



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 10 February 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (02:06 P.M., 11 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

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Henry Smith:

[\[147818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Transport Secretary on plans for lifting covid-19 international travel restrictions to give the aerospace sector the long-term vision to recover from the pandemic.

Paul Scully:

The Department is in regular contact with the Department for Transport on the impacts of COVID-19 on the aerospace sector. Both BEIS and the Department for Transport (DfT) recognise the importance of the UK aerospace industry to the economy and the vital role it will play in the post-pandemic recovery.

DfT engages with the industry via multiple channels, focusing on a wide range of issues affecting the industry such as EU Exit transition, Covid-19 impact, technical certification and specification, and international cooperation.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme: Sutton Coldfield

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[147745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many businesses have taken out loans under the Bounce Back Loan scheme in Sutton Coldfield constituency; and what the total value is of those loans.

Paul Scully:

As of 10 January 2021, 2,057 loans have been offered at a value of £62,409,360 in the Sutton Coldfield constituency, through the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

■ Carbon Emissions

Caroline Lucas:

[\[147811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the CCC's assessment that the UK's fifth carbon budget is not aligned with its recommendation for (a) the sixth carbon budget or (b) the UK's NDC submitted to the UNFCCC process, what plans his Department has to bring forward legislation to align the fifth carbon budget with emissions reductions necessary to achieve (i) net zero by 2050 and (ii) the UK's 2030 NDC.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government will consider carefully the Climate Change Committee's advice in their report "The Sixth Carbon Budget: The UK's path to Net Zero". Through the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan and our Energy White Paper, we have set out concrete steps we will take to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Over the coming

months, we will bring forward further bold proposals, including a Net Zero Strategy, to continue to reduce our emissions in line with our climate obligations. These will be critical steps towards ensuring the UK meets its 5th Carbon Budget.

■ Climate Change

Helen Hayes: [\[147938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and (b) local authority leaders on support for councils' programmes for tackling climate change and improving climate resilience.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently met with my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, reiterating the commitment to tackling climate change and agreed for the two departments to continue working together to drive forward the net zero agenda.

The Secretary of State also meets with Local Authorities and local Members of Parliament regularly to discuss a range of issues including their net zero ambitions as do members of his wider ministerial team.

■ Coronavirus: Research

Helen Hayes: [\[147934\]](#)

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

Nadhim Zahawi:

I refer the Hon. Member to the reply I gave in PQs [145176](#), [144844](#), and [144847](#).

■ Energy: Prices

Mr Steve Baker: [\[147837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the economic effect of green levy subsidies on low-income households.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Energy White Paper has affordability at its heart and includes measures we are bringing forward to keep bills affordable. As set out in the Energy White Paper, the average household dual fuel bill in 2019 was similar to 2010. However, the underlying costs have changed. Over the past decade, electricity prices have risen because of policy and network costs, while gas prices have fluctuated, reflecting movements in the wholesale gas price. However, consumers have used less energy, which has balanced out the cost increase. Based on the policies in the Energy White Paper, we estimate that household dual fuel bills will be, on average, broadly similar in both 2025 and 2030 to 2019.

We see improving the energy efficiency of homes as the best long-term solution to reduce energy bills and tackle fuel poverty. The Energy Company Obligation, worth £640m per year, is focused on low-income and vulnerable households. The Green Homes Grant, launched in September 2020, is a £2 billion programme which will help improve the energy efficiency of homes in England. Of the £2 billion, 500 million is allocated to the Local Authority Delivery scheme which is specifically aimed at low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households.

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

■ Insolvency

Alexander Stafford:

[\[148065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the proposed regulatory framework to provide stakeholders greater assurance that a sale is appropriate set out in the Insolvency Service's Pre-pack sales in administration report, published on October 2020.

Paul Scully:

The Government has committed to strengthening the regulation of pre-pack sales in administration to connected persons. This was outlined in the report published 8 October 2020. The proposed regulatory framework, which was subject to stakeholder consultation, will strengthen the integrity of pre-pack sales by promoting greater transparency for creditors whilst ensuring that pre-pack sales remain a valuable rescue tool in the UK's insolvency framework. The Government is preparing regulations to be laid as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Jessica Morden:

[\[147785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to ensure that electricity costs for the UK steel sector are competitive.

Jessica Morden:

[\[147786\]](#)

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

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.

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 the reduction in the various renewable policy costs for eligible energy intensive industries, including steel, will save them around £400m a year in electricity costs. Between 2013 and 2019, total compensation paid to the steel sector was over £480m.

We have also extended compensation for the indirect emission costs in electricity prices for the most energy-intensive companies at significant risk of carbon leakage by a year, to the end of 2021.

Jessica Morden: [\[147787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recommendations set out in the report by UK Steel entitled Closing the gap, published in February 2021, on reducing the industrial electricity price disparity between the UK and Germany and France.

Jessica Morden: [\[147788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to introduce discounts on energy network costs for the steel sector.

Jessica Morden: [\[147789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to introduce a Capacity Market Levy exemption to lower electricity prices for the steel sector.

Jessica Morden: [\[147790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to implement 100 per cent compensation for the indirect costs of carbon to lower electricity prices for the steel sector.

Jessica Morden: [\[147791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the steel sector of the forthcoming Targeted Charging Review reforms.

Jessica Morden: [\[147792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of network charging costs on the ability of the steel sector to compete globally.

Jessica Morden: [\[147793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to provide 100 per cent relief for the cost of renewable energy generation for the steel sector.

Jessica Morden: [\[147794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to exempt UK steel producers from 85 per cent of the costs of the Capacity Market.

Nadhim Zahawi:

All these issues are related to electricity costs for the steel industry and were highlighted in the recent UK Steel report "Closing the Gap". We welcome this report and will give its recommendations careful consideration.

Jessica Morden: [\[147795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of any divergence between the UK and the EU Emissions Trading System on the UK steel sector.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As stated in the Government Response to the Consultation on The Future of UK Carbon Pricing, the design of the UK Emissions Trading Scheme builds on and is similar to Phase IV of the EU ETS, including for free allocation of emissions allowances. This provides continuation of emissions trading and protects the competitiveness of UK businesses. To have a take a fair, proportionate and considered approach to potential improvements to free allocation, we have committed to reviewing free allocation of allowances.

We currently have a range of ambitious policies in place that will help industry to reduce costs and decarbonise, including the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund, Clean Steel Fund and Industrial Clusters Mission, among others. In Spring 2021, we will publish an Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, setting out a coherent plan for decarbonisation of the UK's industrial sector in line with our net zero target.

■ Pay: Ethnic Groups

Martyn Day: [\[147933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to publish its response to the Ethnicity pay reporting consultation which closed on 11 January 2019.

Paul Scully:

In 2018/19, the Government consulted on options for employer-level ethnicity pay reporting. Following the consultation, Government met with businesses and representative organisations to understand the barriers to reporting and explore what information could be published to allow for meaningful action to be taken. We also ran a voluntary methodology testing exercise with a broad range of businesses to

better understand the complexities outlined in the consultation using real payroll data. The Government is continuing to analyse this data and will respond to the consultation as soon as we can.

■ Travel Agents: Coronavirus

Justin Madders:

[\[147896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of sector specific support for travel agents as a result of the comments of the Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment advising people not to book overseas summer holidays.

Paul Scully:

We recognise that these are very challenging conditions for businesses in the travel sector, including travel agents, which is why we have provided a range of measures to support the sector. On top of our wider economic support package, we have provided business rates relief and one-off grants for eligible hospitality and leisure businesses – and we have cut VAT for tourism and hospitality activities from 20% to 5% until the end of March.

Additionally, ABTA and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) recently announced an extension to their current ABTA and ATOL- backed Refund Credit Note (RCN) regimes, meaning that ATOL-protected holidaymakers can book with confidence following confirmation that the Government will protect refund credit notes offered if packages are cancelled as a result of covid-19.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme

Justin Madders:

[\[147901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of people eligible for the Warm Home Discount scheme have had that discount applied to their energy bill.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

For the current Warm Home Discount scheme year (2020/21), of the 1.2 million Pension Credit Guarantee Credit recipients, around 1 million will receive the rebate automatically on their energy bills, as a result of data matching between DWP and participating energy suppliers. In most cases these automatic rebates are provided before 31 December. In addition, a further 200,000 low income pensioners, who meet part of the eligibility criteria, will receive a letter from Government encouraging them to claim via a dedicated helpline if they meet the remaining criteria. Of these, over 45,000 have so far claimed a rebate through calling the helpline.

In addition, over 1.1 million vulnerable and low income households will also receive a rebate through the Broader Group. Government sets mandatory Broader Group eligibility criteria, of which the potential eligible pool is estimated to be around 3.1 million households. However, energy suppliers are also able to optionally add additional eligibility criteria, subject to approval from the Office of Gas and Electricity

Markets. Due to the limited funding available, Broader Group rebates are generally issued by energy suppliers on a first come, first served basis.

Energy suppliers are responsible for the issuing of rebates to eligible customers and they must do so by 31 March 2021. Although most rebates will have generally been issued by the end of January, there will still be rebates issued throughout February and March.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Staff

Darren Jones: [\[144805\]](#)

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

Darren Jones: [\[144819\]](#)

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

Julia Lopez:

This information is not held centrally. The Industrial Strategy spans a wide array of policy areas across multiple government departments, agencies and bodies, including the Cabinet Office of which the Prime Minister's Office is an integral part.

■ Coronavirus: Death

Jon Trickett: [\[148700\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 134354, what information the UK Statistics Authority holds on the number of education staff who have died from covid-19.

Julia Lopez:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to 148700 [UKSA's final response to PQ148700 (2).pdf]

■ Coronavirus: Lung Diseases

Jon Trickett: [\[148699\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January 2021 to Question 135810, what information the UK

Statistics Authority holds on people suffering from (a) chronic bronchitis, (b) emphysema and (c) pneumoconiosis who have died from covid-19.

Julia Lopez:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to 148699 [UKSA's final response to PQ148699.pdf]

■ **Death: Yorkshire and the Humber**

Jon Trickett:

[\[148701\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 134347, what information the UK Statistics Authority holds on the number of excess deaths recorded in Yorkshire and the Humber region in each year since 2010 and up to and including 2020.

Julia Lopez:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to 148701 [UKSA final response PQ148701.pdf]

■ **Key Workers: Coronavirus**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[149756\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many workers are classed as key workers in the latest period for which data is available; and how many workers were classed as key workers during the covid-19 lockdown announced in (a) March 2020 and (b) November 2020.

Julia Lopez:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to 149756 [UKSA's final response to PQ149756 v1.pdf]

■ **Local Government: Elections**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[147766\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the number of people who can safely attend the counts of the local elections in May 2021 in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[147767\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when his Department plans to publish advice for returning officers organising the counts of the local elections in May 2021.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[147768\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the steps required to make buildings used (a) as polling stations and (b) for counts during the local elections in May 2021 covid-secure.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[147769\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance his Department plans to issue to local authorities in the event that they are unable to secure insurance cover for covid-19 for volunteers and employees attending buildings used (a) as polling stations and (b) for counts during the local elections in May 2021.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[147770\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions his Department (a) has had and (b) plans to have with local authority leaders on ensuring that the May 2021 local elections are covid-secure.

Cat Smith: [\[147911\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with the electoral sector on the challenges of recruiting polling staff for the upcoming May 2021 elections as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Cat Smith: [\[147912\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to make the wearing of masks mandatory in polling stations for the May 2021 elections.

Helen Hayes: [\[147940\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on funding for local authority programmes to encourage postal voting for the 2021 elections.

Julia Lopez:

Democracy should not be cancelled because of covid. The Government has confirmed that the set of local and PCC elections scheduled for May will go ahead, and made a firm commitment that the Government will support the sector to deliver them.

The Government has published a clear [Delivery Plan](#) for the May elections, setting out how the Government will support local elections teams to deliver effective polls that are covid-secure for voters and staff.

Further guidance for all those involved in the elections will be available in due course and well in advance of the polls.

As has been the case under successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not usually disclosed. Details of ministers' meetings with external organisations and individuals are published on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) periodically.

Ian Mearns: [\[149744\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department plan to temporarily suspend the requirement for physical signatures on Local Election Candidate Nomination forms for the elections in May 2021 to (a) prevent transmission of covid-19 infection between households and (b) help ensure a level playing field for all candidates including those who may be classified as vulnerable.

Julia Lopez:

The Government has published a clear [Delivery Plan](#) for the May elections, setting out how the Government will support local elections teams to deliver effective polls that are covid-secure for voters and staff.

