relation to UK nationals and their families when those nationals are arrested under suspicious circumstances while outside of the UK.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[147008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's role is in relation to UK nationals and their families when those nationals are seriously injured while outside of the UK.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[147009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's role is in relation to UK nationals and their families when those nationals die under suspicious circumstances while outside of the UK.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[147010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's role is in relation to UK nationals and their families when those nationals die under non-suspicious circumstances while outside of the UK.

Nigel Adams:

Our consular staff endeavour to give appropriate and tailored support to British nationals overseas and their families in the UK, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year. What we can and cannot do is set out in Support for British nationals abroad: A guide, available on GOV.UK (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-british-nationals-abroad-a-guide>). We help around 30,000 British nationals abroad every year. Cases range from supporting those who have been victims of crimes or had accidents while in another country, through to complex, long-running consular cases such as people detained overseas, injured or who have been killed in suspicious and non-suspicious

circumstances. The UK is a party to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR), which is a multilateral agreement setting out how States will cooperate in the support of their nationals in distress overseas including for example notifying individuals of their right to have their consulate notified of their arrest, and then granting access to detained nationals. The Government's ability to provide consular assistance remains at all times dependent on other states respecting the VCCR and must be done in accordance with the laws of that country.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) provide tailored support to families bereaved overseas, including providing basic information on local police and judicial procedures. Since 2015, a dedicated team have provided support to families bereaved through homicide abroad. Where there is a suspicion on the cause of death, but it is not being investigated as a homicide, the FCDO can suggest the best way to raise concerns with the relevant authorities overseas. In some circumstances the FCDO can register an interest in a case and, for eligible families, make a referral to the Victim Support Homicide Service. To support British nationals detained overseas and their families, the FCDO works closely with the NGOs Prisoners Abroad, the Death Penalty Project and Reprieve.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Torture**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[147002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of UK nationals being subjected to state sanctioned torture; and what steps he is taking to protect UK nationals in cases where there is a prima facie case of torture.

Nigel Adams:

As reported in the FCDO Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report 2019, published in July 2020, between January and December 2019, British nationals reported 119 new allegations of torture or mistreatment overseas to consular staff. The assistance we can, and cannot, provide to British nationals abroad is set out in the publication: Support for British nationals abroad: A Guide on GOV.UK (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-britishnationals-abroad-a-guide>). This also sets out who we can help, and that the level and type of assistance we offer is tailored to the individual circumstances of each case and local conditions.

We take all allegations of torture and mistreatment very seriously and will follow up with action appropriate to the circumstances of the case. Although we cannot investigate torture or mistreatment allegations, with the individual's permission, we can raise them with the local authorities, demanding an end to the mistreatment, and that the incident is investigated and the perpetrators are brought to justice.

■ British Overseas Territories: Self-determination of States**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** [\[149316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 December 2020 to Question 128714 on Self-determination of States, whether the right to choose includes remaining British, incorporating with another state and choosing independence.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government supports the option of Overseas Territories retaining their link with the UK, as well as considering other arrangements consistent with the principle of self-determination, subject to the specific circumstance of each territory. The UK Government's long-standing position is that where independence is an option for an Overseas Territory and it is the clear and constitutionally expressed wish of the people to pursue independence, the UK Government will meet its obligations to help the Territory to achieve it.

■ China: Overseas Aid**Sarah Champion:** [\[148800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of UK Official Development Assistance was spent on technology and technological partnerships with China in 2020.

Nigel Adams:

The UK ended its traditional bilateral aid programmes to China in 2011 and now offers the country expertise and skills to help tackle global issues like climate change and global health. 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. Technology and technological partnerships are not a specified classification for OECD reporting. All ODA is used in a way that reflects the UK's values and takes account of valid national security concerns.

■ China: Religious Freedom**Jim Shannon:** [\[146879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of reported changes to the Bible made by the Chinese Communist Party on the right to freedom of religion or belief in that country.

Nigel Adams:

We remain deeply concerned about the persecution of Christians and others on the grounds of their religion or belief in China, including reports that authorities are tightening control over how certain religions are practised. The freedom to practise,

change or share one's faith or belief without discrimination or violent opposition is a human right that all people should enjoy, this includes having access to religious texts and being allowed to worship in a manner of their choosing. The UK believes that societies which aim to guarantee freedom of religion or belief are more stable, prosperous and more resilient against violent extremism. We continue to raise Freedom of Religion or Belief issues directly with the Chinese authorities and via multilateral action at the UN.

■ **Commonwealth: Coronavirus**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[147756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support covid-19 vaccination programmes in Commonwealth countries.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, treatments and tests globally. The UK has committed £548m for the COVAX Advanced Market Commitment to support access to COVID-19 vaccines for up to 92 developing countries, a number of which are in the Commonwealth, by contributing to the supply of 1.3 billion doses in 2021, and vaccinations for up to 500 million people.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Sir Graham Brady:

[\[147741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will take steps to assist British citizens living overseas to access vaccination for covid-19.

Nigel Adams:

There are no plans to roll out the UK's NHS COVID-19 vaccination programme to British Nationals living abroad. 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.

■ **Diplomatic Service: British Nationals Abroad**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[147011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how his Department assesses the (a) service levels and (b) approach to consular assistance; and whether it has made a comparative assessment with other countries' consular support to determine best practice for providing consular assistance to UK nationals.

Nigel Adams:

Our consular staff endeavour to give tailored support to British nationals overseas and their families in the UK, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year. The assistance the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) can provide to British nationals abroad is set out in the publication: Support for British nationals abroad: A Guide (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-british-nationals-abroad-a-guide>). The UK is a party to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR), which is a multilateral agreement setting out how States will cooperate in the support of their nationals in distress overseas. The Government's ability to provide consular assistance remains at all times dependent on other states respecting the VCCR and must be done in accordance with the laws of that country. The FCDO undertakes regular reviews of our guidance, reviews closed complex cases and seeks to learn from specific feedback, all of which helps us continuously improve our processes and the services we provide to British people, and to develop the capability, expertise and professionalism of our staff. The FCDO is an active member of international consular forums and learns from, and shares experiences and best practice with, a range of other countries.

■ **Diplomatic Service: Pay****Harriett Baldwin:**[\[146872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the basic pay is for UK Ambassadors and High Commissioners ranging from the (a) lowest to (b) highest basic salary in 2020-2021.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office salary scales for Ambassadors and High Commissioners at our overseas posts are shown below. Pay ranges for the Senior Management Structure were effective from 1 April 2020, and for delegated grades from 1 August 2020.

GRADE	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
Senior Executive Officer	£38,300	£43,835
Grade 7	£49,365	£60,078
Grade 6	£60,705	£69,784
SMS 1	£71,000	£117,800
SMS 2	£93,000	£162,500
SMS 3	£120,000	£208,100
SMS 4	£150,000	£200,000

■ EU Countries: Visas

Stephen Hammond:

[R] [\[146829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what bilateral discussions he has with individual EU member states to negotiate an extension to the 180 day limit on visa-free access to the EU for UK visitors.

Wendy Morton:

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

The UK's Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU confirms that both the UK and EU currently provide for visa-free travel for short-term visits for each other's nationals in accordance with their respective laws. The detail of those arrangements is set by domestic law. The Government does not typically enter into bilateral agreements on visa-free travel.

■ Frontier Workers: Northern Ireland

Stephen Farry:

[\[148966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans the Government has to ensure that British citizen frontier workers who work in Northern Ireland and live in the Republic of Ireland are able to secure their rights under Article 30(d) of the EU Withdrawal Agreement in the event that they are not eligible to apply for a frontier worker permit.

Wendy Morton:

The frontier worker permit scheme has been established under Article 26 of the Withdrawal Agreement (and equivalent provisions in the agreements with the EEA EFTA States and Switzerland) to provide EU citizens with a right to be issued with a document certifying their rights as frontier workers in the UK under those agreements. British citizens and dual national British citizens who live outside the UK but who work in the UK are not within the personal scope of the Agreements and therefore are not eligible to apply to the frontier worker permit scheme. British citizens already have right of abode in the UK and do not need permission to work in the UK as that right stems from their British citizenship.

UK nationals who were lawfully resident in Ireland before the transition period ended are covered by the Withdrawal Agreement and do not need to apply for a new residence status in Ireland as their rights are conferred automatically by operation of the law. Under Article 30(d), UK nationals resident in Ireland and subject to the

legislation of the UK continue to be covered by the EU social security regulations in full. This means that if the UK is competent, then the UK Government will be responsible for their social security cover in Ireland, including reciprocal healthcare.

Access to these rights will be determined by caseworkers upon application and guidance on evidence requirements has been published on gov.uk. The Withdrawal Agreement is without prejudice to Common Travel Area arrangements between the UK and Ireland and the rights of British and Irish citizens in each other's state. This includes rights under the social security agreement between the two countries.

■ India: Farmers

Paul Bristow:

[\[147080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Indian Government on restrictions on the use of the internet and 4G access to farmers protesting against the 2020 Indian Agriculture Acts.

Nigel Adams:

We are aware that some restrictions on internet connectivity have been imposed at protest sites and call for these to be lifted as soon as possible. The right to gather lawfully and demonstrate a point of view is common to all democracies. Governments also have the power to enforce law and order if a protest crosses the line into illegality. During his visit to India, the Foreign Secretary discussed the protests with his Indian counterpart, whilst making clear that the handling of protests is an internal matter for the Indian authorities.

■ Israel : Political Prisoners

Sarah Champion:

[\[146899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the complaint submission to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention by Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights and Addameer Prisoner Support on the arrest and detention of Layan Kayed, Elyaa Abu Hijla and Ruba Asi by the Israeli military authorities.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of the complaint submission dated 2 October 2020 to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention by Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights and Addameer Prisoner Support on Israel's continued detention of Layan Kayed, Elyaa Abu Hijla and Ruba Asi. The UK remains concerned about Israel's extensive use of administrative detention. According to international law, administrative detention should be used only when security makes it absolutely necessary rather than as routine practice and as a preventive rather than a punitive measure. We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law and either charge or release detainees.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Mr Clive Betts: [\[149162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the Government of Israel against the use of live ammunition on Palestinian children in the West Bank.

James Cleverly:

We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinian children. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire. As I said on 9 December 2020, in instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we have advocated swift, transparent investigations.

Mr Clive Betts: [\[149164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the UN Special Rapporteurs' statement of 14 January 2021, what recent assessment he has made of progress by Israel on ensuring equal access to covid-19 vaccines for Palestinians.

James Cleverly:

The UK regularly engages with both the Government of Israel and Palestinian Authority (PA) and will continue to raise timely and appropriate access to COVID-19 vaccines. We welcome steps both parties have taken so far to coordinate the response, including the recent delivery of 2,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine from the Israeli Authorities to the PA for Palestinian health workers. We continue to encourage further cooperation between the two parties.

■ Jagtar Singh Johal

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[147001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason the Government has not called for Jagtar Singh Johal's release and repatriation to the UK.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[147004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the lawfulness of Jagtar Singh Johal's arrest and continued detention in India.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[147005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of whether Jagtar Singh Johal has been subjected to torture during his detention in India.

Nigel Adams:

We are aware that some restrictions on internet connectivity have been imposed at protest sites and call for these to be lifted as soon as possible. The right to gather lawfully and demonstrate a point of view is common to all democracies. Governments also have the power to enforce law and order if a protest crosses the line into illegality. During his visit to India, the Foreign Secretary discussed the protests with his Indian counterpart, whilst making clear that the handling of protests is an internal matter for the Indian authorities.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[147003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what consular assistance is being provided to Jagtar Singh Johal; how regularly consular staff speak with Jagtar Singh Johal; and on which dates in the last three months have consular staff spoken to Jagtar Singh Johal.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[147006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason have consular staff not yet visited Jagtar Singh Johal in person.

Nigel Adams:

Mr Johal's welfare continues to be a priority, as is ensuring his ongoing access to his legal representatives. Since his detention, consular staff have visited Mr Johal 29 times. In-person consular visits to prisons in India are currently suspended due to the Coronavirus pandemic. However, consular staff have secured telephone access to Mr Johal in lieu of visits and have been in regular contact with the relevant jail authorities to monitor Mr Johal's health since the introduction of lockdown measures. Consular staff last spoke to Mr Johal by telephone on 20 January, and also spoke to him on 15 December and 12 November. Additionally, on 8 January, consular staff were exceptionally allowed by the Indian authorities to visit Mr Johal while he was in police custody.

■ Myanmar: Military Coups**Jonathan Edwards:**[\[149202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to seize the assets of senior Myanmar military individuals held in the UK following the military coup in that country.

Nigel Adams:

The UK condemns the coup and the state of emergency imposed by the Myanmar military on 1 February, and the arbitrary detention of civil society representatives and democratically elected politicians, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint.

We are currently working closely with international partners to ensure a coordinated and impactful response. The UK will consider all the tools at its disposal. Before the coup, the UK had already imposed targeted sanctions on 16 individuals responsible

for human rights violations in Myanmar. We played a leading role in securing sanctions on 14 individuals whilst we were in the EU. These have all been transitioned into UK law. In July 2020, we sanctioned the Commander-in-Chief and his Deputy, in our first tranche of sanctions under the Global Human Rights Sanctions regime. We have now sanctioned all six individuals named in the UN Fact Finding Mission Report.

■ Occupied Territories: Health Services

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[149163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to help facilitate access to covid-19 (a) vaccines and (b) other essential healthcare supplies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

James Cleverly:

The UK remains committed to ensuring equitable access to effective vaccines as demonstrated by our £548 million contribution to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. Through match funding, the commitment was leveraged to encourage other donors to commit \$1 billion in 2020. We are pleased that the OPTs will be among the first to benefit from the COVAX AMC scheme, with delivery of a first batch of more than 37,000 doses of the of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine anticipated in mid-February.