I refer the Hon Member to the statement of 8 February 2021 [HCWS773](#) which gave details of the measures to reduce the number of signatures required by candidates as part of the nominations process to stand at the elections being held in May 2021.

Olivia Blake: [\[149828\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what representations his Department has received from Sage on the safe holding of local elections in May 2021 during the covid-19 outbreak.

Olivia Blake: [\[149829\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the effect on holding local elections in May 2021 of the use of community centres as vaccination centres that are usually used as polling stations.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to PQ [147911](#) on 9 February 2021.

■ Public Opinion: Scotland

Tommy Sheppard: [\[149782\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many contracts for polling public attitudes his Department has commissioned in Scotland in each of the last three years; and how many of those polls included questions on the (i) constitutional settlement of Scotland and (ii) Scottish independence.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to PQ [91669](#) on 1 October 2020.

■ Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform

Andy McDonald: [\[149247\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is within the scope of the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform's (TIGRR) Terms of Reference to consider changes to working time regulations derived from the Working Time Directive.

Andy McDonald: [\[149248\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is in the scope of the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform (TIGRR) to consider or recommend changes to the 48-hour week protections, rest breaks at work and inclusion of overtime pay when calculating some holiday pay entitlements.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Prime Minister has asked the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform to generate recommendations for how the UK can take advantage of its newfound regulatory freedom.

The Terms of Reference for the Taskforce have been published, here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taskforce-on-innovation-growth-and-regulatory-reform/taskforce-on-innovation-growth-and-regulatory-reform-tigrr-terms-of-reference>

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

John Redwood: [\[147709\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to secure the effective passage of goods from GB to Northern Ireland.

John Redwood: [\[147711\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what representations he has received from (a) haulage and (b) ferry companies on the state of goods trade into and out of Northern Ireland from GB.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Hon. Member to the [oral statement](#) made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 2 February and to the [letter](#) sent to Vice-President Sefcovic by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 2 February.

■ UK Trade with EU

Helen Hayes: [\[149804\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with his Department on increased (a) charges and (b) costs for businesses that (a) import from and (b) export to the EU following the end of the transition period.

Julia Lopez:

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed.

■ **Weather: Death****Jon Trickett:**[\[148702\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2020 to Question 120796, what information the UK Statistics Authority holds on the number of excess winter deaths for each year since 2010.

Julia Lopez:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to 148702 [UKSA's final response to PQ148702.pdf]

DEFENCE■ **Africa: Armed Forces****Stephen Doughty:**[\[149770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel from (a) Ghana, (b) Uganda, (c) Ethiopia, (d) Tanzania, (e) Somalia, (f) Nigeria, (g) South Africa and (h) Mali trained at a defence establishment in the UK in each of the last three years, broken down by (i) institution and (jii) branch of service.

James Heappey:

We are proud of the UK's record of assisting African militaries to improve professional standards, fight terrorism, contribute to UN peacekeeping missions, and promote democratic accountability.

Since 2017-2018 we have provided a total of 372 training places to military personnel from Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda. Of these 372 training places, 271 were provided by the British Army, 25 by the Royal Air Force, and 76 by the Royal Navy. Of the 372 training places, 21 were provided by the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, 24 by the Royal College of Defence Studies, 13 by RAF Cranwell, 68 by the Defence Academy, and 10 by the Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth.

■ **Armed Forces: LGBT People****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[149731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people who forfeited a medal in connection with an offence, for which they are able to obtain a disregard under the terms of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, have had their medals restored since 2010.

Johnny Mercer:

The Ministry of Defence is not aware of any individuals who forfeited a medal in connection with an offence, for which they are able to obtain a disregard under the terms of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, having their medals restored.

AWACS: Procurement**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[149732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 7 July 2020 to Question 67568 on AWACS: Procurement, what steps his Department is taking to support British suppliers to be selected for (a) future training, (b) infrastructure and (c) support arrangements.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence seeks to provide the capability required by our Armed Forces while also ensuring that it delivers value for the taxpayer and contributes towards prosperity in the United Kingdom. Specifically, for the RAF E-7 Wedgetail programme, we are working closely with the prime contractor, Boeing Defence UK, to maximise sub-contracting opportunities for UK companies as part of the supplier selection process for training, infrastructure, and support, in furtherance of the Government's social value agenda.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[149734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with his Australian counterpart on that country's E7 programme.

Jeremy Quin:

The Secretary of State for Defence and other Ministers speak regularly with their counterparts across a range of issues, including respective capability requirements and procurement decisions.

Defence: Procurement**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[149733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that non-UK prime contractors are maximising UK content below the prime level.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) routinely engages with prime contractors, including non-UK primes, to maximise competition in the supply chain wherever possible. For example, Boeing has established an office for UK Industrial Capability and invests directly in the UK on research and development.

Further examples on our current programmes include sub-contracts awarded to Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land and WFEL on the Mechanised Infantry Vehicle programme and the recent F-35 Lightning Air system National Capability Enterprise contract signed by Lockheed Martin, with the majority of the work to be carried out by BAE Systems.

More widely, we have also taken a number of positive actions to make it easier for smaller companies to do business with defence, including sub-contract advertising on our online portal and improving the pipeline information that we publish. We are also implementing the Cabinet Office social value in procurement model.

Through the MOD's Defence Prosperity Programme, we are working collaboratively between Government, industry and academia to grow Defence's contribution to UK prosperity. We are also undertaking a cross-Government review of the UK's defence and security sectors which will identify how we can enhance our strategic approach to ensure we have competitive, innovative and world-class defence and security industries that drive investment and prosperity across the Union and underpin our national security now and in the future.

■ Ministry of Defence: St James's Place

Dame Cheryl Gillan: [\[149711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish details of the arrangement between Defence Relationship Management and St James's Place.

Dame Cheryl Gillan: [\[149712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the complaints against St James' Place received by his Department in the last five years; how many of those complaints remain under investigation; how many of those complaints have been resolved; and what the outcome was of those resolved complaints.

Dame Cheryl Gillan: [\[149713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many veterans have been recommended to take up work with St James' Place by Right Management delivering through the Career Transition Partnership in the last five years.

Dame Cheryl Gillan: [\[149714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish details of the presentations made by (a) St James' Place and (b) St James' Place Academy to armed service personnel who (i) have left and (ii) are shortly to leave the armed services in the last two years to date.

Dame Cheryl Gillan: [\[149715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when due diligence was last undertaken by his Department on (a) St James' Place, (b) St James' Place Academy and (c) any personnel involved in that military network; and if he will publish the report on such due diligence.

Johnny Mercer:

Defence has no specific arrangement with St James's Place (SJP) beyond maintaining a routine relationship through Defence Relationship Management, as we do with all signatories to the Armed Forces Covenant. SJP are also used as one of the two companies who provide independent financial advisors to support the

Financial Aspects of Resettlement (FAR) Briefs, alongside the Forces Pension Society.

There has been one complaint made to Defence regarding SJP, in which the Department was not qualified nor permitted to investigate or intervene on the specific matters raised regarding SJP's relationship with a single individual. That individual was advised to raise their complaint with the appropriate regulatory authorities. Right Management Ltd and the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) do not recommend particular employers; Service leavers are supported in finding opportunities which are relevant to, and suitable for, their personal circumstances.

SJP is one of the two companies which supports the FAR Briefs. The presentation materials are the property of these stakeholders and would not be published by Defence for this reason. The MOD does not use St James' Place Academy to conduct presentation or briefings as part of the CTP. SJP is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The Department has conducted 'secret shopper' activities on four separate FAR briefs over the past year and had no cause for concern over the content being delivered. The FAR briefing package (Pensions and Financial Advice) is currently undergoing review. This may see a change in format and providers and is being done to standardise Assurance and Governance procedures across CTP, rather than as a result of any concern over the material delivered.

■ Navy and Merchant Shipping

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[149170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to (a) commemorate Merchant Navy Day on 3 September and (b) promote the links between the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[149171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with representatives of the Royal Navy on proposals to fly the Red Ensign from Royal Navy ships and shore establishments to mark Merchant Navy Day on 3 September 2021.

James Heapey:

The Royal Navy has previously celebrated the close links between the RN and the Merchant Navy (MN) on both Merchant Navy Day and other occasions, and will continue to do so.

In recognition of the close links between the RN and MN, all Naval Regional Commanders encouraged RN establishments within their regions to fly the Red Ensign on 3 September 2020. The intent is that this tradition will continue to grow in the coming years.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ BBC: Public Appointments**

Christian Matheson: [\[148822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what due diligence was undertaken on candidates during the appointment process for the BBC Chair.

Christian Matheson: [\[148823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that due diligence is undertaken in all public appointments.

Christian Matheson: [\[148824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many candidates (a) applied for and (b) were interviewed for the position of BBC Chair.

Mr John Whittingdale:

In line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments, due diligence checks were conducted on all candidates shortlisted for the BBC Chair role.

As part of these checks, we considered anything in the public domain related to the applicant's conduct or professional capacity. This included us undertaking searches of previous public statements and social media, blogs or any other publicly available information, as well as checks on relevant registers including the Disqualified Director and Insolvency Registers.

■ Football: Coronavirus

Julie Elliott: [\[149759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 3 February 2021 to Question 145789, how much funding has been allocated to each step of the footballing pyramid in (a) men's football and (b) women's football, through the initial allocations of the Sports Winter Survival Package.

Nigel Huddleston:

On 19 November 2020, the government announced a £300 million Sports Winter Survival Package (SWSP) to provide a lifeline to organisations that would otherwise not survive the winter as a result of the restriction on spectators announced from 1 October.

A provisional allocation of £28 million was made to support football, covering women's football (£3 million), National League Steps 1-2 (£11 million) and Steps 3-6 (£14 million). Preliminary allocations of funding from the SWSP were made on a needs based assessment process which reflected the submissions made from individual sports last autumn.

Decisions on how much each sport receives through the Survival Package are made by an independent board based on a rigorous assessment of need. We will announce details of those decisions in due course.

■ **Gambling: Internet**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[149795]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he plans to take to ensure that the consultation on Remote customer interaction published by the Gambling Commission aligns with the Government's forthcoming review of the Gambling Act 2005.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

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

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 strike the right balance between preventing harm and respecting consumers' freedom of choice. 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>

■ **Gaming: Coronavirus**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[149772]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what guidance his Department has provided on the reopening of Adult Gaming Centres.

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. When they are open, 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.

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: Safety

Christian Matheson: [\[148825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to exclude already regulated news publishers from the upcoming online harms legislation.

Caroline Dinenge:

As stated in the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation, content and articles produced and published by news publishers on their own sites do not constitute user-generated content and are therefore out of scope of the upcoming online harms legislation. Legislation will also exempt below-the-line comments on news publishers' sites.

In order to protect media freedom, legislation will include robust protections for journalistic content shared on in-scope services. The government will continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders to develop proposals that protect the invaluable role of a free media and ensure that the UK is the safest place in the world to be online.

Jonathan Edwards: [\[149741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to introduce the Online Safety Bill.

Caroline Dinenge:

In December we published the full government response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation. This set out the new expectations on companies to keep their users safe online.

The Online Safety Bill, which will give effect to the new regulatory framework, will be ready this year.

■ Sports: Coronavirus

Julie Elliott: [\[149760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 3 February 2021 to Question 145789, what assessment he has made of the use of the metric of the number of spectators a sport attracts, in relation to the funding it receives through the Sports Winter Survival Package.

Nigel Huddleston:

The £300m Sports Winter Survival Package provides a lifeline to sports organisations that would otherwise not survive the winter period as a result of the restriction on spectators announced from 1 October. Funding is , which is primarily made up of loans, provided on the basis of what a sport needs to survive, with decisions made by an independent Board.

■ Sports: Gambling

Ronnie Cowan: [\[147917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of gambling advertising on sports shirts on (a) children and (b) vulnerable people.

Ronnie Cowan: [\[147918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the viability of alternative funding models for sport in lieu of gambling sponsorship.

Ronnie Cowan: [\[147919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he and his officials have had on gambling advertising in sport with (a) gambling industry organisations and (b) sports industry organisations.

Carolyn Harris: [\[147929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to introduce a ban on gambling advertising on sports kit.

Nigel Huddleston:

The government launched its Review of the Gambling Act 2005 on 8th December with the publication of a Call for Evidence. As part of the wide scope of that Review, we have called for evidence on the benefits or harms of allowing operators to advertise and engage in sponsorship arrangements across sports, esports and other areas. The Call for Evidence will remain open until 31 March, and no policy decisions have yet been made. The government intends to set out conclusions, including any proposals for change, in a white paper later this year.

The government is aware of studies which suggest an association between familiarity with operator logos in childhood, such as those which may feature on football shirts, and intention to bet when of legal age. We are also aware of international research which suggests an association between exposure to the promotion of betting brands during live sport and increased intention to bet amongst adults, including adults who score more highly on the Problem Gambling Severity Index screen used to assess problem gambling. However, we are not aware of evidence which indicates a causative link between exposure to operator logos on sports shirts and the development of problem gambling in childhood or adulthood.

Ministers and officials continue to meet with a range of stakeholders to discuss matters within scope of the Gambling Act Review. Details of ministerial meetings are publicly available and can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/search/transparency-and-freedom-of-information-releases?content_store_document_type=transparency&organisations%5B%5D=department-for-digital-culture-media-sport.

EDUCATION**■ Assessments: Coronavirus****Olivia Blake:**[\[143946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish his Department's full plans for replacing exams with teacher-assessed grades.

Nick Gibb:

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, the Government considers that exams cannot be held in a way which is fair. The Department has 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 interim Chief Regulator at Ofqual to find a clear and accessible route for private candidates, and those not in school this academic 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 two week consultation on how to fairly award all pupils a grade that supports them to progress to the next stage of their lives.

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 2021.

The Department and Ofqual have strongly encouraged all our stakeholders to respond to the consultation. We 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.

■ Childminding: Coronavirus**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[137126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the national covid-19 lockdown commenced in January 2021, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the financial stability of childminding providers.

Vicky Ford:

We have provided unprecedented support to early years providers throughout the COVID-19 outbreak through block-buying childcare places and schemes including furlough. Childminders are also eligible to receive support from the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme which has been extended until the end of April 2021.

Further information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-self-employment-income-support-scheme>.

Whilst we recognise childcare attendance has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, we saw attendance rise over the autumn term from 482,000 on 10 September 2020 to 759,000 on 17 December 2020. On 17 December, the government therefore announced a return to funding early years settings for the spring term on the basis on attendance as measured by the January 2021 census.

The early years census count has gone ahead as expected with the census guidance unchanged. To support local authorities, we have issued some technical advice on how that guidance can be applied this year. In summary, children who are ill or self-isolating can be counted, as can those whose parents have temporarily withdrawn their children from open nurseries and childminders out of caution, and so long as the parent/guardian has not altered their parental declaration relating to expected hours with the provider. Children should not be counted in the census where a setting has closed or restricted attendance, unless as a result of situations as set out in the supporting technical advice, for example staff sickness, COVID-19 isolation, staff shielding.

We continue to work with the early years sector to understand how they can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, appropriate and affordable childcare is available to those who need it now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

The government will continue to support families with their childcare costs. My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced on 25 November 2020 an extra £44 million for the 2021-22 financial year, for local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers for the government's free childcare entitlement offers.

■ Climate Change: Education

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[148852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making learning about the climate emergency and ecological crisis a compulsory part of teaching training courses.

Nick Gibb:

In November 2019, we published the new Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework (CCF) which sets out a core minimum entitlement for all trainees of what should be covered during their teacher training. From September 2020, all ITT courses will have to encompass the full entitlement described in the CCF into their ITT curricula for all subjects and phases.

The CCF is underpinned by robust independently reviewed evidence about what makes good teaching. There is a strong emphasis on the need for training to be subject and phase specific throughout the framework and it is for providers to ensure they carefully craft coherently sequenced curricula that meet the particular needs of their trainees.

The new ITT CCF does not replace the Teachers' Standards and all ITT must be designed so that teacher trainees can demonstrate that they meet all of the Teachers' Standards at the appropriate level, including Section 3 'having a secure knowledge of the relevant subject(s) and curriculum areas', which can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/665522/Teachers_standard_information.pdf.

■ Employment Schemes: Equality**Kate Green:****[149748]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether an equalities impact assessment was undertaken before his Department announced (a) digital skills bootcamps and (b) the qualification list for the lifetime skills guarantee.

Gillian Keegan:

The government recognises that it is vital that all eligible adults have equal opportunities to benefit from the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, including those with protected characteristics.

We have completed an equalities impact assessment before announcing the Skills Bootcamps. We are still testing and iterating the Skills Bootcamp model and we are carefully monitoring outcomes of all learners, including those with protected characteristics. We have worked with Skills Bootcamps providers to make the bootcamps accessible to all. For instance, we have worked with one bootcamp to help make their application process more accessible for women.

Similarly, an equalities impact assessment was completed prior to the publication of qualifications included in the level 3 adult offer, which is part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee. We will also carefully monitor the impact of this policy amongst groups with protected characteristics as the offer is rolled out from April 2021.

These offers will support our ambition to level up the country, remove significant barriers to learning for the most disadvantaged, and deliver the skills needed for adults to progress in the labour market.

■ Extended Services: Coronavirus**Thangam Debbonaire:****[147907]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make financial support available to playscheme and breakfast club providers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

We appreciate 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. More information on this can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>.

Additionally, we have encouraged all local authorities to consider which local grants could be used to bolster this part of the childcare sector in their areas, to safeguard sufficient childcare provision for children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

This includes funding streams such as the holiday activities and food programme. The expanded programme, which comprises a £220 million fund to be delivered through grants to local authorities, will be expanded to reach all local authority areas over the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021.

The National School Breakfast Programme continues to be funded, and our suppliers Family Action along with Magic Breakfast are working closely with participating schools to make sure that children can still receive healthy breakfasts during this period, including for children staying at home.

Family Action have reported that more than 1,000 schools in disadvantaged areas are registered to receive breakfast deliveries from this programme during the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Financial Services: Education

Claudia Webbe:

[\[148051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the importance of early intervention financial education at a primary school level; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

It is important that pupils are well prepared to manage their money, make sound financial decisions, and know where to seek further information, if required. In 2014, for the first time, financial literacy was made statutory within the National Curriculum as part of the citizenship curriculum for 11 to 16 year olds.

The Department has introduced a rigorous Mathematics curriculum, which provides pupils with the knowledge and skills to make important financial decisions. The Department has also published statutory programmes of study for Mathematics and citizenship that outline what pupils should learn about financial education from Key Stages One to Four.

In the primary Mathematics curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on the arithmetical knowledge that pupils should have. This knowledge is vital, as a strong understanding of numeracy will underpin pupils' ability to manage budgets and money. There is also some specific content about financial education, including calculations with money.

The Department does not monitor or assess the resources that schools use and we trust schools to use their professional judgement and understanding of their pupils to develop the right teaching approach for their particular school, drawing on the expertise of subject associations. The Department will continue to work closely with the Money and Pensions Service and other stakeholders such as Her Majesty's Treasury, to consider what can be learned from other sector initiatives and whether there is scope to provide further support for the teaching of financial education in schools.

Schools are doing their best to ensure pupils continue to be taught a wide range of subjects so that they can maintain their choices for further study and employment. The Department's latest guidance on teaching during the COVID-19 outbreak is set out here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments

Helen Hayes:

[\[149807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will set out his Department's timeframe to respond to the consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021; and what discussions he is having with Ofqual to ensure final plans for GCSE, A-Level and AS Level assessments in 2021 are published as soon as possible.

Nick Gibb:

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

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

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

■ Nurseries: Coronavirus

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[147109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial support is available to (a) maintained and (b) private nurseries for additional costs that have been incurred as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The early years sector has benefitted from the continuation of early years entitlement funding during the summer and autumn terms in 2020.

According to the 2019 Provider Finances report, the biggest cost for early education providers is staff, comprising 70% of costs for private nurseries, 75% for voluntary, 81% for school-based nurseries and 79% for Maintained Nursery Schools. The report is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/providers-finances-survey-of-childcare-and-ey-providers-2019/>.

Providers who have seen a drop in either their income from parents or the government, as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, can access support through the

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), as long as the staff meet the other criteria for the scheme. An early years provider can access the CJRS to cover up to the proportion of its salary bill which could be considered to have been paid for from that provider's private income. This would typically be income received from 'parent-paid' hours that have not yet returned as a result of COVID-19.

Eligible nurseries can also benefit from a business rates holiday and can access the business loans as set out by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

We continue to work with the early years sector to understand how they can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, appropriate and affordable childcare is available to those who need it now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[137125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the announcement of a national covid-19 national lockdown from January 2021, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the financial stability of pre-school providers.

Vicky Ford:

The early years sector has benefitted from the continuation of early years entitlement funding during the summer and autumn terms in 2020, and providers have been able to furlough their staff via the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme. As long as the staff meet the other criteria for the scheme, early years providers are able to furlough their staff if they have experienced a drop in either their income from parents or government. Eligible nurseries can also benefit from a business rates holiday and can access the business loans as set out by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Whilst we recognise childcare attendance has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, we saw attendance rise over the autumn term from 482,000 on 10 September 2020 to 759,000 on 17 December 2020. On 17 December, the government therefore announced a return to funding early years settings for the spring term on the basis on attendance as measured by the January 2021 census.

The early years census count has gone ahead as expected with the census guidance unchanged. To support local authorities, we issued some technical advice on how that guidance can be applied this year. In summary, children who are ill or self-isolating can be counted, as can those whose parents have temporarily withdrawn their children from open nurseries and childminders out of caution, and so long as the parent/guardian has not altered their parental declaration relating to expected hours with the provider. Children should not be counted in the census where a setting has closed or restricted attendance, unless as a result of situations as set out in the supporting technical advice, for example staff sickness, COVID-19 isolation and staff shielding.

We continue to work with the early years sector to understand how they can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, appropriate and affordable childcare is available to those who need it now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

The government will continue to support families with their childcare costs. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 25 November 2020 an extra £44 million for the 2021-22 financial year, for local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers for the government's free childcare entitlement offers.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[139142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Guidance on Use of free early education entitlements funding during coronavirus (COVID-19), published by his Department on 17 December 2020, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of determining local authority early years entitlements on the basis of their January 2020 census count.

Vicky Ford:

Whilst we recognise childcare attendance has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, we saw attendance rise over the autumn term from 482,000 on 10 September to 759,000 on 17 December 2020. On 17 December the government therefore announced a return to funding early years settings for the spring term on the basis on attendance, as measured by the January 2021 census.

The early years census count has gone ahead as expected with the census guidance unchanged. To support local authorities, we issued some technical advice on how that guidance can be applied this year. In summary, children who are ill or self-isolating can be counted, as can those whose parents have temporarily withdrawn their children from open nurseries and childminders out of caution, and so long as the parent/guardian has not altered their parental declaration relating to expected hours with the provider. Children should not be counted in the census where a setting has closed or restricted attendance, unless as a result of situations as set out in the supporting technical advice, for example staff sickness, COVID-19 isolation and staff shielding.

We will fund local authorities in the 2021 spring term based on their January 2021 census. If attendance rises after the census is taken, we will top-up councils to up to 85% of their January 2020 census level, where a local authority can provide evidence for increased attendance during the spring term. This will give local authorities additional financial confidence to pay providers for increasing attendance later in the spring term.

In line with the existing and unchanged statutory guidance local authorities should ensure that providers are not penalised for short-term absences of children, for example sickness, arriving late or leaving early, or a family emergency through withdrawing funding, but use their discretion where absence is recurring or for extended periods, taking into account the reason for the absence and the impact on the provider. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-free-early-education-entitlements-funding-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/use-of-free-early-education-entitlements-funding-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

We continue to work with the early years sector to understand how they can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, appropriate and affordable childcare is available to those who need it now, and for all families who need it in the longer term

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[147059]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of enabling private nurseries and early year providers to furlough staff who need to self-isolate for the period of that isolation.

Vicky Ford:

During the COVID-19 outbreak, we have provided unprecedented support to the early years sector, making grants and loans available and ensuring early years providers can access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) for their non-government funded income, and that childminders can access the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

If an employee is on sick leave or self-isolating as a result of COVID-19, they may be able to get help with Statutory Sick Pay, guidance for which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>. The CJRS is not intended for short-term absences from work due to sickness: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-you-could-be-covered-by-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>. Short term illness or self-isolation should not be a consideration in deciding whether to furlough an employee. If, however, employers want to furlough employees for business reasons and they are currently off sick, they are eligible to do so, as with other employees. In these cases, the employee should no longer receive sick pay and would be classified as a furloughed employee.