The UK has also provided £1.25m funding (WHO with £630,000 and UNICEF with £620,000) to purchase and co-ordinate delivery of medical equipment, treat critical care patients, train frontline health workers, and scale up laboratory testing capacity - mainly in Gaza. We remain in regular, close contact with the Palestinian Authority to discuss their plans for access to safe COVID-19 vaccines in the OPTs.

■ Palestinians: Health Services

Alyn Smith:

[\[148912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the capacity of the Palestinian Ministry of Health to sustain a response to the covid-19 pandemic in the long term.

James Cleverly:

We remain in regular, close contact with the Palestinian Authority (PA) to discuss their ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We will work closely with key partners, including the PA to support a coherent strategy to support recovery. The UK has provided £20 million in funding for this financial year to support the salaries of teachers, nurses and doctors. This will help the PA support its health workers who have been on the frontline battling coronavirus and who deliver life-saving medical services.

We are pleased that the OPTs will be among the first to benefit from the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines, with delivery of a first batch of 37,000 doses of the of

the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine anticipated in mid-February. This is a positive step towards tackling COVID-19 in the OPTs.

■ Platinum Jubilee 2022

Andrew Rosindell: [\[146797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with Commonwealth counterparts on preparations for Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and co-ordinating celebrations.

Nigel Adams:

The 2022 Platinum Jubilee will be a major occasion marking 70 years for Her Majesty The Queen as Head of State of the United Kingdom, its Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories, as Head of State of 15 Commonwealth Realms, and as Head of the Commonwealth.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will work with the Royal Household and other Government Departments to ensure that the Platinum Jubilee is appropriately celebrated in the UK. British Embassies and High Commissions around the world will also mark the occasion. In addition to the Jubilee, the United Kingdom is scheduled to host the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham in this special year.

Commonwealth Realms or other Commonwealth countries may choose to hold their own celebrations in recognition of this special landmark but these will be a matter for the Governments of each country.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy: [\[147984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether childcare support is included among the permitted reasons to travel internationally during the period of covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced in January 2021.

Emma Hardy: [\[147985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether visiting someone in your support bubble is included among the permitted reasons to travel internationally during the period of covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced in January 2021.

Emma Hardy: [\[147986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether children with one parent living abroad are permitted to travel internationally during the period of covid-19 lockdown 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:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home#international-travel>.

■ Zimbabwe: Trade Unions

Ruth Jones: [\[147052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with representatives of the trade union movement in Zimbabwe.

James Duddridge:

The Foreign Secretary has not had discussions with representatives of the trade union movement in Zimbabwe. The British Embassy in Harare regularly engages with trade unions such as the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, most recently in December 2020 on workers' rights. The British Embassy also regularly engages unions of teachers, doctors and informal traders to better understand the political and economic issues facing Zimbabwe.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion: Drugs

Sir Edward Leigh: [\[146768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 14 December 2020 to Question 125929 on Abortion: Drugs, whether people can respond by email to respondents to his Department's consultation on whether to make permanent the current temporary measure allowing for home use of both pills for early medical abortion up to 10 weeks gestation for all eligible women; and what email address his Department has made available for that purpose.

Helen Whately:

People cannot respond this consultation by email. We do not have a dedicated email inbox set up for the consultation. This is to ensure all responses are processed securely and following data protection best practice. The Department's preferred method of response to the consultation is via submission online at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/home-use-of-both-pills-for-early-medical-abortion>

■ Abortion: Health Services

Scott Benton: [\[137338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what representations his Department has received on the effect of the Government's decision to allow self-administered medical abortions at home without in-person consultation on the ability of

(a) women to provide informed consent and (b) medical professionals to assess whether informed consent has been given in those circumstances.

Helen Whately:

A search of the Department's Ministerial correspondence database has identified no items of correspondence received since March 2020. This figure represents correspondence received by the Department's Ministerial correspondence unit only.

We have no central record of any other representations and to obtain it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[119415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which organisations will be responsible for (a) the distribution of covid-19 vaccines and (b) delivering the inoculation.

Jo Churchill:

The Vaccine Taskforce (VTF) works with vaccine manufacturers to put in place robust plans for the delivery of vaccines to Public Health England, for onward distributions to the site of administration.

The Department of Health and Social Care is ultimately responsible for vaccine deployment and works closely with NHS England and Public Health England to ensure that the vaccines are administered safely and efficiently to the public by appropriately qualified healthcare staff.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[140087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure that people attending appointments to receive the covid-19 vaccination have priority access to car parking.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: National Health Service guidance on operating vaccination centres explains that providers should ensure that they are accessible to all members of their community, take reasonable steps to improve access and reduce potential inequalities for people eligible to receive vaccinations. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2021/01/C1034-operating-framework-information-and-guidance-on-operating-vaccination-centres-v1.1-20-january-21.pdf>

All NHS regions will undertake a site review of vaccination centres, which will include an impact assessment, to ensure that they can deliver requirements for accessibility under the Equality Act 2010.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[143733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all vulnerable people are coded correctly by their GP surgery to

ensure they receive notification of their covid-19 vaccination appointment in the appropriate priority group.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement have been communicating regularly with general practitioners (GPs) to remind them of the importance of managing their lists of clinically extremely vulnerable patients. These letters link to information from NHS Digital on how GPs can apply high risk flags on an individual basis which will add patients to the Shielded Patient List, or to remove patients from the list if clinically appropriate. A high risk flag against an individual will prompt vaccination communication so that they are able to book a vaccine through the booking service or to be contacted by their GP in line with the Joint Committee on Vaccine and Immunisation prioritisation list. NHS Digital also runs a weekly search to add individuals automatically to the Shielded Patient List that they can see meet the criteria.

Tulip Siddiq:

[143859]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to suspend parking charges in designated parking areas for facilities which are administering the covid-19 vaccination.

Edward Argar:

Decisions on the provision of parking, including charging, at COVID-19 vaccination sites are made locally by the National Health Service organisations responsible for running them. NHS guidance on operating vaccination centres explains that providers should ensure that they are accessible to all members of their community and take reasonable steps to improve access and reduce potential inequalities for people eligible to receive vaccinations. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2021/01/C1034-operating-framework-information-and-guidance-on-operating-vaccination-centres-v1.1-20-january-21.pdf>

Jonathan Ashworth:

[146891]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to monitor the effect of the covid-19 vaccination programme on trends in care home deaths from the virus.

Nadhim Zahawi:

As large numbers of people from at risk groups are vaccinated, we will be able to gather the evidence to assess the impact on infection rates, hospitalisation and reduced deaths.

■ Dentistry and Doctors

Alex Norris: [\[147018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings of the Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland's recent survey of its doctor and dentist members.

Alex Norris: [\[147019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his provision of mental health support for frontline healthcare workers of findings of the Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland that more than four in 10 people working in all health professions are more stressed and anxious in the second wave of covid-19 wave compared with the first.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: The Department is aware of and takes seriously the high levels of stress and anxiety amongst frontline healthcare workers during the current crisis. The NHS People Plan published last July is helping us support National Health Service staff wellbeing through the winter. It included appointing a new wellbeing guardian role to boards of individual trusts and a combined £30 million in enhanced mental and occupational health support. Our analysis shows staff are accessing the package on offer in large numbers, whether through our dedicated app, website, or telephone and text helplines. Feedback has also been positive with satisfaction scores consistently over 90%.

■ Home Care Services: Coronavirus

Sarah Olney: [\[113618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will prioritise domiciliary care workers for weekly covid-19 tests.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: On 23 November 2020, we began offering Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered domiciliary care organisations access to regular, weekly COVID-19 testing for their carers looking after people in their own homes.

Those working for CQC-registered organisations are able to access weekly polymerase chain reaction tests to administer at home, which will help identify more asymptomatic cases and protect care recipients who are more vulnerable to COVID-19.

Proactively testing asymptomatic carers helps to identify those who unknowingly have the virus and enables those who test positive and their contacts to self-isolate. This is crucial to break the chains of transmission of the virus.

Peter Kyle:

[\[114265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to introduce regular repeat covid-19 tests for domiciliary care workers.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: On 23 November 2020, we began offering Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered domiciliary care organisations access to regular, weekly COVID-19 testing for their carers looking after people in their own homes.

Those working for CQC-registered organisations are able to access weekly polymerase chain reaction tests to administer at home, which will help identify more asymptomatic cases and protect care recipients who are more vulnerable to COVID-19.

Proactively testing asymptomatic carers helps to identify those who unknowingly have the virus and enables those who test positive and their contacts to self-isolate. This is crucial to break the chains of transmission of the virus.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Carol Monaghan:

[\[143824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 9 September 2020 from the hon. Member for Glasgow North West on patient recovery from covid-19.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: 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.

■ **Pregnancy: Screening**

Mary Glendon:

[\[110127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 19 October 2020 to Question 102813, whether he plans to make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the testimony of parents who note that on learning their child has Down's syndrome they feel led by medical professionals to abort their child.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 5 November 2020]: The Department expects clinicians to follow the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists' guidance on Termination of Pregnancy for Fetal Abnormality in England, Scotland and Wales, which states that all staff involved in the care of a woman or couple facing a possible termination of pregnancy must adopt a non-directive, non-judgemental and supportive approach.

The Royal College is currently reviewing its clinical guidelines and guidance for the care of women through antenatal screening and further diagnostic testing. A new core curriculum for professionals working in maternity and neonatal services has been developed by the Maternity Transformation Programme, which includes training on ultrasound scanning and related conversations.

HOME OFFICE

■ Action Fraud

Pat McFadden: [\[146834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many reports of fraud have been passed to Action Fraud in each of the last two years; and how many of those reports have resulted in a prosecution.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office publishes information annually on the number of reports by victims to Action Fraud that have been recorded as fraud offences as well as the investigative outcomes of those crimes. The latest published data can be found in the 'Crime Outcomes in England and Wales' statistical bulletin (in tables 4.3.1 and 4.3.2):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020>

Data for the previous year can be found (in tables 4.2 and 4.3):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020>

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of prosecutions for fraud as part of their quarterly 'Criminal Justice System Statistics' publication. The data provided relate to the number of defendants. The latest published data, along with a time series, can be found here (in tables Q3_2 and Q3_3):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-june-2020>

■ Action Fraud: Finance

Pat McFadden: [\[146833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what Action Fraud's annual budget is.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office provides annualised grant funding of £10.5 million to Action Fraud and National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) for running the service. In addition to this they receive funding from other sources.

Further details on funding of Action Fraud and funding providers are currently available on the City of London Police website:

<https://www.cityoflondon.police.uk/police-forces/city-of-london-police/areas/city-of-london/about-us/about-us/funding/>.

■ Asylum: Penally Camp

Wendy Chamberlain: [149339]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions her Department has had with Dyfed-Powys Police on the costs incurred at Penally Camp; and whether her Department plans to reimburse Dyfed-Powys Police for any such costs.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office has agreed to provide £2.5m of Special Grant funding to Dyfed-Powys Police in respect of these costs up to September 2021.

■ Crime: Females and Gambling

Paul Blomfield: [149228]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many crimes were recorded in 2020 where (a) the perpetrator was a woman and (b) gambling was identified as a relevant factor.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects data on crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales but information on whether the perpetrator was a woman and if gambling was identified as a relevant factor are not held centrally.

■ Forensic Science

Bambos Charalambous: [149313]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what metrics have been developed to illustrate the effectiveness of forensic science on the number of successful (a) convictions and (b) prosecutions.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office is leading on a project that aims to measure the impact of forensic science on the CJS. We are currently working with several police forces and academic institutions in England and Wales to test the approach through a series of small-scale studies.

Bambos Charalambous: [149314]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people are (a) accredited and practising and (b) practising and not accredited in forensic science as at 4 February 2021.

Kit Malthouse:

Information on accredited organisations can be found on the website of the UK Accreditation Service: <https://www.ukas.com/find-an-organisation/?q=forensic>

There is no register of forensic science organisations in the UK, which means that it is difficult to estimate how many unaccredited and practicing forensic science providers exist. However, police forces should not use providers who do not have the appropriate UKAS accreditation.

By supporting legislation to give the Forensic Science Regulator statutory powers, we will make it possible for the Regulator to investigate and take action against forensic science providers who do not meet the necessary quality standards.

In addition, we have supported the creation of the Forensics Capability Network (FCN) as part of an £28.6m investment in forensic capability. The FCN is leading improvement in quality standards and accreditation attainment through a number of workstreams.

■ Fraud

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[146732]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to strengthen penalties against scammers.

Kit Malthouse:

As our lifestyles change and we conduct more activity online, scammers will seek to exploit our vulnerabilities. This government is committed to making this country the safest place in the world to be online. We will continue to consider all routes, including legislation, that will give law enforcement the tools they need to go after these scammers and bring them to justice. The Government also continues to explore legislation to better protect citizens online. This includes examining the role of advertising on digital platforms through the Online Advertising Programme, which will consider the role that online advertising plays in perpetuating online scams.

It is also critical that we do all we can to make sure the public are safe online from scammers in the first place. The National Cyber Security Centre last year launched its Suspicious Email Reporting Service. As of the end of January, this has already led to over 4.5 million reports and 30,000 scams removed from online. However, the best way to avoid these scams, especially around the coronavirus, is to protect yourself. The public can find details on how to stay safe online at the dedicated coronavirus fraud and cybercrime GOV.UK page.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-fraud-and-cyber-crime>

■ Fraud: Costs

Pat McFadden:

[146830]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the annual cost of fraud to UK consumers.

Kit Malthouse:

There are no Government estimates of the annual cost of fraud specifically for UK consumers. The Home Office has estimated that the total economic and social cost of fraud to individuals in England and Wales in 2015/2016 was £4.7bn [1].

Data on incidents of fraud is available from two key sources, the ONS Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and Action Fraud supply data to the Home Office on the number of recorded fraud and computer misuse offences that have been reported to and recorded by them.