We continue to work with the early years sector to understand how they can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, appropriate and affordable childcare is available to those who need it now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

■ Pupil Numbers

Daisy Cooper:

[148016]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will introduce a national register of children of school age who do not have access to a school place as a result of (a) exclusion, (b) moving to a new local authority area and (c) lack of appropriate local provision; and if he will publish those statistics on an annual basis by (i) length of time without a placement, (ii) age group and (iii) whether those children have identified special education needs.

Nick Gibb:

In the spring of 2019, a consultation was held on proposals for a mandatory register of children not attending state or registered independent schools to help local authorities carry out their responsibilities in relation to children not in school.

The consultation sought views on a range of questions linked to the implementation of a system of registration, including what data it would be appropriate to collect. The consultation closed in June of 2019. Responses to the consultation have been considered and further details will be set out in a formal Government response document, expected later this year.

■ Pupils: Hearing Impairment**Sir Christopher Chope:****[147727]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason the latest guidance for schools and colleges about face coverings does not address the issues about which the Secretary of State was in correspondence with the National Deaf Children's Society in October 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Richard Fuller:**[147806]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of wearing of face coverings on the learning of children with hearing loss; what guidance has been provided to schools and colleges on that matter; and whether he plans to make it his policy to ensure the availability of clear face coverings for pupils with hearing loss.

Nick Gibb:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

■ Remote Education: Birmingham

Shabana Mahmood:

[142871]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of the 18 January 2021 to Question 134396 on Children: Computers, how many schools in Birmingham have been in contact with his Department regarding a shortage of electronic devices during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services. The Department is securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people through the Get Help With Technology programme. This programme enables schools to support disadvantaged children in Years 3 to 11 who would not otherwise have access to an appropriate device for online learning.

As of Monday 8 February 2021, this includes over 980,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to schools, academy trusts and local authorities.

All schools, academy trusts, and local authorities have now been given the opportunity to order devices. Laptops and tablets are owned by schools, academy trusts or local authorities to lend to children and young people who need them most during the current COVID-19 restrictions.

Figures on the number of devices already delivered is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data>.

The Department is also able to supply routers and mobile data through this scheme. We have partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online as well as delivering 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home. We are grateful to EE, O2, Sky Mobile, Smarty, Tesco Mobile, Three, Virgin Mobile, Vodafone, BT Mobile and Lycamobile for their collaboration. The Department is currently engaged with additional mobile network operators and continues to invite a range of mobile network providers to support the offer.

Information and guidance for schools on how to register with the scheme and apply for devices and connectivity support can be found at: <https://get-help-with-tech.education.gov.uk/>.

Where schools need additional devices, above their allocations, they should contact the Department's service team at covid.technology@education.gov.uk. They should include the number of disadvantaged pupils in Years 3 to 13 who require support and an explanation of how they have gathered this evidence.

This injection of devices is on top of an estimated 2.9 million laptops and tablets already owned by schools before the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Remote Education: ICT

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[144967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the number of digital devices made available for primary school children who are learning at home in (a) Kingston upon Hull North, (b) Hull City, (c) Yorkshire and the Humber and (d) nationally.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[144968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the number of digital devices provided for secondary school pupils who are learning from home in (a) Kingston upon Hull North, (b) Hull City, (c) Yorkshire and the Humber and (d) nationally.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[144969\]](#)

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

Nick Gibb:

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

As of Monday 8 February 2021, this includes over 980,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to schools, academy trusts and local authorities.

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

The Government is providing this significant injection of devices on top of an estimated 2.9 million laptops and tablets already owned by schools before the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Figures on the number of devices already delivered are available here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data>. This includes 1,749 delivered to the City of Hull local authority. The Department

have also delivered devices to academy trusts, including schools in Yorkshire and the Humber, which are not included in this figure.

Regional figures for delivery of devices are currently not available for the period requested and figures by Parliamentary constituency are also not available.

Where schools need additional devices to support disadvantaged children, they should contact the Department for Education's service team at covid.technology@education.gov.uk. They should include the number of pupils in Years 3 to 13 who require support and an explanation of how they have gathered this evidence.

To support access to the internet, the Department have partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online, as well as delivering 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home. The Department are grateful to EE, O2, Sky Mobile, Smarty, Tesco Mobile, Three, Virgin Mobile, Vodafone, BT Mobile and Lycamobile for their collaboration. We are currently engaged with additional mobile network operators and continue to invite a range of mobile network providers to support the offer.

■ Remote Education: West Sussex

Andrew Griffith:

[\[143947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) laptops and (b) other remote learning devices his Department has provided to West Sussex schools during covid-19 closures since March 2020; and what estimate his Department has made of the value of those devices.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. As of Monday 8 February 2021, this includes over 980,000 laptops and tablets that were delivered to schools, academy trusts and local authorities.

All schools, academy trusts and local authorities have now been given the opportunity to order devices. Laptops and tablets are owned by schools, academy trusts or local authorities to lend to children and young people who need them most during the current COVID-19 restrictions.

Figures on the number of devices delivered, broken down by local authority and academy trust are available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data>.

Where schools need additional devices above their allocations they should contact the Department's service team at covid.technology@education.gov.uk. They should include the number of disadvantaged pupils in Years 3 to 11 who require support and an explanation of how they have gathered this evidence.

The Department is also able to supply routers and mobile data through this scheme. We have partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online as well as delivering 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home. We are grateful to EE, O2, Sky Mobile, Smarty, Tesco Mobile, Three, Virgin Mobile, Vodafone, BT Mobile and Lycamobile for their collaboration. We are currently engaged with additional mobile network operators and continue to invite a range of mobile network providers to support the offer.

The Department has delivered 54,000 4G wireless routers for pupils and care leavers without connection at home, have secured an additional 19,000 routers which we are distributing now and will be procuring more in the next few weeks.

■ School Meals: Coronavirus

Claudia Webbe: [\[148055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will provide a list of (a) primary, (b) secondary, (c) academy and (d) free schools whose pupils are being provided with food packages by Chartwells.

Vicky Ford:

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

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

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Layla Moran: [\[147038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to redistribute surplus lateral flow tests that have been allocated to schools.

Nick Gibb:

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

Mr Andrew Mitchell: [\[147108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional financial support his Department is allocating to schools to help with cleaning and testing costs incurred as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has provided additional funding to schools, on top of existing budgets, to cover unavoidable costs incurred between March and July 2020 due to

the COVID-19 outbreak that could not be met from their budgets. We have paid schools £102 million for all claims in the first claims window that were within the published scope of the fund, and we will shortly process claims made in the second window in December 2020.

Last term, the Department announced the COVID-19 workforce fund for schools and colleges, to help those with high staff absences and facing significant financial pressures to stay open. It funded the costs of teacher absences over a threshold from 1 November 2020 until the end of the autumn term. We expect the schools claims form to be launched in spring 2021.

The Department will also fund schools for costs relating to COVID-19 testing. We have published a workforce planning tool which illustrates the levels of funding available. Funding will be paid to schools who have conducted testing in respect of workforce costs and other incidental costs relating to testing, such as waste disposal.

The Government is delivering catch-up funding worth £1 billion, including a 'Catch-Up Premium' worth a total of £650 million to support schools to make up for lost teaching time. Alongside this, we have also announced a new £350 million National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged pupils, including the National Tuition Fund for students age 16-19.

Finally, schools have continued to receive their core funding throughout the outbreak, regardless of any periods of full or partial closure, with this year marking the first year of a three-year increase to core funding - the biggest in a decade. This will ensure schools can continue to pay their staff and meet other regular financial commitments.

■ Schools: Vocational Guidance

Esther McVey:

[\[149232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to ensure career guidance has been delivered to secondary schools pupils since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

We remain committed to supporting young people to access high quality careers guidance during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Through The Careers & Enterprise Company, we continue to work to support schools and colleges to deliver the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance and increase young people's exposure to the world of work. There are more than 4000 secondary schools and colleges in the Enterprise Adviser Network working with business volunteers to strengthen links with employers, and over 2200 schools and colleges working together in Careers Hubs to drive improvements in the Gatsby Benchmarks through local collaboration.

We have also provided additional support to schools and colleges since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Through the “My Choices” programme, The Careers & Enterprise Company have developed a collection of resources to support careers leaders in helping young people as they prepare for their next stages of education, employment, or training. This consisted of ‘on-demand’ virtual events, developed in collaboration with Learn Live UK, where young people heard directly from employers and apprenticeship providers about the opportunities available to them. Funding was also provided to Careers Hubs and Local Enterprise Partnerships for an ongoing series of local “My Choices” careers events and specific guides have been made available for Careers Leaders, students, and parents/carers via The Careers & Enterprise Company’s website: <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/schools-colleges/my-choices-transition-resources>.

In line with the Gatsby Benchmarks, schools and colleges are expected to provide a personal guidance interview for every student by age 16 and another by age 18. We are working closely with The Careers & Enterprise Company to support schools and colleges to maximise the value and impact of personal guidance interviews. This includes providing resources and practical advice to support the delivery of activity online, by telephone and face to face:

<https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/resources/careers-context-2020-can-do-guide-career-leaders>.

Through the National Careers Service, we continue to offer in-depth information, advice, and guidance for everyone over the age of 13 via telephone-based advisers, web chat or the National Careers Service website. This includes the exam results helpline, which operated between 12 August and 18 September 2020 to ensure that young people who received their exam results last summer got advice from qualified advisers.

Esther McVey:

[149233]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to update career guidance for school children.

Gillian Keegan:

As set out in the recently published Skills for Jobs white paper, we are building on the 2017 careers strategy. We will update the statutory guidance for careers later this year.

Since September 2012, schools have had a statutory duty to secure independent and impartial careers guidance on the full range of education and training options, including apprenticeships. This originally applied to year 9 to 11 pupils and was extended to year 8 to 13 in September 2013.

The current statutory responsibilities include:

- Compliance with the Baker Clause (provider access duty).
- The appointment of a Careers Leader.
- The publication of information about the careers programme for children and their parents.

In January 2018, following the publication of the Careers Strategy, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-strategy-making-the-most-of-everyones-skills-and-talents>, the department published new statutory guidance for secondary schools on careers and access for education and training providers, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools>. This set the expectation that schools should work towards meeting all eight Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Careers Guidance.

In February 2018, the department published careers guidance for further education colleges and sixth-form colleges, setting out what they should do to meet the Gatsby Benchmarks. The careers statutory guidance for secondary schools and colleges was updated in October 2018.

Through our investment in The Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service, a strengthened careers education system is emerging.

Four in five schools and colleges in England have adopted the Gatsby Benchmarks to develop and improve their careers programmes and support their statutory careers duties. The Careers & Enterprise Company is increasing young people's exposure to the world of work. For the employer encounters benchmark, every school should offer every young person seven encounters with employers – at least one each year from year 7 to year 13. Progress towards meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks has been greatest in Careers Hubs. Over 2200 schools and colleges (45%) are now in Careers Hubs.

The National Careers Service provides tools and resources to support schools, colleges and local authorities in implementing their statutory careers duties.

■ Vocational Education: Assessments

Theresa Villiers:

[\[149735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what measures he plans to put in place to assess students studying for BTEC exams in 2021.

Theresa Villiers:

[\[149736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to set out his plans for measures to assess students seeking BTEC qualifications.

Gillian Keegan:

Written exams scheduled in February and March should not go ahead unless they are taken to demonstrate occupational competency. Alternative arrangements will be needed to award qualifications that are taken instead of, or alongside, GCSEs and AS/A levels, including many BTECs used for progression to further or higher education, where the primary method of assessment is written exam(s). Our joint consultation with Ofqual proposed this is also the case for April onwards.

We sought views through the consultation on the detail of these alternative arrangements and the qualifications that should be in scope of this approach. The department's joint consultation with Ofqual closed on 29 January. The department

and Ofqual will work together to publish our decisions by the end of February, once the consultation responses have been analysed. Further information on this is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-alternative-arrangements-for-the-award-of-vtqs-and-other-general-qualifications-in-2021>.

Helen Hayes: **[149806]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will set out his Department's timeframe to respond to the consultation on alternative arrangements for the award of VTQs and other general qualifications in 2021; and what discussions is he having with Ofqual to ensure final plans to assess BTEC and other vocational qualifications this summer are published as soon as possible.

Gillian Keegan:

On 15 January 2021, the department, together with Ofqual, launched a joint consultation which sought views on a range of proposals around alternative arrangements for the award of vocational and technical qualifications in summer 2021. The consultation closed on 29 January 2021.

We recognise the need to provide clarity to students and the sector as soon as possible and we are working with Ofqual to publish our decisions by the end of February, once the consultation responses have been analysed. Further information on the consultation is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-alternative-arrangements-for-the-award-of-vtqs-and-other-general-qualifications-in-2021>.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Countryside Code: Coronavirus

Damian Hinds: **[147819]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to promote the Countryside Code: short covid-19 version more widely.

Damian Hinds: **[147820]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to update the Countryside Code after covid-19 restrictions have been lifted and The Countryside Code - short Covid-19 online version, last updated on 2 July 2020, has been stood down.

Rebecca Pow:

Natural England (NE) has a statutory duty to produce and promote the Countryside Code which provides three levels of information: short and long versions for the public plus additional information for land managers and owners for areas of open country. NE is currently undertaking a review and refresh of the Code.

The launch of the refreshed version of the Countryside Code at Easter will be the first step in a much longer campaign both to promote the Code and begin an associated campaign running throughout 2021. This will include a broader conversation with stakeholders about what a 'post-Covid' Code for the 21st century would look like and how we can, as a sector, promote more positive behaviours and awareness. The aim is that it can be used flexibly across multiple platforms to reach a much greater diversity of audiences and NE will be setting out more about this work in due course.

Alongside this development work an updated video has been produced to promote the Code and respecting the countryside. This has been posted across Defra's and Natural England's social media channels as well as being available to stakeholders to use on their social channels with a complementary package of additional content. We also plan to publicise the video on the Government's 'Nextdoor' channel and on our Instagram accounts this week.

We are continuing to work on a wider communications plan and will be developing additional social media content to respond to potential upcoming issues over the coming months.

■ Dogs: Sheep

Damian Hinds:

[\[147821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help protect sheep from attacks and harassment by dogs.

Victoria Prentis:

My department takes the issue of livestock worrying very seriously, recognising the distress this can cause farmers and animals, as well as the financial implications.

All reported crimes should be taken seriously, investigated and, where appropriate, taken through the courts and met with tough sentences.

The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953 provides a specific offence of allowing a dog to worry livestock with a maximum fine of £1,000. In addition, the police can and do take action under the Dogs Act 1871 where there are dogs that are out of control and dangerous to other animals. Section 2 of the 1871 Act allows a complaint to be made to a Magistrate's court by any individual, the police or local authorities, where a dog is "dangerous and not kept under proper control". The court may make any Order it considers appropriate to require the owner to keep the dog under proper control, or if necessary, that it be destroyed. The court may specify measures to be taken for keeping the dog under proper control, such as muzzling and remaining on a lead when in public.

Guidance is available to educate owners about handling their dogs responsibly in the vicinity of livestock, in order to prevent the occurrence of attacks or chasing.

The statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs provides owners with information on how to provide for their dog's natural needs as required by the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The Code of Practice clearly sets out that all dogs need to be

trained to behave well, ideally from a very young age and should be introduced gradually and positively to different environments, people and animals. If owners become aware of changes in behaviour, or their dog is fearful of, or aggressive, towards other dogs and people, they should avoid the situations which lead to this and seek veterinary advice. The Code asks owners to ensure that they prevent their dogs from chasing or attacking any other animals, including livestock and horses; for example, through use of a lead or avoidance of such situations.

Recent reports on livestock worrying, including by the National Chiefs' Police Council, have recommended reforming the 1953 Act to address current enforcement challenges and ensure it remains fit for purpose. We are currently engaging closely with key stakeholders to improve our understanding of the scale of the issue and the views of both livestock keepers and dog owners.

■ Ivory: Auctions and Trade

Luke Pollard:

[\[147996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the number of ivory items auctioned or traded in the UK in each year since 2018; and what steps he is taking to commence all provisions of the Ivory Act 2018.

Rebecca Pow:

We have not made any estimates of the number of ivory items auctioned or traded in the UK since 2018. The government is committed to bringing the world leading Ivory Act into force as soon as practicable. We are required to consult on certain, specific matters that will be set out in the secondary legislation and in guidance. These include the commencement arrangements for the ban, implementation of the exemptions, and the information required and fees for registrations of exempt items. We plan to publish this consultation shortly.

■ Members: Correspondence

Alan Brown:

[\[149793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to answer the MP inquiry from the office of the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun submitted to his Department on 15 December 2020 on the issuing of an ABP licence.

Victoria Prentis:

The enquiry referred to by the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun is a duplication of one that was made by an MSP to Scottish Government on behalf of his constituent concerning ABP licence approval. It was dealt with by Scottish Government as it is a devolved issue.

Scottish Government sent the Approval No. 69/186/8002/ABP/PFT letter on the 18th of December 2020.

APHA have sent Mr Alan Brown MP a reply providing an explanation and background on the case.

■ Neonicotinoids

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[147869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what choice of seed sugar beet farmers will have in 2021; and whether non-neonicotinoid treated seeds will be available.

Victoria Prentis:

Under the terms of the emergency authorisation for the neonicotinoid seed treatment Cruiser SB, no sugar beet seed will be treated unless the forecast level of virus yellows in the national sugar beet crop exceeds a threshold value. Sugar beet growers are able to choose whether they wish to take treated seed, if and when it becomes available. Untreated seed will be available for those who prefer that option.

■ Plastics: Pollution

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[147749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans the Government has to reduce the amount of plastic pollution in public parks.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out our ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste. We are making great strides to tackle plastic pollution. In December 2018 we published the Resources and Waste Strategy, which sets out how we want to achieve this and move towards a circular economy. We know more needs to be done, and for the most problematic plastics we are going faster, which is why we have committed to work towards all plastic packaging on the market being recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025.

We have made significant progress, by introducing one of the world's toughest bans on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products and have significantly reduced the use of single-use carrier bags by the main supermarket retailers by 95% with our 5p charge. We have announced our plans to increase the minimum charge to 10p and to extend the charge to all retailers later this year. In October 2020, we introduced measures to restrict the supply of plastic straws, plastic drink stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds. We will continue to review the latest evidence on problematic products and/ or materials to take a systematic approach to reducing the use of unnecessary single-use plastic products, including problematic packaging materials.

As the hon. Member will be aware, it is an offence to drop litter (including in public parks), and councils have legal powers to take enforcement action against offenders. Anyone caught littering may be prosecuted in a magistrates' court, which can lead to a criminal record and a fine of up to £2,500 on conviction.

Instead of prosecuting, councils may decide to issue a fixed penalty (on-the-spot fine) of between £65 and £150.

With regards to improving enforcement, we are seeking powers in the Environment Bill to ensure that enforcement powers are used with a high degree of

professionalism, whether by council staff or private contractors, and to place our improved enforcement guidance on a firm statutory footing, giving those to which it applies a clear and explicit duty to have regard to it when exercising their enforcement functions.

We also continue to campaign to raise awareness of littering issues in public spaces. Last summer, in response to Covid-19, Defra developed a 'Respect the Outdoors' campaign to encourage people to follow the Countryside Code and to highlight the impacts of littering. This was promoted both online and in locations across the country near to urban parks, beaches and national parks. We also supported, and provided funding for, Keep Britain Tidy's Love Parks campaign, which encouraged people to treat our parks with respect.

Preliminary evaluation of these campaigns indicated that they had a positive influence on the target audience's intended disposal of PPE litter, with anecdotal reports from local authorities that the intervention resulted in a markedly beneficial outcome.

■ **Recycling: Birmingham**

Mr Andrew Mitchell: **[147748]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the recycling rates in Birmingham in 2019-20.

Rebecca Pow:

Recycling rates for 2019/20 for local authorities in England are not yet available. Reporting of waste and recycling data for local authorities in England for the year 2019/20 was delayed due to Covid-19.

Recycling rates for 2019/20 will be published on 3 March 2021 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/local-authority-collected-waste-management-for-england-for-201920>)

The most recent publication of waste statistics shows that the recycling rate for Birmingham in 2018/19 was 22.0%

■ **Rights of Way: Maps**

Sarah Champion: **[147863]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will extend the 2026 deadline to record historic footpaths and bridleways onto Definitive Maps.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra intends to pass legislation this year to streamline the processes for recording and changing rights of way. This will make it easier and quicker for local authorities to process applications and add rights of way onto the definitive maps, protecting them for the future. As part of this we will bring into force the cut-off date which is the deadline for registering historic rights of way. This will provide certainty about where rights of way exist.

The cut-off date is currently 2026 and could be extended by regulations for a maximum of five years. An earlier cut-off date will provide certainty on where rights of way exist for both users and landowners. A later cut-off date would allow more time for unrecorded rights of way to be recorded. Defra is working closely with stakeholders to understand these different views and will take them into account when reaching a decision.

■ Zoo Animals Fund

Mr Andrew Mitchell: [\[147751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Zoo Animals Fund in supporting zoos and aquaria during the covid-19 outbreak.

Alex Sobel: [\[147992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to support zoos and aquaria beyond March 2021 as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Alex Sobel: [\[147993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of ringfencing money from the Zoo Animals Fund to make it accessible beyond the end of the 2020-21 financial year.

Victoria Prentis:

We recognise this has been an extremely tough time for the sector and would like to assure zoos that we remain committed to ensuring the sector can deliver the best possible care for its animals. We have extended the application deadline for the Zoo Animals Fund from 29 January 2021 to 26 February 2021, and the fund provides support up until the end of March 2021. The Zoo Animals Fund is an envelope of funding which provides 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 focus of the fund is on the welfare of zoo animals and if zoos are downsizing or rehoming their collections, including if they are closing, then the fund can also provide support for this to ensure the animals' welfare. The fund has been a lifeline for many zoos and has been accessible to all zoos which need funds to care for their animals, as evidenced by the success of small, medium and large zoos in securing grant funding. We stand ready to process applications and encourage any zoo in need 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 and we encourage zoos to explore these. 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 Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty**

Alan Brown: [\[147923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Mauritian counterpart on the ruling from the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea which that confirmed that the Chagos archipelago and surrounding waters fall within the sovereignty of Mauritius; and if he will make a statement.

Alan Brown: [\[147924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his US counterpart on the ruling from the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea which confirmed that the Chagos archipelago and surrounding waters fall within the sovereignty of Mauritius; and what assessment he has made of the implications of that ruling for the US airbase lease.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary has not had any discussions on the ITLOS ruling with his US or Mauritian counterparts. The UK is not a party to these proceedings, which can have no effect for the UK or for maritime delimitation between the UK (in respect of the British Indian Ocean Territory) and the Republic of the Maldives.

We remain open to dialogue with Mauritius on matters of shared interest, including BIOT and its Marine Protected Area (MPA), and we have ongoing discussions with the US on a range of issues including BIOT.

■ **Chen Quanguo: Sanctions**

Hywel Williams: [\[149728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to introduce sanctions against Chen Quanguo.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 10 February 2021]: The Government remains gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. On 12 January, the Foreign Secretary announced robust, targeted measures to help ensure that British organisations, whether public or private sector, are not complicit in, nor profiting from, the human rights violations in Xinjiang. We also continue to play a leading role in holding China to account for its human rights violations in the region, working closely with international partners, including at the UN.

The FCDO are carefully considering further designations under the Global Human Rights regime, introduced in July 2020. We will keep all evidence and potential listings under close review. It is not appropriate to speculate on who may be designated in the future, as to do so could reduce their impact.

■ Christianity: Oppression

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[147111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Christians receive equal access to vaccines and healthcare in countries or regions where they face persecution.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 10 February 2021]: The UK is committed to rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. The UK has committed £548 million to the COVAX Advanced Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. Through match funding, the commitment encouraged other donors to commit \$1 billion. Our commitment will contribute to the supply of at least 1.3 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021 for 92 developing countries. First COVAX deliveries are anticipated to begin at the end of February.

Gavi and its alliance partners plan to work with faith-based organisations and religious leaders to provide accurate and transparent information on, and encourage the distribution and uptake of, COVID-19 vaccines. We continue to assess the impact of Covid-19 on human rights globally, including Christians and members of minority religious and belief communities facing persecution.

On 16 November 2020, the Minister of State responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, virtually attended the Ministerial to Advance Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in Warsaw and reaffirmed the UK's commitment to promoting FoRB, particularly during the pandemic. We will continue working with our partners to support global efforts to combat the outbreak of Covid-19 and its effects on the most vulnerable, including those from religious minorities.

■ Developing Countries: Health Services

Stuart Anderson:

[\[148002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to strengthen domestic healthcare systems in developing countries and increase the training of professionals to lead them.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has placed strengthening health systems at the heart of our global health work to achieve Universal Health Coverage, end preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths and ensure country systems are prepared for and can respond to health threats, such as COVID-19.