The CSEW report that in the year ending March 2020, there were an estimated 914,000 incidents of consumer and retail fraud.

[1]

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732110/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-crime-horr99.pdf

Members: Correspondence**Jeff Smith:****[146923]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Minister for Immigration plans to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Manchester Withington dated 24 September 2020 on an ongoing application for leave to remain in the UK, HO ref: J1086026.

Chris Philp:

A response to the Honourable Member was issued on 4th February.

Offenders: Deportation**Mr Simon Clarke:****[149323]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign national offenders received a prison sentence of 12 months or more in each year since 2010.

Mr Simon Clarke:**[149324]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign national offenders were served with a Deportation Order in each year since 2010.

Mr Simon Clarke:**[149325]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign national offenders lodged an appeal against a Deportation Order in each year since 2010.

Mr Simon Clarke:**[149326]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Home Office, how many appeals against deportation by foreign national offenders were allowed in each calendar year since 2010; and how many of those appeals were allowed on human rights grounds.

Mr Simon Clarke:

[149327]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many successful appeals against deportation by foreign national offenders on human rights grounds were allowed on the basis of (a) Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights and (b) Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights in each year since 2010.

Chris Philp:

The information requested above is not available in a reportable format and would require a manual check of individual records which could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Any foreign national who is convicted of a crime and given a prison sentence is considered for deportation at the earliest opportunity.

Section 32 of the UK Borders Act 2007 provides a statutory duty to deport a foreign national if they have been convicted of an offence in the UK and sentenced to a period of imprisonment of at least 12 months. This is subject to several exceptions, including where to do so would be a breach of a person's ECHR rights or the UK's obligations under the Refugee Convention.

Where a decision is made to deport, and representations are raised against that decision, an FNO is likely to be granted a right of appeal. This may be exercised in or out of country depending on the circumstances of the case.

The Home Office publishes data on Returns in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of Returns from the UK by return type (including enforced returns) are published in table Ret_01 of the Returns '[summary tables](#)'.

The term 'deportations' refers to a legally-defined subset of returns which are enforced either following a criminal conviction or when it is judged that a person's removal from the UK is conducive to the public good. Information on those deported is not separately available and therefore the published statistics refer to all enforced returns.

The MoJ publishes data on Appeals in the following statistical quarterly release, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2020>.

■ Police: Coronavirus

Mr Steve Baker:

[R] [147839]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of police enforcement of covid-19 restrictions on the (a) nature of policing and (b) relationship between the police and the public; and if she will make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

The police have played a vital role in the response to this pandemic, helping to keep the public safe, and ensuring that public order is maintained in these unprecedented circumstances.

Policing continues to be by consent. Throughout the pandemic the police approach to enforcing restrictions has followed the four-step escalation principles – engaging, explaining, encouraging, and then enforcing where necessary. In addition, the police have maintained community relations as local measures have come into effect.

The latest published ONS figures show that confidence in the police remains at high levels with 85% being very or fairly satisfied with the way the police in the local area is responding to the virus outbreak.

■ Police: Mental Health

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[147013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers have had their service cut short as a result of a decline in their mental health due to trauma experienced while on duty.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of officers on long-term absence, recuperative duties and medical retirements. This information is published annually as part of Police Workforce in England and Wales statistics. However, figures specifically on those who have left as a result of trauma experienced are not available in this data.

The Government has been clear about its commitment to support the mental and physical wellbeing of all police officers and staff, and is working with police leaders to ensure this.

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

The Government has also accelerated work to introduce a Police Covenant, which will ensure our police get the support and protection they need. Our focus will be on health and wellbeing, physical protection and support for families. We are in no doubt that an area we must focus on is mental health support. In addition to covering police officers, staff and volunteers, the Covenant will also cover those who have previously worked in policing roles, to ensure that they are also supported once they leave the service.

We will continue to work closely with policing partners to ensure the Covenant has a lasting impact on both those who work, or have worked in policing.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[147015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to bring forward proposals on (a) mandatory standards or (b) accountability for the mental wellbeing of police officers.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government and police leaders take this matter very seriously and are working to support the mental and physical wellbeing of all police officers and staff.

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

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

Our focus will be on health and wellbeing, physical protection and support for families. We are in no doubt that an area we must focus on is mental health support. Working with policing partners and others, we intend to build on the existing work started by the National Police Wellbeing Service as part of the Covenant to support the mental health of our police.

The Service has already been working hard to embed Occupational Health Standards in forces – it is important that in the first instance, we make sure that forces have the right people, make the right investment and ensure the best quality in this area. We intend to monitor this closely through the Police Covenant in future.

■ Police: Mental Illness**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[147014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of police officers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder; and what steps she is taking to support police officers with work-related mental health issues.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of officers on long-term absence, recuperative duties and medical retirements. This information is published annually as part of Police Workforce in England and Wales statistics. However, figures specifically on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder are not available in this data.

The Government has been clear about its commitment to support the mental and physical wellbeing of all police officers and staff and is working closely with police leaders to ensure this.

We have invested in programmes which offer help directly to officers and staff. This includes £7.5million to fund the development of the National Police Wellbeing

Service, which was launched in 2019. The Service is helping forces to identify where there is most risk of impacts on mental health, and developing work around building resilience, as well as putting in place support for those who need it in response to traumatic events.

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

Our focus will be on health and wellbeing, physical protection and support for families. We are in no doubt that an area we must focus on is mental health support. We will continue to work closely with policing partners to ensure the Covenant has a lasting impact on both those who work, or have worked in policing.

■ **Police: Sick Leave**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[147968]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many days were police officers absent from work as a result of mental health-related sickness in each of the last five years; and how that absence rate compares to the typical absence rate for mental health issues across all workplaces.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of officers on long-term absence, as well as the number on adjusted or recuperative duties, annually in the '[Police workforce, England and Wales](#)' statistical bulletin. While these figures include those on leave due to psychological conditions as well as physical injuries, data are not collected on the specific reason for the absence, so figures on the number of officers absent due to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder are not available.

The Government has been clear about its commitment to support the mental and physical wellbeing of all police officers and staff and is working closely with police leaders to ensure this.

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

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Our focus will be on health and wellbeing, physical protection and support for families. We are in no doubt that an area we must focus on is mental health support. We will continue to work closely with policing partners to ensure the Covenant has a lasting impact on both those who work, or have worked in policing.

■ Repatriation

Stuart C McDonald: [\[149253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the UK's immigration returns agreements with (a) Afghanistan, (b) Algeria, (c) Angola, (d) Azerbaijan, (e) China, (f) Djibouti, (g) Democratic Republic of Congo, (h) Guinea, (i) Iraq, (j) Kuwait, (k) Nigeria, (l) Sierra Leone, (m) Somalia, (n) South Korea, (o) South Sudan, (p) Switzerland and (q) Vietnam cover the return of (i) nationals and residents of the country listed and (ii) nationals of third countries.

Stuart C McDonald: [\[149254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the UK's immigration returns agreements with (a) Afghanistan, (b) Algeria, (c) Angola, (d) Azerbaijan, (e) China, (f) Djibouti, (g) Democratic Republic of Congo, (h) Guinea, (i) Iraq, (j) Kuwait, (k) Nigeria, (l) Sierra Leone, (m) Somalia, (n) South Korea, (o) South Sudan, (p) Switzerland and (q) Vietnam.

Chris Philp:

We have good longstanding migration relationships with many countries including through formal returns and readmission agreements with the countries listed in the question. The content of such agreements varies in scope. Some of the agreements are published on Gov.UK or are in the public domain. However, some agreements are not published so as to preserve good international relations or for operational reasons.

■ Thames Valley Police

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[147970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to increase resources for (a) Thames Valley Police and (b) police officers in Slough.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is proposing a total police funding settlement of up to £15.8 billion in 2021/22, an increase of up to £636 million compared to 2020/21. Of this, Thames Valley Police is set to receive up to £482.8m in 2021/22, an increase of up to £26.1m, assuming full take-up of precept flexibility.

We are increasing the number of police officers by 20,000 by March 2023. At 31 December 2020, 6,620 additional officers have been recruited as part of the Police Uplift Programme and forces have therefore met the first target of 6,000 additional officers by March 2021 ahead of schedule.

Thames Valley Police has recruited 258 additional officers as at 31 December 2020, and has therefore exceeded its year one allocation of 183 officers. Thames Valley Police's officer Uplift recruitment target for 2021/22 is 171 officers, plus 8 officers to increase capacity to tackle organised crime. The deployment of these officers is an operational decision for Chief Constables.

Additionally, over 2019/20 and 2020/21 Thames Valley has been allocated £3.2m in Police Surge Funding to uplift Forces' operational response to violent crime and £2.3m to develop a Violence Reduction Unit to tackle the root causes of violence

■ **Trespass**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[149307]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of proposed reforms to the policing of unauthorised encampments on (a) Gypsies and Travellers, (b) walkers and ramblers, (c) horse riders and (d) cyclists.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is committed to ensuring all communities are treated fairly. We are equally clear that we will not tolerate law breaking.

That is why we set out in the Queen's Speech in December 2019 our firm aim to bring forward legislation this session to strengthen the powers available to the police to tackle unauthorised encampments.

Legislation will target those causing harm and disruption, rather than those simply wanting to enjoy the countryside

■ **UK Border Force: Heathrow Airport**

Dan Carden:

[147028]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to resolve the industrial dispute between her Department and Border Force staff at Heathrow Airport.

Chris Philp:

Changes to colleague working arrangements in line with government guidance have been introduced following extensive consultation which began in October. The aim is to help protect Border Force officers, and the public from coronavirus. This best practice is supported nationally by independent bodies such as ACAS, and the PCS itself. Organisations across the country have implemented similar arrangements to ensure their staff and the public are protected.

We are fully engaged with staff and unions at Heathrow to resolve any potential industrial dispute.

Industrial action would cause unnecessary disruption at an already difficult time. Border Force has robust contingency plans in place to ensure any industrial action does not impact on border security.

■ USA: Extradition**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[146998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the reasons why more UK nationals have been extradited to the US than US nationals extradited to the UK under the UK-US Extradition Treaty; and what discussions she has had with the US administration on compliance with that treaty.

Chris Philp:

The relative size and mobility of the populations of the UK and the United States results naturally in a greater number of extraditions from the UK to the United States than from the United States to the UK. Neither the UK nor the US discriminates between own nationals and non-nationals in our extradition arrangements.

Home Office ministers and officials regularly discuss extradition with counterparts in the United States .

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Affordable Housing: Construction****Mick Whitley:**[\[148011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of funding for the Affordable Housing Programme will be allocated to the construction of low-cost, social rent housing.

Christopher Pincher:

We do not ringfence the funding for the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) by tenure. As part of the AHP 21-26, Social Rent homes can now be funded across the country at the same grant rates as Affordable Rent. Additional funding to deliver Social Rent is available in local authority areas where affordability pressures are highest. This will ensure that Social Rent homes are built where they are most needed. The new AHP will deliver around 32,000 social rent homes, more than double the delivery of the current programme.

■ Building Safety Fund: Leeds**Hilary Benn:**[\[149165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment his Department has made of the position of the application to the Building Safety Fund in respect of the Tumblebeck building, Neptune Street, Leeds.

Christopher Pincher:

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

■ Buildings: Insulation

Stephen Doughty:

[\[146897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to increase the UK-wide capacity of qualified surveyors capable of undertaking assessments for EWS1 forms.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department is funding nearly £700,000 to train more assessors to speed up the valuation process for homeowners in cases where an EWS1 form is required. The training is being delivered by RICS, who aim to have trained an additional 2,000 assessors by the end of the summer.

■ Coronavirus: Housing Market

Jon Trickett:

[\[146778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the evidential basis on which the Government's decision to permit house viewings to continue during the third national covid-19 lockdown in England was reached.

Christopher Pincher:

We have worked with both the estate agency sector and Public Health England to develop our guidance and make sure that agents are operating in a COVID-secure way, as such businesses are required to do in order to remain open. Throughout the pandemic, the Government has listened carefully to the views of the scientific community, the information from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and its sub-groups when taking decisions on the best way to tackle the pandemic.

■ Evictions

Mick Whitley:

[\[148007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending the ban on evictions beyond 21 February 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

We are working with the Ministry of Justice to consider whether, and if so how, to extend the current regulations on bailiff enforcement, including how long any such extension should be in place, and will provide more details as soon as possible.

Mick Whitley:

[\[148009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress the Government has made on abolishing section 21 evictions.

Christopher Pincher:

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

Repealing Section 21 represents the largest change to renting in 30 years and it is only right that the reforms are taken forward in a considered manner. We have consulted on this issue, in the 'A New Deal for Renting: Resetting the Balance of Rights and Responsibilities Between Landlords and Tenants' consultation. This received almost 20,000 responses and sought views on the best way to provide tenants with greater security, but also ensure that landlords are able to recover their properties where they have valid reasons to do so.

We will publish a response to the consultation and bring forward a Renters Reform Bill to implement the reforms at the appropriate time, once the urgencies of responding to the pandemic have passed.

■ High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention**Rachel Hopkins:**[\[148978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many local authorities issued enforcement notices relating to the (a) installation of fire alarms and (b) implementation of a waking watch in (i) 2017, (ii) 2018, (iii) 2019 and (iv) 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

Local Authorities and Fire and Rescue Services share responsibility for enforcement relating to fire safety. The Department does not centrally record the data requested.

■ Housing: Insulation**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[148047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many residential buildings in the UK require the removal of combustibile cladding; and what estimate he has made of the cost of that removal.

Christopher Pincher:

The information on combustibile cladding for all blocks of flats is not held. However, section 11 of the [Building Safety Bill: Impact Assessment](#) estimates the average costs per building for addressing safety remediation in high rise buildings and the estimated proportion of high-rise buildings that will require remediation by type of remediation required. These estimates consider all necessary remediation, which goes beyond façade remediation.