The UK has a wide portfolio of health system investments. This includes support to the multilaterals such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, Gavi the Vaccine Alliance and WHO. We provide strategic bilateral support at country and regional levels, share public health expertise with developing countries, support research and development and use our strong diplomatic networks at a country, regional and global level to support evidence-based health policies. We recognise

that having a strong health workforce is an essential building block for an inclusive, resilient health system. Our health systems programmes support health workforce education and training, curriculum development, continuing professional development, qualification development, and national health workforce policy.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff**

Sarah Champion:

[\[147864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she will provide financial assistance for former staff of the Department for International Development who are non-UK citizens and wish to apply for (a) for UK citizenship or (b) a new role in her Department.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 10 February 2021]: Civil Service policy is that departments do not fund naturalisation application costs for staff. Existing non-UK national staff are still able to work in the FCDO and apply for new roles within agreed functions without applying for naturalisation or citizenship.

■ **Hong Kong: British National (Overseas)**

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:

[\[147734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what further steps the Government can take to protect BNO passport holders who do not wish to move from Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

The UK will not look the other way on Hong Kong, and we will not duck our historic responsibilities to its people. We will continue to bring together our international partners to stand up for the people of Hong Kong, to call out the violation of their freedoms, and to hold China to their international obligations.

■ **Iran: Nuclear Fuels**

Gareth Bacon:

[\[148045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the permanent members of the UN Security Council on reports that Iran has started uranium enrichment up to 20 per cent.

James Cleverly:

Iran's commencement of uranium enrichment up to 20% at the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant has no credible civil justification and carries significant proliferation-related risks. We have been clear that if Iran is serious about preserving the deal it must return to compliance. The E3 made a statement on the 6 January making clear that this latest step is in clear violation of Iran's commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). We continue to explore options to engage closely with the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council to address Iran's non-compliance.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Louise Haigh:

[\[147928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support (a) Issa Amro and (b) other human rights defenders that have been convicted and imprisoned by an Israeli military court.

James Cleverly:

Officials from our Consulate-General in Jerusalem attended Mr Amro's court hearing on 6 January. We continue to urge the Israeli Government to fully respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of human rights defenders and organisations. We have also raised concerns with the Palestinian Authority about the narrowing of space for civil society to operate in the West Bank.

Paul Blomfield:

[\[149230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Government of Israel on ensuring that it complies with the Geneva Convention on occupied territories and provides equitable access to vaccines for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

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.

■ Maldives: Foreign Relations

Stephen Doughty:

[\[149768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many times ministers in his Department (a) met and (b) held discussions with representatives of the government of the Maldives in each of the last five years; and when each of those (i) meetings and (ii) discussions took place.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 10 February 2021]: Ministers from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office regularly engage with their counterparts in the Government of Maldives. The most recent discussions between the Minister for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, and the Maldivian Foreign Minister, Abdulla Shahid, took place on 4 February 2021, 18 November 2020 and 23 July 2020. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon also regularly engages with the Maldivian High Commissioner to the UK.

■ Maldives: Overseas Aid**Stephen Doughty:**[\[149767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) financial and (b) technical support the Government has provided to the government of the Maldives in each of the last five years.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 10 February 2021]: No bilateral financial support has been provided to the Government of Maldives by the UK in the last five years. In addition to supporting civil society, UK funding - including through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) - has provided technical assistance to the Maldivian police and Maldivian Government since 2019. This has included work to increase capabilities on risk and disaster management, to counter extremism, and to improve the security of tourist accommodation. The CSSF has also provided technical support to the media sector and the independent Presidential Commission on Deaths and Disappearances.

■ Myanmar: Military Coups**Jonathan Edwards:**[\[149203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the British embassy in Myanmar is taking to protect UK citizens following the military coup in that country.

Nigel Adams:

As of 1 February, the Myanmar Military have declared a state of emergency and assumed control of the country. The British Embassy in Yangon is following the situation closely and will continue to update travel advice. British nationals in Myanmar are advised to exercise caution, stay at home where possible and continue to check the travel advice and Embassy social media pages. Any British national requiring urgent consular assistance should contact the British Embassy, our phone lines are open 24 hours a day. All information and contact details can be found on the Gov.uk website: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/myanmar>

■ Palestinians: Coronavirus**Caroline Lucas:**[\[148754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made recent representations to the Government of Israel to encourage them to ensure Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza can access covid-19 vaccines as quickly as possible; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas:[\[148755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the cold chain capacity of the

Palestinian Ministry of Health and its ability to implement a comprehensive covid-19 vaccination programme in the West Bank and Gaza.

James Cleverly:

The UK regularly engages with both the Government of Israel and 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.

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 more than 37,000 doses of the of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine anticipated in mid-February. We are pleased to see reports from the UN that there is enough cold-chain storage capacity for anticipated vaccines.

Alan Brown:

[\[149269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of covid-19 on rates of (a) poverty and (b) unemployment in the occupied Palestinian territory.

James Cleverly:

The World Bank estimates that 2020 saw the sharpest ever decline in economic activity on record in the OPTs with an estimated 11.5 percent contraction in GDP. Poverty has increased from 22% of the population in 2016 to about 30% in 2020. The unemployment rate in the OPTs for quarter three of 2020 reached 28.8%, up from 26.3% in 2016. The situation remains most concerning in Gaza where the poverty rate is expected to move towards 50%. The UK is in close contact with key partners, including the PA, about their strategy for economic recovery.

■ **Plea Bargaining: USA**

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[149719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect on the rights of UK citizens facing trial in US courts of the application of the US plea-bargaining process.

Wendy Morton:

The US plea-bargaining process is a domestic policy issue for the US authorities. 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>).

■ Uganda: Democracy and Freedom of Expression

Chi Onwurah:

[\[148779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of steps taken by his Department's to support democracy and freedom of speech in Uganda.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government supports programmes for civil society groups and organisations in Uganda that promote democracy, robust institutions, and transparent elections. We have worked with Uganda over a number of years, helping to strengthen institutions in Uganda to uphold democratic freedoms and advocate for the equal treatment of all Ugandans according to the terms of the Ugandan constitution and laws. We have noted some areas of progress including increases in voter turnout at the 2016 elections following voter education initiatives, the bolstering of legal aid provision that supports human rights defenders and journalists, increased accountability at local government level, and enhanced efficiency in the adjudication of corruption cases at the Anti-Corruption Division of the High Court via the provision of technical assistance. However, the UK still has significant concerns about the treatment of opposition candidates and restrictions on political freedoms in Uganda. This does not provide for an open political landscape within which democracy can flourish. As a result, we have regularly raised our concerns with the Government of Uganda to press them on these issues so that democratic principles, the rule of law and political freedoms are upheld. As part of the Media Freedom Coalition, we underlined the importance of the media's ability to provide accurate and reliable information via a statement on 8 January. The Government of Uganda's continued restrictions on social media and temporary shutdown of the internet during the elections have reduced the transparency of those elections and limited the ability of Ugandans to exercise their right to freedom of expression, we have lobbied against these restrictions and will continue to do so. Following the unacceptable constraints placed on the opposition candidate Robert Kyagulanyi, the British High Commission in Kampala pressed the Ugandan authorities to remove restrictions on his political freedoms prior to the lifting of his de facto house arrest on 25 January. Our High Commissioner has engaged with political leaders across all parties, including Kyagulanyi, to discuss these issues and push for democratic engagement and reform. As a long-standing partner to Uganda, the UK will continue to follow post-election developments closely, and engage with the Ugandan Government and Ugandans to advocate for democracy.

■ Uganda: Overseas Aid

Stephen Doughty:

[\[149769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has (a) suspended or (b) cancelled any funding programmes in Uganda in the last 12 months.

James Duddridge:

Following the disproportionate response by the Ugandan security services to the protests at the end of November 2020, we took the decision to pause funding of three projects totalling £40,909 which were working directly with the Ugandan security services. These projects include: one delivering human rights training to the Uganda Police Force, a second delivering human rights training to the Uganda Prison Service and a third project, providing training materials to the UPDF to document and investigate conflict-related sexual violence. In addition to the wider UK Overseas Development Assistance review, we are currently reviewing UKAid spend in Uganda, including the permanent status of the above projects.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Asylum: Napier Barracks****Zarah Sultana:**[\[148931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will place a copy in the Library of the report produced by Public Health England on the safety of Napier Barracks as a site for housing asylum seekers in light of the covid-19 outbreak in that accommodation in January 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: Public Health England has not produced a report on the safety of Napier Barracks as a site for housing asylum seekers.

■ Breast Cancer: Nurses**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[146808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NHS Long-Term Plan, how many metastatic breast cancer patients have had access to a Clinical Nurse Specialist in (a) 2016, (b) 2017, (c) 2018, (d) 2019 and (e) 2020.

Jo Churchill:

This information is not available in the format requested.

■ Breast Cancer: Screening**Kim Johnson:**[\[148947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of women taking up their screening invitation within six months in (a) April 2020, (b) May 2020, (c) June 2020, (d) July 2020, (e) August 2020, (f) September 2020, (g) October 2020, (h) November 2020, (i) December 2020 and (j) January 2021.

Jo Churchill:

The proportion of women taking up their screening invitation from April 2020 to January 2021 is not available in the format requested.

The latest data on national performance for uptake in breast screening is up to 31 March 2020 for Quarter 4.

■ Breast Cancer: Surgery

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[148876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) priority 1 and (b) priority 2 breast cancer surgeries have been cancelled in (a) London, (b) Slough and (c) England since December 2020.

Jo Churchill:

This data is not currently available.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[149178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of women that have missed out on immediate breast reconstruction since April 2020.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[149179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of women that have had their breast reconstruction surgery delayed since April 2020.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[149180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of women that are awaiting breast reconstruction surgery.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: This information is not available in the format requested. Information regarding completed specific treatment pathways is only published annually.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[148877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the cancer workforce has been redeployed to work on the response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[148878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what professions within the cancer workforce have been prioritised for redeployment to work on the NHS response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not hold the information requested.

The decision to redeploy staff is managed locally and levels of redeployment will differ across each individual trust.

■ Childbirth: Coronavirus

Ms Harriet Harman: [\[146742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate has been made of the number of women who have gone through labour without a support partner present due to the ongoing covid-19 outbreak in (a) Camberwell and Peckham, (b) Southwark, (c) London and (d) England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

This information is not held centrally.

■ Children: Day Care

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[147069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will have discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for Education on the potential merits of providing financial support to the wraparound childcare sector during the covid-19 outbreak to tackle childhood obesity.

Jo Churchill:

Officials at the Department for Health and Social Care have regular discussions with colleagues in Her Majesty's Treasury and the Department for Education on delivering the measures set out in 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives' to help achieve our ambition to halve childhood obesity by 2030.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[147071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the role of the wraparound childcare sector in supporting mental health among parents.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment has been made.

■ Coronavirus

James Murray: [\[148044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what date his Department first became aware that a case of the South African variant of covid-19 had been identified in London W7, as confirmed by his Department on 1 February 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: Public Health England discovered a cluster linked to this variant in early December. The Department was notified on 11 December.

■ Coronavirus: Babies and Parents

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[148815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether parent and baby groups are permitted to meet during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown restrictions; and what guidance his Department has published on such groups meeting.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Support groups, such as baby and toddler groups, for the provision of support for parents and their children, that are necessary to deliver in person, can continue with up to 15 participants where formally organised to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support. This includes where parents and carers meet other parents and carers with or without their young children. Children under five years old are not included in the 15-person limit.

Guidance on such group meetings is available at the following link:

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

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Luke Pollard:****[148903]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has issued to people in the clinically vulnerable category during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Jo Churchill:

Those considered clinically vulnerable should follow the guidance and rules that are in place for everyone in England during the national lockdown, which can be found at the following link:

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

The guidance to clinically vulnerable people is regularly reviewed and the Government will not hesitate to make changes if necessary.

Jim Shannon:**[84252]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions the Government is holding with Health ministers in devolved Administrations on local lockdowns in response to changes in the level of covid-19 cases.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government and devolved administrations hold regular discussions in response to managing local outbreaks of COVID-19 across the United Kingdom. Officials hold daily updates on local outbreaks and any cross-border clusters.

■ Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups**Shabana Mahmood:****[142878]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Minister for the Cabinet Office on ensuring the adequacy of covid-19 data being collected by the Government on (a) ethnicity and (b) demographics.

Jo Churchill:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care regularly discusses a wide range of COVID-19 related matters with Cabinet colleagues.