The Department publishes regular data on the identification and remediation progress of high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings in England with ACM cladding systems unlikely to meet building regulations. The latest data is available [here](#).

■ Levelling Up Fund

Steve Reed:

[\[149242\]](#)

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

Luke Hall:

The Levelling Up Fund will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities and will support economic recovery.

The Fund will be jointly managed by HM Treasury, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the Department for Transport.

We will publish a prospectus for the fund early this year.

■ Private Rented Housing: Enfield

Feryal Clark:

[\[147085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress has been made on processing the application made by Enfield Council in February 2020 seeking approval to implement a Selective Licensing Scheme for the private rented sector in the borough.

Christopher Pincher:

Enfield submitted their application for a Selective Licensing scheme in February 2020 and a SoS decision has not been made on their application. Officials have reviewed the Enfield application and recommended that the application is approved. Enfield have chased the status of their application on a number of occasions. We have also received a number of MSUs and press queries regarding Enfield's selective licensing application. Prior to COVID-19 we aimed for an 8 week turnaround between receiving the application and notifying the LA of the decision. This is not a statutory time limit but is in the non-statutory guidance. Resourcing pressures as a result of COVID-19 have meant this has not been achievable. A local housing authority may designate a selective licensing scheme on any one or more of the following conditions, housing demand; a significant and persistent problem caused by anti-social behaviour; poor housing conditions; high levels of migration; high level of deprivation; and high levels of crime. Since 2015 any selective licensing designation - whether singularly or cumulatively with other designations - which covers more than 20 per cent of the private rented stock in the local housing authority area or more than 20 per cent of their geographical area requires confirmation by the Secretary of State before it can be brought into force. The Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government makes the final decision on selective licensing applications.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Finance**Lee Anderson:**[\[148917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress the Government has made in allocating additional support to (a) local authorities in Ashfield constituency and (b) other local authorities as part of its levelling up agenda.

Luke Hall:

The constituency of Ashfield is benefitting from a range of Government investment. Kirby-in-Ashfield, Sutton-in-Ashfield and Eastwood are continuing to receive funding from the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership's £257.5 million allocation of the Government's Local Growth Fund. Sutton-in-Ashfield and Kirkby-in-Ashfield were both invited to develop proposals for up to £25 million each from the Towns Fund and we were delighted to receive a joint Town Investment Plan from the two towns recently. Ashfield District Council has also been awarded an in-principle offer of over £6.2 million from the Future High Streets Fund to help implement transformative high street plans and bring a much needed boost for the people of Sutton-in-Ashfield.

Investments like this will be built upon by our new £4 billion Levelling Up Fund which will be open to all local areas and allocated competitively. We will prioritise bids to drive growth and regeneration for places in need, those facing particular local challenges, and areas that have potentially benefitted less from Government investment in previous years. We will publish a prospectus for the fund and launch early this year.

■ Rents: Arrears**Dan Carden:**[\[147029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the number of tenants in rent debt since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

Data from the EHS Household Resilience Survey June-July 2020 suggests that around 7 per cent of PRS households are in rent arrears compared to around 3 per cent pre-COVID. 5 per cent of private renters had spoken to their landlords and agreed a rent holiday and a further 6 per cent had spoken to their landlords and agreed a rent reduction. The vast majority of tenants are meeting their rental commitments. The Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support which is available to tenants. The Coronavirus Job Reception Scheme and the wider package of economic support measures are supporting private renters to continue paying their rent.

Mick Whitley:[\[148005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to make available additional financial support to people in rent arrears as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has provided a comprehensive package of support to help prevent people getting into financial hardship or rent arrears as a result of COVID-19. This includes support for businesses to pay staff salaries through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended until April 2021. We have boosted the welfare system by billions of pounds, including increasing Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit by up to £1,040 for the year. We also lifted Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of local rents in April 2020, which has provided 1.5 million claimants with around £600 more housing support per year than they would otherwise have received. In 2021/22 Local Housing Allowance rates will be maintained in cash terms at their increased level, meaning claimants renting in the private rented sector will continue to benefit from the significant increase in the rates applied in April 2020. For those who require additional support Discretionary Housing Payments are available. As announced at the spending round for 2020/21 there is already £180 million in Discretionary Housing Payments for local authorities to distribute for supporting renters with housing costs in the private and social rented sectors. For 2021-22 the Government will make available £140 million in DHP funding, which takes account of the increased LHA rates. We continue to closely monitor the ongoing effects of the pandemic on renters.

Mick Whitley:[\[148006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of making loans available to people in rent arrears as a result of the covid-19 outbreak, on similar lines to the Tenancy Saver Loan Scheme in Wales and the Tenant Hardship Loan in Scotland.

Christopher Pincher:

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. The increased LHA rates will be maintained at the current levels in cash terms in 2021/22, even in areas where the 30th percentile of local rents has gone down. We have boosted the welfare system by billions of pounds, including increasing Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit by up to £1,040 for the year

In addition, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has offered support for businesses to pay staff salaries, enabling people to continue to pay their rent and has been extended until April 2021. For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available. As announced at the spending round for 2020/21, there is already £180 million in DHPs for local authorities to distribute for supporting renters with housing costs in the private and social rented sectors. For 2021-22 the Government will make available £140 million in DHP funding, which takes account of the increased LHA rates. We continue to closely monitor the ongoing effects of the pandemic on renters.

■ Tenants: Loans

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[146977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 5 October 2020 to Question 97550, if he will take steps to introduce a Tenant Loan Scheme similar to the Tenancy Saver Loans and Tenant Hardship Loan Fund introduced by the Welsh and Scottish Governments.

Christopher Pincher:

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. The increased LHA rates will be maintained at the current levels in cash terms in 2021/22, even in areas where the 30th percentile of local rents has gone down. We have boosted the welfare system by billions of pounds, including increasing Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit by up to £1,040 for the year.

In addition, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has offered support for businesses to pay staff salaries, enabling people to continue to pay their rent and has been extended until April 2021.

For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments are available. As announced at the spending round for 2020/21, there is already £180 million in DHPs for local authorities to distribute for supporting renters with housing costs in the private and social rented sectors. For 2021-22 the Government will make available £140 million in DHP funding, which takes account of the increased LHA rates.

We continue to closely monitor the ongoing effects of the pandemic on renters.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Jon Trickett:

[\[146784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which representatives were present at the 26 engagement events relating to the development of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has been engaging with key stakeholders on the design and priorities of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund since 2016, including holding a series of engagement events. Over 500 stakeholders attended these events across a variety of sectors, including businesses, public bodies (such as Local Enterprise Partnerships, Mayoral Combined Authorities, and local councils), higher education institutions, the voluntary and charity sector and rural partnership groups.

Our engagement events have taken place across the UK including in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. We will continue to work closely with interested parties as we develop the fund.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Arms Trade: Myanmar**

Jonathan Edwards: [\[149201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to impose restrictions on the direct and indirect sale of weapons to Myanmar following the military coup in that country.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

There are sanctions against Myanmar (Burma) already, including an arms embargo and a ban on the export of equipment that might be used for internal repression.

HM Government will not issue export licences for items prohibited by these sanctions.

■ Developing Countries: Cambodia

Emily Thornberry: [\[146819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, for what reasons the decision to extend least developed countries framework preferences to Cambodia was not presented to Parliament.

Greg Hands:

The approach on trade preferences and Cambodia was set out to the Chair of the International Trade Committee in a letter dated 21 January 2021.

■ Generalised System of Preferences: Cambodia

Emily Thornberry: [\[146815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 15 October 2020 to Question 101253, on what basis the decision was taken to derogate from the previously stated replication of the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences system with respect to the new preferences afforded to Cambodia.

Emily Thornberry: [\[146816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what evidence the Government used to assess human rights concerns in Cambodia when determining that country's full access to the least developed countries framework.

Emily Thornberry: [\[146818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the Cambodian Government's implementation of the core human and labour rights UN/ILO conventions necessary to qualify for the least developed countries framework.

Greg Hands:

The United Kingdom has concerns about human rights in Cambodia and continues to raise these with the Cambodian government at every opportunity.

We continue to monitor the situation in Cambodia and consider if it is appropriate to suspend preferences in line with the provisions of our Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) scheme, taking into account the human rights situation as well as the economic impact of COVID-19 and the impact on vulnerable people, including female garment factory workers.

■ Human Rights: Cambodia

Emily Thornberry:

[\[146817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, on what occasions she has raised human rights concerns with representatives from the Cambodian Government since the implementation of the least developed countries framework.

Greg Hands:

The United Kingdom continues to raise its concerns about human rights with the Cambodian government at every opportunity. For example, when explaining the UK's approach on trade preferences to Cambodia, Her Majesty's Ambassador to Cambodia expressed our concerns about the human rights situation to Cambodia's Deputy Prime Minister in December 2020.

At UN Human Rights Council sessions in late 2019 and June 2020, the UK also publicly urged the Cambodian authorities to lift restrictions on political debate and to create the conditions for a proper functioning democracy. The United Kingdom continues to seek opportunities to increase our engagement with Cambodia directly on these issues.

■ Iron and Steel: UK Trade with EU

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[147012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether UK steel producers face any tariffs or quotas to export steel into the EU market.

Greg Hands:

The Department for International Trade and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy worked closely with the UK steel sector to ensure the European Commission provides UK steel exports into the EU with tariff-free quota allocations from 1 Jan 2021.

As a result, HM Government has successfully secured from the EU country-specific allocations for some steel products within the Tariff Rate Quotas (by which the EU imposes its steel safeguard measures) to enable UK companies to trade tariff-free into the EU. These tariff-free allocations came into operation on 1 January 2021.

■ Trade Agreements: Climate Change

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[147016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that (a) trade deals which include trade on food and drink and (b) other trade deals support the UK's domestic and international climate commitments.

Greg Hands:

Our manifesto is clear that in all our trade negotiations we will maintain our high environmental protection standards, which includes clean growth and climate change objectives, animal welfare and food standards.

To inform trade deals and feed into all our negotiations, the Government has run a series of public consultations with the food and drink industry and has established key fora for industry stakeholders such as the Trade and Agriculture Commission and Trade Advisory Groups. As negotiations progress, we will bring together the best evidence from across Government, insight from external stakeholders and a range of data and analytical tools.

Our outline approaches to free trade agreements (FTAs) with the US, Japan, New Zealand, and Australia, have committed to securing provisions that will help trade in low carbon goods and services, support research and development, innovation in green sectors, and maintain our right to regulate in pursuit of decarbonisation. We will continue to pursue a range of mechanisms in the design of future trade policy, both bilateral and multilateral, working with partner nations to tackle climate change.

■ Trade Agreements: Corruption

Dan Carden:

[\[147026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans she has to include anti-corruption provisions in future trade deals.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

As detailed in our 'Strategic Approach' publications, we are aiming to secure provisions in free trade agreements with the US, Australia and New Zealand that address the trade-distorting effects of corruption on global trade and fair competition to help maintain the United Kingdom's high standards in this area.

The United Kingdom-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement includes a new provision covering anti-corruption, which signals the United Kingdom and Japan's shared ambition to combat the distorting effects of corruption on trade.

■ Whisky: USA

Ian Paisley:

[\[147846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to negotiate the reduction or elimination of tariffs on the export of Northern Irish single malt whiskey to the US.

Greg Hands:

The UK government is committed to achieving the removal of punitive tariffs impacting UK industries, such as Northern Irish Whiskey Distillers, by de-escalating this dispute.

The Secretary of State for International Trade will be engaging the Biden administration at the earliest opportunity to find a mutually beneficial and balanced settlement that works for the whole of the UK and to the benefit of UK businesses. We want to de-escalate and resolve the disputes so that we can deepen trading ties with the US and move onto the next phase of our trading relationship.

JUSTICE**■ Courts: Domestic Abuse****Ellie Reeves:**[\[146995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many courts the Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework was rolled out to in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021; and when he plans to publish the results of the effect of that framework on those courts.

Chris Philp:

The Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework was implemented across all magistrates' courts in England and Wales in January 2019. Some regions went a step further and took the opportunity to corral the Specialist Domestic Abuse Courts (SDAC) into one venue to enable them to provide a stronger, more efficient support service resource as opposed to hearing a small number of cases in nearby centres. All SDACs adopted the 5 core requirements within the Domestic Abuse Framework to ensure the optimum services were provided to all parties. Each region established joint boards to drive forward improvements locally and to review performance which was then monitored by a National DABPF board, where best practice was shared or provide support as and when required.

Domestic Abuse cases are given priority and are heard as soon as possible, but always before a trained bench and staff who are trained in this field.

The Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework is now embedded in all magistrates' courts.

The COVID19 pandemic has reduced our court room capacity, however domestic abuse courts remained a priority and were priority listings.

An audit was undertaken in Summer 2020 by the newly formed DABPF national board (membership from CPS, HMCTS, NPCC, MOJ, Home Office, the DA Commissioner, officials from the Office of the Senior Presiding Judge, Women's Aid, Refuge, Savelives, and Witness Support) which identified that the regions continued to operate Specialist Domestic Abuse Courts, albeit some with remote third sector support due to the COVID pandemic. The reduction of court room capacity and the extra burdens that lockdowns and social distancing placed on courts in terms of

service provision for the third sector reduced the ability for most of the Regions to make any meaningful progress towards further improvements. However, all regions have reflected that the relationships they had developed and the structures in place for multiagency new ways of working allowed them to continue to provide access to specialist domestic abuse services. The guidance and 5 key priorities that the framework provided gave all involved a firm basis to continue to effectively hear Domestic Abuse work despite the pandemic.

The newly formed National DABF board provides a robust governance structure to escalate issues to the National Oversight Group (chaired by the Home Secretary) or the National Criminal Justice Board and can identify and cascade best practice. To explore why referrals have been falling, and to drive up performance, a suite of work will be undertaken within the Framework governance with the NPCC leads, HMICFRS and the third sector.

Jessica Morden:

[\[149189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Government holds data on the number of specialist Domestic Violence courts in operation in England and Wales.

Chris Philp:

HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) does not hold data on the number of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVC) in operation in England and Wales. This is because the principles of Specialist Domestic Abuse Courts (SDACs) are increasingly embedded across all magistrates' courts in England and Wales. SDACs bring together highly trained personnel and support services for victims. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), together with the police and HMCTS, implemented a Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework for use across all magistrates' courts. This Framework is the result of a Criminal Justice System (CJS) wide initiative to identify common components from high performing courts. Its aim is to improve the capacity and capability of the whole CJS to respond effectively to reports of Domestic Abuse.

■ Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences: Leeds

Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[146850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much funding his Department has made available to organisations that provide support to victims of (a) domestic violence and (b) sexual abuse based in the Leeds area in each of the last three years; and if he will increase that funding in response to the effects of the covid-19 pandemic.

Alex Chalk:

MoJ does not hold specific funding data for Leeds, as funding for local support services for victims of crime is provided to West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner covering all of West Yorkshire.

In the last three years, the funding provided to West Yorkshire PCC by the Ministry of Justice for local support services for victims of crime, including Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence is as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	FUNDING ALLOCATION
2018/19	£2,672,833
2019/20	£2,664,803
2020/21	£2,712,200

In the last three years, the funding provided through the Ministry of Justice Rape Support Fund to rape support centres in West Yorkshire is as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	FUNDING ALLOCATION
2018/19	£250,532
2019/20	£389,005
2020/21	£906,772 (inc. £323,264 COVID-19 funding)

In 2020/21 MoJ provided an additional £770,000 in emergency COVID-19 funding to West Yorkshire PCC to provide additional support for domestic abuse and sexual violence service providers to maintain support during the pandemic.

On 1st February 2021, in addition to the core funding for local commissioning of support services for victims of crime, the Government announced a further £40m for victims' services. This funding will include £11 million for local community-based sexual violence services and £9.7 million for domestic abuse services. It also includes £16m to expand further the availability of Independent Domestic Violence Advisers and Independent Sexual Violence Advisers. We are in the process of agreeing the core and additional allocations for 2021-22 that all local areas will receive.

■ Employment Tribunals Service: Coronavirus

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[146988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 29 January 2021 to Question 140903 on Employment Tribunals Service: Coronavirus, how many single claims have been (a) received by and (b) disposed of by Employment Tribunals since 1 September 2020.

Chris Philp:

Information on single claim receipts and disposals is detailed in weekly management information.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/hmcts-weekly-management-information-during-coronavirus-march-to-december-2020>

■ Fraud: Prosecutions

Pat McFadden:

[\[146835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions for fraud have taken place in UK courts in each of the last five years.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions for fraud offences in England and Wales up to December 2019, available in the 'Outcomes by Offence' data tool, which can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938568/outcomes-by-offence-tool-2019.xlsx

In the data tool linked above, use the 'Offence group' filter to select '10: Fraud offences' and the number of defendants prosecuted for this offence group will populate in row 23 of the pivot table.

■ Legal Aid Scheme: Coronavirus

Jack Lopresti:

[\[146849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what funds he is allocating for legal aid to people who have lost their income as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Alex Chalk:

Legal aid plays an important role in supporting access to justice; that is why we spent £1.7bn on civil and criminal legal aid in 2019-20. Individual decisions about legal aid funding are taken by the Legal Aid Agency (LAA), which is responsible for administering the legal aid scheme and takes funding decisions independently of the Ministry of Justice.

We are aware that the COVID-19 pandemic has created a range of challenges for the provision of legal aid. The Government is committed to maintaining access to justice during this time. For civil legal aid, individuals who have lost their income (or suffered a reduction in their income) who apply for funding will be assessed on their current circumstances.

Individuals who are claiming Universal Credit or some other means-tested benefits will be deemed to qualify automatically within the income threshold; and will qualify for non-contributory legal aid (subject to passing any capital and merits test). As there is not a capital assessment for criminal legal aid, if an applicant's income is within the income threshold they will qualify for non-contributory legal aid.

■ Ministry of Justice: Children's Rights

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[149306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will (a) produce and (b) publish children's rights impact assessments for all proposed legislation.

Alex Chalk:

We are fully committed to protecting and promoting children's rights. It is important for all children – regardless of race, religion or abilities – to have equal civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Child's rights impact assessments are a valuable tool in ensuring children's rights are considered in policy and legislation, and the government is also committed to give due consideration to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) when making new policy and legislation.

Child's rights impact assessments are not always carried out for all legislation, however the Equality Statement does consider data on children and summarises our assessment of the likely equalities impacts on individuals' protected characteristics, including age.

■ **Prisons: Wales**

Liz Saville Roberts:[\[149308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) prison officers and (b) other staff members at (i) HMP Berwyn and (ii) other prisons in Wales are Welsh speaking.

Lucy Frazer:

HMPPS do not gather official statistics about the number of Welsh speaking staff in prisons. The below local information was collected by Equalities Leads in Wales in Jan 2021, however, this is subject to staff declaring themselves to be Welsh speakers. There is also varying levels of fluency among staff.

PUBLIC SECTOR PRISON	NUMBER OF OPERATIONAL WELSH SPEAKING STAFF	NUMBER OF NON-OPERATIONAL WELSH SPEAKING STAFF
HMP Berwyn	14	5
HMP Cardiff	8	2
HMP Swansea	16	6
HMP Usk & Prescoed	5	1

At HMP Parc, 32 operational staff and 26 non-operational staff are Welsh speakers.

We are working hard to increase the diversity of prison staff and making the recruitment process more accessible to new starters from a range of backgrounds, and we continue to welcome applications from Welsh speakers and in the Welsh language.

■ Sentencing: Children's Rights

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[149305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will (a) undertake and (b) publish a children's rights impact assessment for the provisions contained in the A Smarter Approach to Sentencing White Paper.

Chris Philp:

While a separate Child Rights Impact Assessment was not carried out, we published an Overarching Equality Statement alongside the White Paper, *A Smarter Approach to Sentencing*, in September last year. This assessment included data on children and summarises our assessment of the likely equalities impacts on individuals' protected characteristics, including age. This is publicly available on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-smarter-approach-to-sentencing>

SCOTLAND

■ Sovereignty: Scotland

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[146852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of publishing a White Paper on the potential consequences of Scottish independence, setting out policy on areas including, but not restricted to, defence, immigration, economy, currency, trade, pensions, membership of the European Union, public service spending, culture and the environment.

Mr Alister Jack:

The question of Scottish independence was settled decisively in 2014 when Scotland voted to remain part of the UK. The UK Government continues to respect that result.

The UK Government is constantly communicating the benefits of Scotland being part of the United Kingdom and will continue to do so in future through a range of methods. These benefits have been clear recently in, for example, the unprecedented economic support offered to people and businesses in Scotland during the Covid-19 pandemic and the UK Government's investment in vaccines, ensuring that we have UK-funded, affordable doses available across the whole of the United Kingdom.

On the other hand, there is little doubt there are many unanswered questions about the practicalities and impact of leaving the UK, not least around important issues like currency, defence, the fiscal transfer and the sustainability of public spending in Scotland at its current levels. These are all of direct relevance to the lives of people in Scotland.

TRANSPORT**■ Aviation: Quarantine****Maria Eagle:**[\[148713\]](#)

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 (a) aviation industry and (b) regional airports.

Robert Courts:

The Department for Transport works closely with HM Treasury on matters related to aviation. The Secretary of State meets regularly with his Cabinet colleagues including the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in addition to the many more meetings attended by Junior Ministers or DfT Officials to discuss and achieve the goals to mitigate the effect of COVID-19.

The Government recognises the impact COVID has had on the aviation sector, particularly in light of the continuing restrictions. 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 or the new Airport and Ground Operator Support Scheme (AGOSS).

In total, we estimate the support we have committed to provide to the air transport sector (airlines, airports and related services) through the coronavirus support package, the new AGOSS scheme and through export development guarantees, will benefit the sector by around £6.5bn.

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.

■ Bridges: Repairs and Maintenance**Sarah Olney:**[\[149311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to financially support local authorities in repairing substandard bridges to their full carrying capacity within the next five years.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department will allocate over £1.1 billion capital funding for local highways maintenance, including bridge repair, to local highway authorities in England, outside London, during 2021/21. The Department will work with HM Treasury on a multi-year settlement for areas, including local highways maintenance, at the next Comprehensive Spending Review.

■ Buses and Taxis: Coronavirus

Kate Osamor:

[\[148859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reduce the risk of covid-19 among bus, coach and taxi drivers.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has published 'Safer Transport' guidance for transport [operators](#) and 'Safer Travel' guidance for [passengers](#), as well as specific safety guidance for owners, operators and drivers of taxis and private hire vehicles ([PHVs](#)). The Government is developing further guidance on installing protective screens in taxis and PHVs.

In addition, the Government continues to provide £27.3 million per week of Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) funding to bus operators and local authorities and will do so until it is agreed that this funding is no longer needed. CBSSG funding allows bus operators to provide up to 100% of pre-Covid service levels in order to accommodate social distancing, while also helping operators to implement safety measures to protect staff and passengers, including protective screens in driver's cabs and enhanced cleaning of vehicles.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: EU Countries

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[148736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will place in the Library correspondence and records of discussions with the European Commission on an exemption for specialist hauliers to new limits on movements in the EU.

Rachel Maclean:

Our assessment is that the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) will allow for the 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. These rules will also apply to specialist hauliers, such as hauliers who carry equipment for musicians and other performers.

Alternative arrangements for specialist hauliers were discussed in detail as part of negotiations, including specific proposals for liberalised access, but the EU was unwilling to agree more flexible arrangements. Unfortunately, we are not able to release the content of correspondence and records pertaining to the negotiation. These texts are confidential, and it is therefore not appropriate for them to be published.

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.

■ Liverpool Port: Roads**Bill Esterson:**[\[149231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether (a) Jigsaw Homes, (b) Bellway North West, (c) Nuffield College, (d) P&O Ferries / Ferrymasters, (e) Stagecoach Merseyside, (f) Santander UK, (g) Aintree NHS Trust, (h) the Health & Safety Executive, (i) Canal & River Trust, (j) the Forestry Commission, (k) Groundwork and (l) Hugh Baird College have made representations to Highways England on the A5036 Port of Liverpool Access scheme; and whether each of those representations were in favour of or against the proposed road.

Rachel Maclean:

Highways England has had contact with the stakeholders listed, and others, as part of its duty to consult in relation to the A5036 Princess Way – access to the Port of Liverpool. It is not possible to provide a simple categorisation of all views as in favour of or against the scheme.

All stakeholders will, in due course, have the opportunity to comment on the scheme proposals as part of the process of obtaining development consent under the Planning Act 2008.

■ Midland Main Railway Line: Electrification**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[148872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to electrify the Midland Mainline beyond Corby.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Further electrification of the Midland Main Line is currently being examined by the Department and Network Rail, and is at an early stage of development. This work will consider the National Infrastructure Commission Rail Needs Assessment (December 2020) and the Department's Integrated Rail Plan due to be published early this year. Electric services from London to Corby are due to commence in May 2021, with electrification to Market Harborough planned for 2023.

■ Motorcycles: Keyworkers**Rebecca Long Bailey:**[\[148817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his department has made of the potential merits of extending the validity period of Compulsory Basic Training certification for frontline and key workers needing to commute during the pandemic whose two-year deadline has expired or is due to expire during lockdowns; and what steps he is taking to support workers who have lost their means of commuting due to a lack of extension to their certificates.

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. That includes critical workers. The Government has no plans, on road safety grounds, to waive that two-year validity period for any category of learner rider. Mobile emergency workers who hold a valid CBT certificate are, however, able to take a motorcycle test during the current restrictions if put forward by their employer.

■ Network Rail: Infrastructure

Grahame Morris: [\[149206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the spend was in real terms on protecting Network Rail infrastructure assets from weather-related impacts for each year of the control period 2014–19.

Grahame Morris: [\[149207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) budget and (b) spend is in real terms on protecting Network Rail infrastructure assets from weather-related impacts in each year of the control period 2019–24.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Please see the table attached. This information is in line with the information provided in the rail resilience report published 1 September 2020.

Network Rail is investing a total of £1.247bn in CP6 (*1 April 2019- 31 March 2024*) to maintain and renew earthworks and drainage, supporting weather resilience improvements on the railway. This is a real term increase of 20% on CP5 (April 2014 to March 2019).

Attachments:

1. Table - NR weather-related spending [Table - NR weather-impacts spending.pdf]

Grahame Morris: [\[149209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of inspections and works in relation to protecting Network Rail infrastructure assets is undertaken by staff (a) directly employed by Network Rail and (b) employed by sub-contractors.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Earthwork inspections are entirely outsourced to specialist engineering contractors on four out of Network Rail's five regions . Earthwork inspections are partly outsourced on Network Rail's North West & Central region. As a devolved organisation, the work of these contractors is overseen and quality controlled by Network Rail's regions.

Grahame Morris: [\[149210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the two taskforces established after the Stonehaven train derailment to examine Networks Rail's response to climate change will report their findings.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Both taskforce reports have recently been submitted to Network Rail. Network Rail is currently discussing the content of the reports with the taskforce leaders, Lord Robert

Mair and Dame Julia Slingo, and will provide an update to the Secretary of State for Transport within the next month.

Ian Mearns: [\[149213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many infrastructure assets were determined by Network Rail to require assessment for weather-related infrastructure impacts in respect of (a) bridge scour, (b) earthworks susceptibility, (c) flood sites, (d) heat, (e) rainfall, (f) snow and (g) wind in 2020.