Following the release of the Public Health England review into disparities in the risks and outcomes of COVID-19 in June 2020, the Minister for Equalities (Kemi Badenoch MP) is considering where and how the collection and quality of data, including around ethnicity and demographics, can be improved on, working with the Equality Hub, Government departments and their agencies.

■ **Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**

Fleur Anderson: [\[148026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the value is of service credits applied to Ayanda Capital's contract for personal protective equipment which was later found to be unsuitable.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: Service Credits are not used in the contracts the Department has awarded to personal protective equipment suppliers.

■ **Coronavirus: Travel**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[144625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of whether social media influencers should be permitted to travel abroad on employment grounds.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Under the current restrictions, it is against the law to leave home without a reasonable excuse. This does not include going on holiday for leisure.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Jim Shannon: [\[147849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will publish regular statistics on the number and proportion of care home residents that have received both the first and second dose of the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Statistics on vaccinations for adult care home residents are now published and are available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/>

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[147966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, where on the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation priorities for covid-19 vaccines list people suffering with Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency are.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that for the first phase of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, the priority should be the

prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

The secondary priorities include vaccination for those at increased risk of hospitalisation and increased risk of exposure.

Evidence suggests that the risk of serious COVID-19 disease is strongly related to age, and the advice has been to immunise individuals according to age and risk from underlying health condition. If a patient is considered to be at very high risk of serious illness from COVID-19 and based on clinical judgement by their general practitioner or hospital clinician, they could be added to the Shielded Patient List identified as clinically extremely vulnerable. This may include those with an alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency.

Apsana Begum:

[\[148037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will end data sharing between the NHS and the Home Office during the covid-19 outbreak to encourage uptake of the covid-19 vaccine amongst migrants.

Nadhim Zahawi:

There are no plans to suspend the limited data sharing arrangements between the National Health Service and the Home Office at this time.

The Department has published a message on the relevant NHS website pages stating that overseas visitors to England, including anyone living in the United Kingdom without permission, will not be charged for testing or treatment for or vaccination against COVID-19. The message also states that no immigration checks are needed to receive these services. Because there is no charge for the vaccine for people living in the UK, the immigration status of a patient is not relevant.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[148054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many GP surgeries have not yet received supplies of a covid-19 vaccine in (a) Leicester East constituency and (b) England.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Individual general practitioner practices do not receive supplies of the COVID-19 vaccine. General practices are delivering COVID-19 vaccinations at scale, coming together in Primary Care Network (PCN) groupings to deliver the vaccine as local vaccination services. Over 1,000 PCN-led local vaccination sites are now open and offering the vaccine across England.

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[148821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support the wellbeing of clinically extremely vulnerable children who are not yet eligible for a covid-19 vaccine.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: Our current knowledge suggests that very few children are at highest risk of severe illness due to the virus.

There are a number of options available to support the wellbeing of clinically extremely vulnerable children and young people. The Every Mind Matters website is available to everyone, including children, with advice and practical steps for people to take to support their wellbeing and manage their mental health during this pandemic. In addition, all mental health trusts have established 24 hours a day, seven days a week urgent mental health helplines for all ages.

Anyone concerned about their mental health should speak to their general practitioner or existing care team or can access further advice via NHS.UK. Online self-referral options are commonly available for some services including children and young people's mental health services.

■ Dentistry: Re-employment**John Penrose:**[\[146828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January 2021 to Question 140762, whether retired dentists who cannot re-register are unable to take a patient's medical history, draw up the covid-19 vaccine from vial to syringe and undertake other basic tasks; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the speed of the vaccination programme of retired dentists being able to undertake those tasks.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Giving immunisations is usually a registered activity undertaken by registered healthcare professionals. However, due to the unprecedented scale of the vaccination programme, some tasks can be delegated to suitably trained, unregistered staff working under a National Protocol. An unregistered, retired dentist can apply to be an unregistered vaccinator and be appropriately trained and recertified as being competent to draw up and vaccinate within the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

■ Drugs and Medical Equipment: Safety**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[149176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the July 2020 Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review report entitled First Do No Harm, what plans he has to create a new independent redress agency for people harmed by medicines and medical devices.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: The Government has no current plans to do so.

■ Food Standards Agency: Contracts

Jonathan Edwards: [\[149205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Food Standards Agency on the awarding of contracts to companies under investigation by HMRC.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: No discussions have taken place with regards to any contracts awarded by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) around companies under investigation by HM Revenue and Customs.

All FSA contracts that are above the public procurement thresholds are awarded following competitive procurement processes, which are conducted in accordance with the public contracts regulations and in line with the Cabinet Office spend controls process. Additionally, financial due diligence is completed to ensure existing and future suppliers are financially stable, in line with the outsourcing playbook.

■ Food Standards Agency: Veterinary Medicine

Jonathan Edwards: [\[149204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to increase competition in the market for Food Standards Agency-related veterinary services.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has a programme of operational transformation in place to modernise the model for delivery of official controls, including veterinary services, in approved meat premises. This programme will define the future specification for contracted services, with an aim to altering the markets that the FSA procures from to help improve competition levels. The FSA is committed to providing an update on this work later in 2021.

■ Gambling Act 2005

Margaret Ferrier: [\[147873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with (a) gambling industry organisations and (b) gambling industry-funded treatment services on the review of the Gambling Act 2005.

Jo Churchill:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is the lead Government department for the regulation of the industry as well as the Gambling Act 2005. On 8 December 2020, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport launched its review of the Gambling Act 2005 with the publication of a call for evidence which is open until 31 March 2021.

The Department of Health and Social Care is responsible for addressing gambling-related harms. We have had no direct contact with gambling industry organisations or gambling-funded treatment services regarding the review of the Gambling Act 2005.

■ Health Professions: Misconduct

Daisy Cooper:

[\[149341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cases the General Medical Council has determined to be in the public interest to investigate as an exception to the Five Year Rule under the the General Medical Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules Order of Council 2004, SI 2004/2608, Rule 4(5) since 2004.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: The Department does not hold this information.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Afzal Khan:

[\[143895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's guidance is on allowing hospital patients to be treated on the same ward as patients who have received a positive covid-19 test.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: 'COVID-19: infection prevention and control (IPC)' is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>

This guidance sets out that in general, patients with COVID-19 who are admitted to hospital will have more severe disease than those who can remain in the community. Whilst in hospital patients should remain in isolation or a cohort with transmission-based precautions applied for at least 14 days after onset of symptoms.

■ Huntington's Disease: Health Services

Alexander Stafford:

[\[122929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that patients with Huntington's disease can access a wide range of NHS healthcare to manage their complex conditions.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[122930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that Huntington's disease patients receive (a) more options, (b) better support, and (c) joined-up care through the NHS Long Term Plan.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[123737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people with Huntington's disease receive adequate care and support during the covid-19 outbreak.

Alexander Stafford: [\[123738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Huntington's Disease Association on supporting NHS staff who care for people with Huntington's disease.

Alexander Stafford: [\[123739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking improve (a) treatment and (b) care for people with Huntington's disease.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to improving the lives of those who live with rare diseases. Patients with Huntington's disease have access to a range of services, including the services of their general practitioner, associated health professionals, neurology services, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, local mental health services for patients and their families, palliative care where appropriate and online resources. NHS England also commissions neuropsychiatry services for adults and children which provide assessment and treatment for patients with conditions such as young onset dementia including Huntington's disease.

NHS England continues to consider the impact of COVID-19 on patients with rare diseases and look at what services can continue to be delivered successfully through virtual communication technology such as telephone consultation and videoconferences. Where services do need to be delivered face-to-face, including the diagnosing of new cases, NHS England will work with providers to ensure that patients have a safe journey through the hospital to the treatment area.

The Government published the new United Kingdom Rare Diseases Framework in January 2021. The new Framework provides the high-level direction for rare diseases in the United Kingdom over the next five years, including four priorities that were identified using results from the 2019 National Conversation on Rare Diseases: helping patients get a final diagnosis faster, increasing awareness of rare diseases among healthcare professionals, better coordination of care; and improving access to specialist care, treatment and drugs.

The Framework will be followed by nation-specific action plans that will be developed in close consultation with stakeholders, including patient representative groups such as Genetic Alliance UK, of which Huntington's disease Association are a member. The plans will also be supported by the continued delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan, as well as recent publications such as Genome UK which outlines the future for improving support for those with genetic rare diseases.

■ Maternity Services: Coronavirus

Ms Harriet Harman: [\[146741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the normal standard of pregnancy care continues during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The National Health Service has made arrangements to ensure that women are supported and cared for safely through pregnancy, birth and the period afterwards during this pandemic when there will be extra pressures on healthcare services.

Throughout the pandemic, NHS England and NHS Improvement have been guiding maternity services to prioritise maintaining safe and personalised maternity care by making adjustments to service provision only where necessitated by the local impact of COVID-19.

Wherever possible, services have been asked to reinstate a fully personalised approach to meeting the needs of individual women and their families and the level of care contacts and choice options available to women and their partners across the maternity pathway.

■ Mental Health Services: Nurses**Jon Trickett:**[\[148688\]](#)

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

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), but not staff working in primary care, local authorities or private sector providers commissioned by the National Health Service.

In the Yorkshire and the Humber region, there were 3,983 full-time equivalent mental health nurses employed in October 2010 and 3,291 in October 2020.

■ National Cancer Screening Programmes in England Review**Kim Johnson:**[\[148945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish an implementation plan in response to Professor Sir Mike Richards's Independent review of adult screening programmes.

Jo Churchill:

The Department, NHS England and NHS Improvement and Public Health England (PHE) are considering the findings of Professor Sir Mike Richards' report, together with recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee and the National Audit Office and any outstanding recommendations from the Independent Breast Screening Review, as part of a wider screening improvement programme.

Following the Government's announcement that PHE will be replaced by the new National Institute for Health Protection, the publication of an implementation plan was paused to ensure that the resulting organisational changes and transfer of functions were reflected in the implementation plan. The Department remains committed to the improvement of screening programmes and will publish in due course.

■ Neurofibromatosis: Children**Sally-Ann Hart:** [\[148050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including café au lait marks in children's Red Book health records to improve the early diagnosis of neurofibromatosis Type 1.

Jo Churchill:

The content of the red book is determined by The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. The Department continues to work with the Royal College and the National Health Service to ensure the red book is up to date and accessible.

■ NHS: Protective Clothing**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[148721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2021 Question 128093 on NHS: Protective Clothing, what estimate he has made of the average cost per thousand of individual face coverings purchased for NHS staff since the start of the covid-19 outbreak from suppliers (a) inside the UK and (b) outside the UK where orders were for in excess of 100,000 face coverings.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: No new contracts were awarded to suppliers by the Department for face coverings or face masks since July 2020.

The outbreak of COVID-19 placed extreme strain on the global supply chain of personal protective equipment (PPE) and procuring PPE was a significant challenge many countries were posed with. This led to a significant surge in demand in global markets, increased competition and limited supply. These factors resulted in vast increases in the cost of PPE including face masks.

The United Kingdom market for face masks has stabilised since the first peak in 2020 and we have now moved to a stable situation which has equipped us for any further spikes or waves. If we need to procure more face masks for frontline workers, we anticipate this to be at the prevailing price point.

■ Obesity: Health Services**Ben Bradley:** [\[149330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of his obesity strategy on (a) costs for consumers and (b) the level of jobs in the food and drinks industry.

Ben Bradley: [\[149331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what impact assessment he has undertaken on the potential effect on the food and drinks industry of the Government's proposed strategy on tackling obesity.

Jo Churchill:

We carefully consider all views and potential impacts of our measures to reduce obesity and its effects on individual health and the National Health Service. This includes feedback from a wide range of experts and stakeholders on specific policy proposals and in response to our public consultations.

The final impact assessment on mandating calorie labelling of food and drink in out-of-home sector is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/903712/Calorie_Labelling_-_Impact_Assessment.pdf

The final impact assessments on the proposals to restrict the promotion of foods high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) by location and by volume is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/restricting-promotions-of-food-and-drink-that-is-high-in-fat-sugar-and-salt>

The developmental impact assessment on further advertising restrictions on TV and online was published alongside the 2019 consultation on this policy. This is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786554/advertising-consultation-impact-assessment.pdf

An evidence note was published alongside the consultation on the proposal to introduce a total restriction of online advertising for HFSS products. This builds on the impact assessment that accompanied the 2019 consultation and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/total-restriction-of-online-advertising-for-products-high-in-fat-sugar-and-salt-hfss/evidence-note>

We will publish the final impact assessment on further advertising restrictions on TV and online alongside the full response to the consultation shortly.