Ian Mearns: [\[149214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many infrastructure assets were identified by Network Rail as requiring action to protect or repair the asset as a result of weather-related infrastructure impacts in 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail inspected more than 1,000 assets in the last year, including 584 sites in the three weeks following the Carmont derailment. Of these sites, only 1% were identified as having defects that had deteriorated and required action sooner than planned.

■ Network Rail: Stonehaven

Ian Mearns: [\[149212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many infrastructure assets Network Rail has yet to inspect and assess as a proportion of total assets for weather-related infrastructure impacts in respect of (a) bridge scour, (b) earthworks susceptibility, (c) flood sites, (c) heat, (d) rainfall, (e) snow and (f) wind, since the Stonehaven derailment in August 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail inspects its infrastructure assets in line with its published engineering standards.

■ Network Rail: Weather

Grahame Morris: [\[149208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment has been made of the effect of a reduction in enhancements for the 2019-24 control period on the protection of Network Rail infrastructure assets from weather-related effects.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

There will be no impact on the maintenance and renewal of the railway.

Ian Mearns: [\[149215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which infrastructure assets identified by Network Rail in 2020 as requiring action to be taken to protect or repair the asset as a result of weather-related infrastructure impacts have (a) had that work completed and (b) work outstanding.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In the three weeks following the Carmont derailment, Network Rail inspected 584 locations which were assessed because they shared similar characteristics to the areas in which the Carmont derailment took place. 1% of these sites required remedial work sooner than was originally planned and that work has been completed.

However, there will be many more instances across the network where teams have completed weather resilience works on assets which fall outside of this bracket. That information is held by Network Rail's regional teams and would take a large amount of time to collate. Therefore, the information requested can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Public Transport: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[148874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to ensure passengers return to using (a) rail and (b) other forms of public transport once covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As the vaccine rollout continues at pace, the priority of the Department will continue to be to provide a safe and reliable transport system. Keeping public transport networks safe, increasing public confidence and re-establishing transport demand is essential for our economic prosperity.

We will continue to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 to enable us to build back better across the whole of the UK. Understanding the longer-term changes in behaviour which result from COVID-19 will help us deliver against the Department's longer-term priorities, such as decarbonising our transport system.

Railways**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[147961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Integrated Rail Plan will be published.

Andrew Stephenson:

Following full consideration of the National Infrastructure Commission's report, the Government expects to publish the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) early this year.

Railways: North of England**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[147963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, plans he has to increase rail investment in North of England (a) cities, (b) towns and (c) rural areas.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Government will present an Integrated Rail Plan which will look at how best to deliver HS2 Phase 2b, Northern Powerhouse Rail and other transformational investment across the North and Midlands.

We continue to deliver ambitious enhancements to the rail network in the North, investing in key priorities including the Transpennine Route Upgrade linking Manchester and Leeds, and restoring lines and stations closed during the Beeching cuts, with an unrelenting focus on levelling up our country and ensuring all communities have the connections they need to support growth and prosperity.

■ Railways: Repairs and Maintenance**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[147964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 21 January 2021 to Question 137282, when are delayed engineering works rescheduled for.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The engineering works postponed over Christmas have now either been completed or are rescheduled to take place over the next few weeks. No impact on passengers is expected.

■ Regional Airports**Maria Eagle:**[\[148716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to support regional airports; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time.

The Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS) opened for applications on 29 January to provide support for eligible commercial airports and ground handlers in England. It will provide support up to the equivalent of their business rates liabilities in the 2020/21 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £8m.

■ Regional Airports: Coronavirus**Maria Eagle:**[\[148717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to publish a recovery plan on how his Department will support regional airports to help ensure their continuing viability as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are lifted.

Robert Courts:

The government is focused on reducing the public health risks posed by community transition of COVID-19 and imported variant cases of the virus from overseas.

We are also developing a forward looking strategic framework on the recovery of the sector, which will include the government's ongoing priority to support and strengthen regional connectivity.

The Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS) opened for applications on 29 January to provide support for eligible commercial airports and ground handlers in England. It will provide support up to the equivalent of their business rates liabilities in the 2020/21 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £8m.

In total, we estimate the support we have committed to provide to the overall air transport sector (airlines, airports and related services) through the coronavirus support package, the new AGOSS scheme and through export development guarantees, will benefit the sector by around £6.5bn.

■ **Roads: Birmingham**

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[147747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding he has allocated to Birmingham City Council for the repair of potholes in the last 12 months.

Rachel Maclean:

Birmingham City Council, as the local highway authority, is responsible for the maintenance of its local road network. Birmingham City Council has a Highways Maintenance Private Finance Initiative project for the comprehensive upgrade and maintenance, over 25 years, of their highway network.

The project commenced operation on 7 June 2010; the Department is providing over £1.2 billion towards the £2.7 billion total cost.

■ **Rolling Stock: Disability**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[148871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps he has taken to set consistent standards on rail carriages to ensure that they are accessible for people with disabilities.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Equality Act 2010 gives the Secretary of State powers to establish regulations to require rail vehicles to be designed and built to make them accessible to disabled passengers and persons of reduced mobility. Accessibility standards for new and refurbished rail carriages are mandated through the Railways (Interoperability) Regulations 2011 and the Rail Vehicle (Non-Interoperable Rail System) Regulations 2010. There are currently nearly 16,000 rail carriages in service which comply with these standards.

During 2020, 2 new targeted compliance dispensations and 17 time-limited dispensations were granted. There were a further 11 targeted compliance

dispensations which were re-issued with amended annexes listing individual vehicle references.

■ **Speed Limits: Cameras**

Ms Harriet Harman: [\[146748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his policy is on the inclusion of the location of speed cameras on Google Maps and other web mapping services.

Rachel Maclean:

We expect all drivers to observe speed limits. It is up to the Highways Authority and the Police to decide whether to use cameras and how they wish to operate them.

We are, however, keen that the public should be kept informed about the location of fixed speed cameras and we recognise that apps may include this public domain data on their service. We are not out to trap the motorist. We want to ensure fairness and safety on our roads.

■ **Train Operating Companies: Closures**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[148875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the long term effect of open access operators closing on rail connectivity in the affected regions.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government recognises the importance of rail connectivity for all communities and regions and we continue to monitor the situation and to work closely with all open access operators. The Government is aware of the services that open access operators provide and would consider measures to ensure all geographic areas are served effectively by the railway should they be required, and no community loses connectivity.

■ **Transport for the North: Finance**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[147962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason the Transport for the North's core budget was reduced.

Rachel Maclean:

The most recent allocation of core funding to Transport for the North will enable the organisation to continue to play a valuable role in delivering its statutory functions of developing a transport strategy for the region and helping the Department to prioritise, bringing strength of partnership among members to speak to the Government with one voice. The Department will continue to work with Transport for the North to achieve our shared ambition of world-class infrastructure in the region.

The Spending Review settlement includes funding for key transport infrastructure projects and programmes in the North, and the Spending Review also demonstrated our commitment to accelerate projects in the North

■ UK Trade with EU

Drew Hendry:

[\[149265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions officials in his Department have had with their European counterparts on the scope of existing constraints on eligible small boat sizes that can be used for commercial activity within the EU.

Robert Courts:

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency has been engaging with EU Member States to remove technical barriers to enable the provision of cabotage services by UK vessels in specific EU Member States, including yachts under 24 meters. The MCA will continue to engage with relevant countries to ensure recognition of UK Small Commercial Vessel Codes and seek to unblock technical barriers where they exist. DfT will engage with EU Member States to unlock any other regulatory restrictions for maritime cabotage. The MCA have been working with European counterparts to make progress towards the mutual acceptance of qualifications and the technicalities of the codes of practice for some small vessels such as workboats.

TREASURY

■ Child Benefit

Justin Madders:

[\[147894\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the £50,000 income limit for the Child Benefit High Income Charge by inflation each year.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is committed to managing the public finances in a disciplined and responsible way by targeting support where it is most needed. The adjusted net income threshold of £50,000 used in the administration of the HICBC only affects a small minority of those with comparatively high incomes. The Government therefore believes that the current threshold for HICBC remains the best option at present. As with all elements of tax policy, the Government keeps this under review as part of the annual Budget process.

■ Companies: VAT

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[149222\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many companies based (a) outside the UK and (b) in Northern Ireland were registered with HMRC in respect of paying VAT on goods sold into Great Britain on (i) 31 December 2020 and (ii) 31 January 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The table below provides the information requested on the number of companies registered for VAT in respect of paying VAT on goods sold into Great Britain.

NUMBER OF COMPANIES REGISTERED FOR VAT IN RESPECT OF PAYING VAT ON GOODS SOLD INTO GREAT BRITAIN	TOTAL NO OF COMPANIES WHO WERE REGISTERED	NO OF COMPANIES FROM OUTSIDE THE UK WHO WERE REGISTERED	COMPANIES WITH A NORTHERN IRELAND POST CODE WHO WERE REGISTERED.NOTE – NOT ALL THESE COMPANIES REGISTERED WILL SUPPLY GOODS TO GB.
Month of December 2020	27,615	558	492
Month of January 2021	28,378	589	367

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

Colum Eastwood:

[\[149355\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to defer the first payments of the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, due in April 2021, in response to the financial pressures on businesses resulting from the covid-19 outbreak.

Colum Eastwood:

[\[149356\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of deferring the first repayments of the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme due in April 2021 in light of the ongoing financial pressures on businesses as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

Under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) rules, capital repayments start immediately, unlike the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) where no repayments are due from the business during the first 12 months of the facility. As a result, many CBILS borrowers started repaying their facilities from the date they were taken out.

Following the Chancellor's announcement at the Winter Economy Plan, to help businesses repay their CBILS facilities the Government have amended the CBILS rules to allow lenders to extend loan terms from six to a maximum of ten years where the borrower is in difficulty and where the lender judges that an extension would help their situation. I should be clear that CBILS term extensions will be offered at the discretion of lenders, unlike the "Pay As You Grow" options for Bounce Back loans. Such extensions would therefore be given in line with a lender's forbearance policies.

Any business concerned about their ability to repay their finance should discuss this with their lender in the first instance. Given loans under CBILS are varied and resemble more traditional commercial lending, CBILS borrowers are more likely to

benefit from tailored engagement with their lender if they have concerns about repayments. Lenders have an ongoing relationship with CBILS borrowers and will be best placed to provide support tailored to an individual businesses circumstance.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Chris Law: [\[147882\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme claims have been incorrectly refused since the scheme began.

Chris Law: [\[147883\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many incorrectly refused Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme claims have been investigated and resolved since the scheme began.

Chris Law: [\[147884\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many incorrectly refused Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme claims are currently being investigated.

Chris Law: [\[147885\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average time taken is for investigating and resolving an incorrectly refused Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme claim.

Jesse Norman:

In order to decide if a case has been incorrectly refused, HMRC must obtain evidence of alleged errors and investigate them. Cases differ widely, and the time taken to resolve a case will vary depending on the circumstances and complexity.

HMRC have received a total of 7,293 complaints (up to 4 February 2021) relating to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Of this figure, 374 have been upheld, 225 have been partially upheld, and 5,579 have been rejected. A further 1,115 claims are currently being investigated.

Chris Law: [\[147886\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme claims that have been approved by HMRC but where a payment was not subsequently received by the applicant.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not have an estimate for the number of Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) claims which have been approved by HMRC but not received by applicants, as all claims made within the necessary deadline will be paid six working days after they have been submitted via the online portal. The claims system has been running successfully.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Supply Teachers

Daisy Cooper:

[\[149340\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the veracity of the advice from the Recruitment and Employment Confederation that agencies cannot provide retrospective furlough agreements for their supply teachers during the covid-19 outbreak; and whether it is acceptable for furlough to be back dated for supply teachers to 4 January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

For claims from 1 November 2020, an employer can claim before, during or after they process their payroll as long as their claim is submitted by the relevant deadline.

Claims can be backdated where employees have already been furloughed from that date. A claim cannot start any earlier than the date the employee was furloughed. Employers must have confirmed in writing to their employee that they had been furloughed.

Claims for furlough days in January 2021 must be submitted by 15 February 2021.

■ Council Tax and Stamp Duties

Dan Carden:

[\[147027\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of replacing council tax and stamp duty with a proportional property tax.

Jesse Norman:

The Government does not have any plans to introduce a new proportional property tax, but keeps all taxes under review. Residential properties will continue to be taxed through Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) and Council Tax.

■ Disability: Coronavirus

Hilary Benn:

[\[147738\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to provide an emergency support package to protect (a) disabled people's health and finances and (b) disabled children and their families during the covid-19 pandemic.

Jesse Norman:

Like others, individuals with disabilities will benefit from the substantial level of financial support provided during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes an injection of £7bn into the welfare system, the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). The CJRS has been extended until the end of April 2021. It is up to the employer to make the best decision for their organisation and their employees about whether to furlough staff. Standard discrimination law applies; an employer cannot decide who should be furloughed based on any protected characteristic.

However, if people with a protected characteristic disproportionately request furlough, it can be acceptable under the law for the use of furlough to be disproportionately higher in that group. Employers are encouraged to consult on the process with employees.

The Government also recognises the challenges presented by COVID-19 for all those who are living with a disability and are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable. Individuals who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable may have access to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). Clinically Extremely Vulnerable individuals also have priority access to vaccination against COVID-19 before the general population and in line with the priority ordering set by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

The Government's support package during the current pandemic sits alongside a substantial set of existing welfare support for individuals with disabilities. The Government will spend over £55 billion in 2020/21 on benefits to support disabled people and people with health conditions. The Government has implemented a range of measures to make access to disability benefits easier and to protect existing claimants during the current situation. This includes temporarily suspending face to face assessments.

■ Financial Institutions: Corporation Tax

Gareth Thomas:

[\[146759\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the amount of corporation tax paid by (a) credit unions and (b) building societies in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The estimated Corporation Tax (CT) liabilities from building societies are shown in the table below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	CT LIABILITIES (£ MILLION)
2014 to 2015	110
2015 to 2016	180
2016 to 2017	360
2017 to 2018	370
2018 to 2019 (latest available year)	300

A similar breakdown of CT liabilities from credit unions is not available, as they are not separately identifiable in the data.

■ Fraud: Telephone Services

Hilary Benn:

[\[147739\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to tackle scam calls claiming to be from HMRC alleging an unpaid tax bill and threatening arrest.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC take protecting taxpayers seriously; as a result of recent work they have dropped from the third to 146th most phished brand in the world in the five years to 2019. This resulted in an increase in reports of fraudulent HMRC branded telephone calls. HMRC operate a suspicious telephone contact referral service on GOV.UK, provide a suspicious e-mail referral service at phishing@hmrc.gov.uk, and a suspicious SMS referral service using the '60599' SMS short code.

HMRC operates a dedicated Customer Protection team to prevent, detect and respond to frauds abusing the HMRC brand. HMRC work closely with the telecoms industry and Ofcom to block malicious phone numbers, and in the last 12 months, HMRC reported 2,687 phone numbers being used in tax-related phone scams to telecommunication companies to be taken down, and responded to more than 278,000 reports of telephone scams from the public.

Intelligence indicates these frauds are organised and conducted mainly outside of the UK jurisdiction, and HMRC are working with law enforcement and partner tax authorities nationally and internationally to reduce the harm from tax-branded voice scams.

HMRC support and lead UK investigations as appropriate. In July 2020, four individuals were arrested as part of an investigation into a suspected multi-million-pound phone scam targeting UK taxpayers. HM Revenue and Customs officers carried out searches at five addresses in East and West London on Tuesday 28 July. £10,000 in cash was seized along with a quantity of laptop and desktop computers, mobile phones and SIM cards.

■ Holiday Accommodation: Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Patrick Grady:

[\[149259\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with representatives of the self-catering accommodation industry on enabling professional self-caterers to access the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) was designed to support eligible self-employed individuals by providing, in its third phase, a taxable grant worth 80% of average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment and capped at £7,500 in total. This is designed to ensure that support will be targeted to those self-employed individuals who need it most.

Those individuals who are ineligible for the SEISS may be eligible for other elements of the Government's support package, including Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals,

rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

Other businesses, including those in the self-catering accommodation industry, may benefit from the additional funding for businesses worth £4.6 billion across the UK. All local authorities in England have received an additional £500 million of discretionary funding to support their local businesses. This builds on the £1.1 billion discretionary funding which local authorities had previously received to support their local economies and help businesses affected by the COVID-19 crisis. This is on top of support being offered to businesses required to close through the Local Restrictions Support Grant and additional one-off grants.

The Government encourages local authorities to use their Additional Restrictions Grant allocations to set up a discretionary grant scheme using this funding e.g. for those businesses who are affected by closures, but which are not legally closed. However, local authorities can also use it to support businesses indirectly including by providing additional guidance and support for businesses in their areas.

■ Hospitality Industry and Tourism: VAT

Dave Doogan:

[\[149333\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the budgeted cost to the Exchequer is of the reduction to 5 per cent VAT for hospitality and tourism sales between 8 July 2020 and 31 March 2021; how much of that cost has been accrued; and what the projected final cost of that policy is.

Jesse Norman:

The Exchequer cost of the temporary reduced rate of VAT for hospitality, accommodation and attractions until 31 March 2021 was set out at Spending Review 2020. The estimated cost is £2,540m, as shown in Table 1.1:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents>.

This costing has been certified by the Office for Budget Responsibility.

The actual cost to date is not available owing to the lags in VAT reporting, and the final cost will depend on the level of demand and the extent of restrictions during the period of the relief.

■ Imports: VAT

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[149223\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which international comparisons HMRC drew upon in designing the schemes it uses to recover VAT on goods imported into the UK.

Jesse Norman:

VAT on goods imported to the UK is recoverable by the owners of the goods, via their VAT return, where they are VAT registered and the goods are intended for use in making taxable supplies. Details of this can be found in Revenue and Customs Briefs

2 (2019) and 15 (2020) at www.gov.uk/government/publications, and the approach is in line with international norms.

HMRC also use the overseas refund scheme to refund import VAT to overseas businesses importing goods into the UK. This scheme is the equivalent of the mechanism used in the EU to refund VAT to businesses that are outside the EU.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[149224\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of changes in the requirements for the levying of VAT on imported goods on (a) volumes of international trade between the UK and other countries, (b) volumes of trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, (c) prices of imported goods into Great Britain and (d) the availability to consumers in Great Britain of goods not produced in Great Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided extensive guidance on the VAT treatment of cross-border goods and services following the end of the transition period and is committed to supporting businesses to enable them to continue to trade.

As with all tax measures, where new changes have been introduced, the Government includes its assessment of the impacts of the changes in Tax Information and Impact Notes. Notes for measures recently legislated for in the Taxation (Post-transition Period) Act were published alongside that legislation.

■ **Insurance: Coronavirus**

Christine Jardine:

[\[912041\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to ensure that businesses' insurance claims relating to the effects of the covid-19 outbreak are settled in a timely manner.

John Glen:

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rules require insurers to handle claims fairly and promptly and settle claims quickly once settlement terms are agreed. The FCA has said that, in light of COVID-19, insurers must consider very carefully the needs of their customers and show flexibility in their treatment of them.

The Government is working closely with the FCA to ensure that the rules are being upheld during this crisis and fully supports the regulator in its role.

■ **Retail Trade: Non-domestic Rates**

Ian Paisley:

[\[146878\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether businesses in the retail supply chain are eligible for business rates relief.

Jesse Norman:

This year the Government has provided an unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties due to the direct adverse effects of COVID-19, worth about £10 billion, and has frozen the business rates multiplier for all businesses for 2021-22.

Business rates are devolved in Northern Ireland and so are a matter for the Northern Ireland Executive.

■ Secondhand Goods: UK Trade with EU**Rachel Reeves:**[\[149218\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support the Government is providing to UK charities facing difficulties in exporting second-hand clothing to the EU under rules of origin requirements.

Jesse Norman:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) ensures there will be zero tariffs or quotas on trade between the UK and the EU, where goods meet the relevant rules of origin. Rules of origin are a standard feature of trade agreements and serve to protect UK industry from unfair competition by ensuring that products from third countries cannot unduly benefit from the TCA.

The Government has always been clear that leaving the Single Market and Customs Union will result in new customs processes for businesses trading with the EU, and this also applies for charities exporting clothes. The rules of origin in the TCA were developed in close consultation with stakeholders to reflect the needs of UK-EU supply chains, and those agreed for the textiles and clothing sectors are in line with the most liberal precedents found in other FTAs the EU has agreed, ensuring as many UK exports as possible can meet them and benefit from zero tariffs. However, there will necessarily be some circumstances where goods do not satisfy rules of origin requirements. The Government is working closely with businesses and other organisations to ensure that they understand any new requirements, and it has published detailed guidance.

For goods that do not meet rules of origin requirements, depending on the goods' circumstances, businesses may be able to use existing reliefs in place to ease trade between the UK and EU. The Government understands that the EU, like the UK, provides for relief from customs duties on imports of humanitarian goods, irrespective of the TCA. Charities can find out more information on the EU's procedures on its Europa.eu website and on those of its Member States.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme**Carolyn Harris:**[\[147930\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to maintain the fourth Self-Employment Income Support Scheme Grant at the same level as the third grant, 80 per cent of average profits, to provide support for (a) self-employed practitioners

in personal care services. and (b) other self-employed workers who face reduced demand as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Ruth Jones: [\[148000\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to vary the eligibility requirements for Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grants.

Ruth Jones: [\[148001\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to announce Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant payments imminently.

Jesse Norman:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given on 3 February 2021 to UIN 145754.

Carolyn Harris: [\[147931\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to provide financial support to (a) practitioners operating in personal care services and (b) other self-employed people that are unable to access the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Carolyn Harris: [\[147932\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) practitioners in personal care services and (b) other self-employed workers in different occupations that are unable to access the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government recognises the impact that the pandemic is having on businesses and individuals across the country. That is why it has provided £280 billion of support to safeguard jobs and to protect the economy. As part of those efforts the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) has been successful in providing £13.7 billion of support to the self-employed. People who are ineligible for the SEISS, including practitioners in personal care services and affected business owners in the sector, may be eligible for the wide range of other support schemes available including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Government-backed loans (such as Bounce Back Loans), VAT deferrals, business grants, the £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit, and Local Authority Hardship Funds to help with council tax payments.

In addition, the Devolved Administrations have been provided with £16.8 billion of funding to allow them to design their own support schemes.

The Government estimates that 1,668,000 individuals may be ineligible for the SEISS across all sectors, including personal care. These figures include individuals who have been assessed to be ineligible for the SEISS for any reason. For example, they may earn the majority of their income from PAYE employment (and so may be eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme), or they may have average trading profits of over £50,000. Further information can be found in Table 3 in the following document:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/955944/SEISS - Official statistics tables January 2021.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/955944/SEISS_-_Official_statistics_tables_January_2021.ods).

Neale Hanvey: [\[148017\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answers of 25 January to Questions 137329 and 140287, what steps his Department is taking to overcome the practical issues that have prevented the Government from being able to include the newly self-employed in 2019-20 in the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).

Neale Hanvey: [\[148018\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to provide support for newly self-employed people who are ineligible for support from the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

In delivering the SEISS, the Government has had to balance reaching as many people as possible, while protecting the public purse from the substantial risk of fraud by organised criminals and others who would seek to exploit these schemes. This has meant using data that HMRC already hold, in the form of Self-Assessment Tax Returns for the years up to and including 2018-19.

The SEISS continues to be just one element of a substantial package of support for the self-employed. 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.

Drew Hendry: [\[149264\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the inclusion of interest income that falls within the tax free threshold as income earned outside of self-employment when people make applications for payments through the Self Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has taken substantial steps to support the self-employed during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) receiving claims from about 2.7 million individuals so far, totalling over £18.9 billion as of 31 December.

HMRC assess eligibility for the SEISS based on trading profits and non-trading income reported on Income Tax Self-Assessment returns.

Interest that falls within the Personal Savings Allowance is declared on Income Tax Self-Assessment returns.

All interest is included in total income and relevant income (non-trading income) for the purposes of SEISS eligibility. The design of the SEISS, including the eligibility requirement that an individual's trading profits must be no more than £50,000 and at least equal to their non-trading income, means it is targeted at those who most need it, and who are most reliant on their self-employment income.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Impact Assessments

Apsana Begum:

[\[148038\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department conducted an equalities impact assessment of the decision to exclude the 1.3 million self-employed people who have less than 50 per cent of their income coming from self-employment, from the self employment income support scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The self-employed are very diverse and have a wide mix of turnover and profits, with monthly and annual variations even in normal times, and in some cases with substantial alternative forms of income too. The design of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), including the eligibility requirement that an individual's trading profits must be at least equal to their non-trading income, means it is targeted at those who most need it, and who are most reliant on their self-employment income.

The Government takes equality considerations seriously and has been careful to give due regard to Public Sector Equality Duties throughout its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. When designing the SEISS, the Treasury undertook an analysis of how the scheme, including the eligibility criteria, may affect individuals with protected characteristics, in line with its Public Sector Equality Duty.

The SEISS continues to be just one element of a substantial package of support for the self-employed. Those ineligible for the SEISS may still be eligible for other elements of the support available, including increased levels of Universal Credit, Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

■ UK Trade with EU

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[147908\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will negotiate with the EU to ensure that businesses in the UK importing goods from the EU which originate from non-EU countries do not have to pay duty if the goods have had the duty paid in the EU.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[147910\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment the Government has made of the effect of the UK's withdrawal from the European Customs Union on businesses in the UK that import goods from third countries via the EU.

Jesse Norman:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) ensures there will be zero tariffs or quotas on trade between the UK and the EU, where goods meet the relevant rules of origin, and also includes provisions to facilitate trade and address non-tariff barriers. At the same time, it takes the UK out of the EU's Customs Union and Single Market and enables the UK to develop an independent trade policy and take full advantage of the new international trading opportunities available.

Rules of origin are a standard feature of trade agreements and serve to protect UK industry from unfair competition by ensuring that products from third countries cannot unduly benefit from the TCA. The rules of origin in the TCA were developed in close consultation with stakeholders to reflect the needs of UK-EU supply chains.

The Government has always been clear that leaving the Single Market and Customs Union will result in new customs processes for businesses trading with the EU. There will also necessarily be some circumstances where goods do not satisfy rules of origin requirements, including where products contain significant inputs from countries outside the UK or EU. The Government has published detailed guidance on rules of origin in the TCA and is working with businesses and trade associations to ensure that businesses understand any new requirements.

■ Union Learning Fund**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[149177\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will allocate funding in the 2021 Budget to the Union Learning Fund.

Steve Barclay:

The government will publish the Budget on Wednesday 3 March 2021. The Budget will set out the next phase of the plan to tackle the virus and protect jobs and will be published alongside the latest forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility.

■ Wholesale Trade: Non-domestic Rates**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[146806\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will meet with the Federation of Wholesale Distributors to discuss the extension of Business Rates Relief to food service wholesalers.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has been in contact with the Federation of Wholesale Distributors and understands the impact that COVID-19 has had on businesses in the sector.

This year the Government has provided an unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties due to the direct adverse effects of COVID-19, worth about £10 billion, and has frozen the business rates multiplier for all businesses for 2021-22.

The Government has provided various schemes to support firms, including wholesalers, including Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans, Bounce Back Loans, grants and VAT deferrals.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Disability: Coronavirus

Jim Shannon: [\[149237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the government is taking to support disabled people affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Jim Shannon: [\[149238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Government has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on disabled people.

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[149299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the recent ONS finding that almost three in five people who have died from covid-19 were disabled, what assessment the Disability Unit has made of the potential merits of a package of emergency support for disabled people.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is committed to supporting disabled people affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. We continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on disabled people using existing and new data sources.

We are ensuring that disabled people continue to have access to employment support, disability benefits, financial support; food, medicines, as well as accessible communications and updated guidance.

We are clear that consideration of equality impacts must be integral in all key policy decisions. All equality and discrimination laws and obligations continue to apply during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Cabinet Office Disability Unit works with disability stakeholders and across Government Departments to ensure that the needs of disabled people are considered in the Government's response to COVID-19.

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.

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[149300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Disability Unit has made of the potential merits of prioritising disabled people who are shielding for covid-19 vaccinations.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Cabinet Office Disability Unit works with disability stakeholders and across Government Departments to ensure that the needs of disabled people are considered in the Government's response to COVID-19.

The Government is clear that consideration of equality impacts must be integral in all key policy decisions, and that all equality and discrimination laws and obligations continue to apply during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisation's (JCVI) advice of 30 December placed "the clinically extremely vulnerable" (which includes those on the Shielded Patient List) and "all individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality" at number 4 and 6 respectively on the priority list for phase 1 of the vaccination roll out.

Those definitions will apply to many people who are disabled, which has given many welcome assurance that they are being given priority status befitting the higher risks they face.

Extended Services: Coronavirus**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[147067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect on childcare sector employment levels of the closure of businesses in the wraparound care sector resulting from their ineligibility for financial support.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:[\[147068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the effect on the ability of single parents to find work of the closure of businesses in the wraparound care sector resulting from their ineligibility for financial support during the covid-19 outbreak; and if she will make a statement.

Feryal Clark:[\[147086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of businesses in the wraparound care sector closing due to ineligibility for covid-19 support on the ability of single parents to attend work.

Mims Davies:

No assessments have been made.

The wraparound childcare sector, like many sectors, is experiencing challenges 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.

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.

■ Housing Benefit: Coronavirus**Sarah Olney:** [\[149310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will extend the period for which housing benefit claimants can be absent from home beyond 52 weeks to ensure that people who have been shielding away from home throughout the covid-19 outbreak who intend to return to their home continue to be eligible for housing benefit.

Will Quince:

There are currently no plans to extend the allowable period of temporary absence beyond 52 weeks. This is already an extension to the usual allowable period of 13 weeks.

■ Housing Benefit: Evictions**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[146949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many housing benefit claimants have been evicted as a result of rent arrears in each of the last 12 months.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[146950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many housing benefit claimants have been evicted as a result of rent arrears in each of the last 10 years.

Will Quince:

The Department does not collect this information.

We have provided an unprecedented package of support throughout the pandemic, injecting billions into the welfare system for those most in need, including uplifting the Local Housing Allowance to the 30th percentile of local market rents in each area, and are maintaining that uplift in cash terms for 2021/22.

In addition we have legislated 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.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced the Duty to Refer, which came into force on 1 October 2018. This requires named public authorities, including jobcentres in England, to refer service users who they think may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to the local housing authority of the claimant's choice. This earlier intervention is intended to give people the stability they need to move into, and remain in, work.

■ Job Entry Targeted Support**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[149338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number or people who will take part in the Job Entry Targeted Support programme in (a) the UK and (b) Scotland over the lifetime of that programme.

Mims Davies:

The Job Entry Targeted Support programme went live in England and Wales on 5 October 2020 and will run for a period of 18 months, with capacity to support 263,560 participants. The Job Entry Targeted Support programme in Scotland began on 25 January 2021, also has a duration of 18 months, and has capacity to support 22,000 participants

■ **Kickstart Scheme**

Seema Malhotra: [\[143765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to publish data on Kickstart scheme (a) placements and (b) starts in each (i) sector, (ii) region and (iii) nation of the UK.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: The Department for Work and Pensions was pleased to announce that more than 100,000 jobs placements have been approved with 2,000 young people having started in Kickstart jobs, and we are pleased that so many young job seekers are able to benefit from, and participate in, the scheme under current public health restrictions. The DWP is committed to publishing a more detailed breakdown in due course.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Housing Benefit**

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[146951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of changes to the way housing benefit is issued on the number of private landlords renting to claimants.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[146952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of changes to the way housing benefit is issued on the number of claimants renting from private landlords.

Will Quince:

No such assessment has been made. Housing Support for claimants living in the Private Rented Sector has been paid directly to the claimant, rather than the landlord, since 2008 when LHA was introduced.

We strongly encourage landlords and agents to consider all potential and existing tenants in receipt of Housing Support on an individual basis, as everyone deserves a safe and secure home, regardless of whether they are in receipt of benefits.

■ Social Security Benefits

Hywel Williams: [\[149168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have had their payment of (a) employment and support allowance and (b) limited capability for work-related activity component of universal credit delayed since March 2020.

Hywel Williams: [\[149169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average length of a delay for payment of (a) employment and support allowance and (b) limited capability for work-related activity component of universal credit has been since March 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

Claimants do not have to wait for a Work Capability Assessment (WCA) before they can be paid Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (UC). They receive an assessment rate of ESA or a Standard Allowance of UC while their claim is being assessed.

For both ESA and UC, claimants will remain on the assessment rate or Standard Allowance award until the evidence needed to make a recommendation has been gathered (or until their benefit is due to end in contributory ESA). Any additional amounts the claimant may qualify for after their assessment will be backdated to ensure no long-term loss.

Statistics on WCAs for ESA by month of claim start to March 2020 for initial assessment outcomes, including those still in progress, assessment outcome by month of decision to June 2020, and clearance times for initial claims by month of clearance to June 2020, are published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/esa-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessments-including-mandatory-reconsiderations-and-appeals-january-2021>

Statistics on WCAs for UC are currently under development for future publication and have not previously been published as official statistics. We will issue them in due course as an official statistics release in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Whilst the initial statistics will not have median clearance times, these will be developed for publication in due course.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Angus Brendan MacNeil: [\[149186\]](#)

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 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.

■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[148922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she will allocate funding to implement the Department for Work and Pensions' proposals on access to benefits for people with a terminal illness.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department for Work and Pensions is committed to delivering improvements to the benefit system for claimants that are nearing the end of their lives and is working across Government to bring forward proposals following the evaluation.

■ Social Services: Children

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[149301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Disability Unit has made of the potential merits of introducing emergency funding for disabled children's social care.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is committed to supporting disabled people affected by the COVID-19 outbreak including disabled children.

The Cabinet Office Disability Unit works with disability stakeholders and across Government Departments to ensure that the needs of disabled people are considered in the Government's response to COVID-19.

On 19 May 2020 the Government announced £37.3 million for the Family Fund to help over 75,000 low-income families raising children who are disabled or seriously ill, including £10 million specifically in response to the pandemic. Details of the announcement have been published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/37-million-to-support-children-with-complex-needs>

Furthermore, the Government has provided £3.2 billion of additional to support local authorities to address any pressures they are facing in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including in children's social care and for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services.

We 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.

■ Universal Credit

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[149302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the universal credit standard allowance for people aged under-25 living independently to match the amount people aged over 25 receive.

Will Quince:

The £20 per week uplift to everyone on Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit was announced by the Chancellor as a temporary measure in March 2020 to support those facing the most financial disruption as a result of the public health emergency. This measure remains in place until March 2021.

The lower rates for younger claimants under 25 years reflects the fact that they are more likely to live in someone else's household and have lower living costs and lower earnings expectations. It also reinforces the stronger work incentives that Universal Credit creates for this age group which have been aided by the Department's £2bn Kickstart scheme which is already creating thousands of high-quality jobs for young people.

For claimants who live independently, Universal Credit already includes separate elements to provide support for housing costs, children and childcare costs and support for disabled people and carers.

Care leavers up to the age of 22 are exempt from the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Shared Accommodation Rate and are entitled to the higher, one bed LHA rate.

For those who require additional support Discretionary Housing Payments are available. Since 2011 we have provided over £1 billion in DHPs to local authorities to support households with their housing costs.

■ Universal Credit: Bullying and Sexual Harassment

Drew Hendry:

[\[149266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of excluding payments from workplace (a) bullying redress schemes and (b) sexual harassment redress schemes from income calculations for universal credit.

Will Quince:

There are no plans to amend the treatment in Universal Credit of such payments. They would not be treated as unearned income unless subject to taxation under Part 5 of the Income Tax (Trading and Other Income) Act 2005. Where one-off payments are treated as capital there would be no effect on Universal Credit entitlement unless the claimant's capital reached £6,000 or more. Capital of £16,000 would end entitlement to Universal Credit.

■ **Universal Credit: Fines**

Shabana Mahmood:[\[145768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to Answer of 22 January to Question 134402 on Universal Credit, what the value of claims with a deduction for court fines is in each month since November 2018.

Will Quince:

The information is provided in the table below

MONTH PAYMENT DUE	NUMBER OF CLAIMS WITH A DEDUCTION FOR COURT FINES	PROPORTION OF ALL CLAIMS WITH A DEDUCTION FOR COURT FINES	TOTAL VALUE OF UC CLAIMS WITH A COURT FINES DEDUCTION
Nov-18	7,000	1%	£5,600,000
Dec-18	7,000	1%	£6,000,000
Jan-19	8,000	1%	£6,200,000
Feb-19	8,000	1%	£6,600,000
Mar-19	13,000	1%	£9,800,000
Apr-19	37,000	2%	£26,100,000
May-19	61,000	3%	£43,400,000
Jun-19	82,000	4%	£59,300,000
Jul-19	101,000	5%	£74,100,000
Aug-19	111,000	5%	£82,700,000
Sep-19	116,000	5%	£87,200,000
Oct-19	113,000	5%	£85,300,000
Nov-19	108,000	5%	£79,100,000
Dec-19	112,000	5%	£83,000,000

MONTH PAYMENT DUE	NUMBER OF CLAIMS WITH A DEDUCTION FOR COURT FINES	PROPORTION OF ALL CLAIMS WITH A DEDUCTION FOR COURT FINES	TOTAL VALUE OF UC CLAIMS WITH A COURT FINES DEDUCTION
Jan-20	116,000	5%	£85,900,000
Feb-20	122,000	5%	£90,800,000
Mar-20	126,000	5%	£94,300,000
Apr-20	68,000	2%	£53,600,000
May-20	71,000	2%	£63,700,000
Jun-20	139,000	3%	£125,500,000
Jul-20	126,000	3%	£114,900,000
Aug-20	120,000	3%	£108,700,000

Notes

- 1.Claim figures rounded to the nearest 1,000, payments to the nearest £100,000.
2. Total value of Universal Credit claims reflects the amount of money paid to claimants and their landlords as part of their award, including the amount which they would have been entitled to had it not been deducted/sanctioned. It does not include other payments such as advances and hardship payments.
- 3.Figures are subject to retrospective change as later data becomes available.
- 4.Claim numbers may not match official statistics caseloads due to small methodological differences.
- 5.The increase in the proportion of claims with deductions for fines is due to an improved manual process phased in between February and the end of March 2019 for courts to send through their court fines deductions.
- 6.The decrease in number of claims with deductions for court fines, and total deducted from October 2019 is because the maximum deductions limit was reduced from 40% of the standard allowance to 30% of the standard allowance.
- 7.Figures for April and May 2020 are affected by the temporary suspension of third party deductions due to Covid-19.
- 8.During June 2020, third party deductions were reinstated but other deductions (for benefit overpayments etc.) were still suspended. This led to an increase in the total deducted for court fines, as a result of their place in the deductions priority order. From July 2020, other deductions began to be reinstated, following a phased approach.

■ Universal Credit: Personal Income**Neale Hanvey:**[\[148022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Johnson & Others v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Court of Appeal decision 22 June 2020, what steps her Department is taking to recompense universal credit claimants who experienced fluctuations of their income due to the method of calculating earned income prior to the changes brought into effect on 16 November 2020.

Will Quince:

The legislation and arrangements we have put in place provide a remedy to satisfy the Court of Appeal's Judgment and means that for future cases affected by this issue, monthly earnings will be reallocated to another assessment period, which means that only one set of earnings will be taken into account rather than two, and certain claimants will be able to benefit from any applicable work allowance.

The Court of Appeal's judgment did not require the Department to apply the new arrangements retrospectively.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Government: Coronavirus

Nicola Richards: [\[144890\]](#)

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

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 5 February 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Luke Hall:

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

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

FUND NAME	FUNDING (£M)
COVID-19 2020/21 emergency unringfenced funding for LAs (Tranches 1-4)	4,607
Contain Outbreak Management Fund	978
Infection Control Fund	1,146
Adult Social Care Rapid Testing Fund	149
Workforce Capacity Fund for Adult Social Care	120
Local authority compliance and enforcement grant	30
Funding to support the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable	33
Reopening High Streets Safely Fund	50
Next Steps Accommodation Programme	92
Emergency Support for Rough Sleepers	3

FUND NAME	FUNDING (£M)
Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies	63
Additional Funding for Home to School Travel	71
COVID Winter Grant Scheme	170
SFC Compensation Scheme (first round)	528
Total	8,040

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

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

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

Attachments:

1. **PQ 144890 Breakdown by region and local authority (004) (002).docx**
2. ~~PQ 144890 Breakdown by region and local authority.docx~~
3. PQ 144890 Ceremonial counties list.docx

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business Update

Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully): [\[HCWS775\]](#)

I hereby give notice of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy having drawn an advance from the contingencies fund totalling £2,819,000,000 to enable expenditure in connection with the governments' response to Covid-19 support packages for business to fight the virus and build back better, to be spent ahead of the passage of the Supply and Appropriation Act in March 2021.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £1,459,000,000, additional capital of £1,110,000,000 and additional cash of £250,000,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £2,819,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

The cash advance will be repaid upon receiving Royal Assent on the Supply and Appropriation Act.