■ Ophthalmic Services: Disadvantaged**Rosie Cooper:****[141946]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether as part of the commitment in the NHS Long Term Plan to reducing health inequalities he plans to require integrated care services to take account of the National Ophthalmology Database in understanding the extent of inequalities within eyecare.

Jo Churchill:

As part of their planning and commissioning arrangements, clinical commissioning groups should be taking into account all sources of available information, including the National Ophthalmology Database. Working with the health inequalities team at NHS England and NHS Improvement, we are considering how to put Integrated Care Systems on a statutory footing and will bring forward proposals in due course.

■ Podiatry: Coronavirus**Neil Coyle:** [\[140117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the answer of 25 November 2020 to Question 117280, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the ability of podiatrists to provide their services to patients.

Jo Churchill:

On 23 December 2020, NHS England wrote to the National Health Service outlining the operational priorities for this winter and 2021/22. This asked for systems to maximise their capacity to treat non-COVID-19 patients, including the delivery of podiatry services. The letter is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/important-operational-priorities-for-winter-and-2021-22/>

■ School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme**Daisy Cooper:** [\[149343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will expand the NHS School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme to include primary school children aged six and older.

Jo Churchill:

The School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme provides over 2.3 million children in Key Stage 1 with a portion of fresh fruit or vegetables each day at school. Approximately 450 million pieces of fruit and vegetables are distributed to children annually. There are currently no plans to extend the scheme to include children in Key Stage 2.

Daisy Cooper: [\[149344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to source more of the produce used in the NHS School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme from British farmers.

Jo Churchill:

The School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme is operated by a private contractor on behalf of the Department and produce grown by British farmers is used as part of the Scheme.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Military Bases****Ruth Jones:** [\[147998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps her Department has taken to move people seeking asylum out of military barracks.

Chris Philp:

Use of these sites for contingency initial asylum accommodation is temporary whilst pressures in the asylum system are addressed.

People are routinely moved between asylum accommodation venues for a variety of reasons.

■ Asylum: Napier Barracks**Apsana Begum:**[\[148039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers at Napier Barracks have received medical treatment for covid-19.

Apsana Begum:[\[148040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers at Napier Barracks have had to receive medical treatment for mental health conditions including suicide ideation.

Apsana Begum:[\[148041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers at Napier Barracks have received medical treatment for conditions arising from the refusal of food or fluids.

Apsana Begum:[\[148042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the UKVI in meeting its duty to inspect accommodation, to ensure that the provider is complying with the basic standards; and what matters arose from those inspections in the latest period for which data is available.

Apsana Begum:[\[148043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department has provided to asylum seekers in accommodation at Napier Barracks on the procedure for complaints about that accommodation; how many many complaints have been received through made through the relevant complaints procedure; and what remedial steps have been taken in response to complaints received.

Chris Philp:

The Government takes the wellbeing of asylum seekers extremely seriously. We provide asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute with safe, warm and secure accommodation, whilst their claims are being processed.

Since Napier Barracks opened as asylum accommodation, the Home Office has worked closely with Clearsprings Ready Homes and Migrant Help, providers of accommodation and advice services, and in partnership with local authorities, the police and other partners to ensure that the site operates safely, securely, and in accordance with public health guidance. In addition to support provided on site, Home Office officials have held discussions with asylum seekers about their concerns

and to provide further reassurance, including about their safety, wellbeing and access to relevant healthcare services.

We expect the highest standards from our providers, who are expected to conduct regular checks across the accommodation estate. The Home Office have access to providers' systems to monitor compliance. Throughout the pandemic, the ability to inspect accommodation in the usual way has faced some understandable logistical challenges, however we have robust systems in place to monitor and ensure continued accordance with the high standards of service we and those we accommodate expect.

Asylum seekers can also raise specific issues or concerns about their accommodation through the 24/7 Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) service operated by Migrant Help. The Home Office and our providers receive feedback on complaints raised through our regular dialogue with Migrant Help, which enables attention to be focussed on any areas of concern.

The Asylum Accommodation and Support Services contracts (AASC) have a robust performance management system, against which providers are expected to deliver. Where performance falls short of the required standard, failures are recorded and can result in the award of points and, ultimately, service credits being applied.

Providers' performance is monitored closely by dedicated staff in each contract area, who are in daily contact with them. This is supplemented by a formal governance process which includes quarterly Strategic Review Management Boards and monthly Contract Management Groups. Service credits and subsequent improvement plans are discussed and monitored as part of this process.

Asylum seekers who are accommodated at Napier receive an induction which outlines the process for raising complaints. A booklet available in ten languages detailing the process is also issued to new arrivals.

Community support workers at the site can also support asylum seekers in accessing the AIRE service to raise a complaint. Providers' staff will make clear to asylum seekers that registering a complaint will not affect their asylum claim.

The Home Office will continue to carefully review the operation of the site and will make any improvements necessary. We continue to work closely with our provider and partners to identify opportunities for improvement, as we do across our entire accommodation estate.

The Home Office does not publish statistics relating to medical treatment provided to, or complaints raised by, those accommodated at Napier Barracks and to provide these data could only be achieved at disproportionate cost to the department.

Apsana Begum:

[149352]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of safeguarding referrals made on behalf of asylum seekers at Napier Barracks in the last 14 days.

Chris Philp:

We take the welfare of those in our care very seriously. Regular welfare checks are conducted on service users, including behavioural monitoring of those who show signs of vulnerability, and where appropriate safeguarding referrals are made to relevant bodies.

The Home Office however do not publish or provide estimated data of safeguarding referrals relating to asylum seekers.

■ Asylum: RAF Coltishall**Clive Lewis:**[\[149292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the health and safety of asylum seekers housed in Badersfield.

Clive Lewis:[\[149293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to provide (a) physical and (b) mental health care for asylum seekers that are housed in Badersfield.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office is meeting all its statutory duties to accommodate asylum seekers. Due to increased demand on the asylum system it has necessary to use temporary accommodation – this accommodation has always been safe, secure, and funded by the taxpayer

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

We work closely with our accommodation providers to ensure that all asylum seekers in supported accommodation are aware of, and have access to, Migrant Help's helpline. This service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, if service users need help, advice or guidance, including signposting to relevant mental and medical health services. Regular welfare checks are conducted on service users, including behavioural monitoring of those who show signs of vulnerability, and where appropriate safeguarding referrals are made to relevant bodies.

The safety and health of people in the accommodation estate is of the utmost importance. The Home Office has robust contingency plans in place and continues to follow national guidance issued by Public Health England (PHE) and the National Health Service (NHS).

Our providers have put in place a range of measures and additional support to enable households to comply with public measures on social distancing and self-isolation.

Guidance has been issued to all service users in a range of languages relating to hygiene, washing hands, social distancing, coronavirus symptoms and what to do if they become symptomatic.

We keep the use of contingency asylum accommodation under review, according to the availability of more long-term asylum accommodation.

■ Aviation: Passengers

Jon Trickett: [\[148703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many arrivals there were at UK airports in each week from 1 December 2020 to 25 January 2021.

Chris Philp:

The most recent immigration statistics were published on the 27th November 2020.

The links to the relevant information can be found below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2020#history>

In addition, an ad hoc 'Statistics relating to Covid-19 and the immigration system, was also published on the 27th November 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-relating-to-passenger-arrivals-since-the-covid-19-outbreak-november-2020>

The next Immigration statistical release is due on the 24th February and future data relating to 2021 and beyond will be published in due course.

■ Biometric Residence Permits

Emily Thornberry: [\[147771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the reason is for the delays to individuals receiving their Biometric Residence Permits.

Emily Thornberry: [\[147772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people did not receive their Biometric Residence Permit within 10 working days of their immigration application being approved in (a) October 2020, (b) November 2020, (c) December 2020 and (d) January 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[147773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the DVLA for the production of Biometric Resident Permits (BRPs), what proportion of BRP cards were not produced within the SLA production request target time from 1 October 2020 to 1 February 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[147774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the DVLA for the production of Biometric Resident Permits (BRPs), what the average production time was for BRP cards that fell outside of the SLA production request target time, from 1 October 2020 to 1 February 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[147776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Service Level Agreement with TNT/FedEx for the delivery of Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs), what the average delivery time was for BRP cards that fell outside of the first attempt delivery time target, from 1 October 2020 to 1 February 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[147777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking with the DVLA and TNT/FedEx to tackle delays in the production and delivery of Biometric Residence Permits.

Emily Thornberry: [\[147778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of responses to BRP has not been delivered forms have been answered within her Department's target time, from 1 October 2020 to 1 February 2021.

Kevin Foster:

Delays to customers receiving their Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) can be for various reasons, relating to their individual application. This could be as a result of the following:

- Biometrics not properly captured at the point of enrolment resulting in the BRP failing to progress to production after the decision to grant leave to remain or enter has been made.
- Delay in the verification of the National Insurance Number process between UKVI and DWP. Subject to testing, an Application Programme Interface (API) is being introduced at end of February 2021 to speed up and reduce risk of error in this process.
- A caseworker failing to request production of the BRP at point of decision.
- Variable address quality issues may result in our delivery partner FedEx failing to be able to deliver the BRP.
- Inability of FedEx to access property to deliver package securely.
- Customer failing to arrange re-delivery after first delivery attempt.
- Customer not present at address at time of delivery.
- Customers failing to keep UKVI informed in good time of change of address.
- Delays within UKVI Change of Address Team resulting in delays in updating UKVI systems with up to date addresses.
- Customer failing to collect BRP within 90 days from a Post Office.

In December 2020 UKVI identified a failure relating to biometric enrolments through our overseas enrolment partner TLS, which was capturing oversized photographic images. This prevented 5,585 BRPs being produced between September 2020 and December 2020. On 22 January 2021 we wrote to all those customers affected to

inform them of the problem. A technical fix has now been identified to resolve the problem and enable all the affected BRPs to be produced. The fix was introduced on 8 February 2021, all affected BRPs successfully printed on 9 February 2021. Customers affected will be written to on 10 February 2021 to inform them when their BRP will be either ready to collect from their chosen Post Office or delivered by FedEx to the address they provided during the application process.

UKVI does not hold figures relating to how many BRPs were delivered within ten working days, and we are unable to measure this from point of decision to point of delivery, through our supplier's systems.

The DVLA, which produces BRPs, has an SLA to complete 90% of production requests within one working day and the remaining 10% within two working days. Between 1 October 2020 and 1 February 2021 it achieved 58.8% produced within 24 hours, and 95.4% within 48 hours. 4.6% took longer than 48 hours to produce.

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The production of BRPs outside the 48 hour target was the result of a production failure at DVLA over a three working day period between 22 – 26 October 2020. The average processing time of the 19,250 affected was three working days. DVLA has not breached the 48 hour target since this date.

UKVI meets with DVLA weekly to monitor performance. The impacts of Covid-19 restrictions and safe working practices have reduced staffing capacity within the production site and contributed to the delays experienced.

Our secure delivery partner FedEx has a service level agreement to attempt first delivery of a BRP for 99% of packages collected from DVLA within 48. Between 1 October 2020 and end of December 2020, the latest assured figure available, FedEx achieved 92.4%.

FedEx does not keep figures relating to the average time it takes for the BRP to be delivered after the first delivery attempt. Successful re-delivery relies on the customer contacting FedEx to re-arrange delivery within 30 days of FedEx receiving the BRPs.

FedEx has a detailed improvement plan in place, and we meet with them twice a week to progress actions within the plan. We are confident that we will see improvements in service as they are implemented.

UKVI does not hold figures in relation to the number of delivery enquiries that were not responded to within the five working day SLA. However, we can confirm that the team responsible for responding to these enquiries are currently taking up to 30 working days to respond to enquiries. A recovery plan is being put in place with the aim to return to service levels by end of May 2021 subject to being able to onboard and train staff quickly.

■ British National (Overseas): Hong Kong

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:

[147728]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the Government's latest estimate is of the number of Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) passport holders who will apply for the new visa scheme and arrive in the UK.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: [\[147729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans the Government has to house the Hong Kong BNO passport holders when they arrive in the UK; and whether they will be dispersed throughout the UK or settled in one group.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: [\[147730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans the Government has to use the immigration of Hong Kong BNO passport holders to support the Government's levelling up policies.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: [\[147731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of the arrival of Hong Kong BNO passport holders on schooling for all age groups.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: [\[147732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of the arrival of Hong Kong BNO passport holders on the NHS.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: [\[147733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment the Government has made of the potential effect of the arrival of Hong Kong BNO passport holders on the jobs market in the UK; and what steps the Government plans to take to help the Hong Kongers into employment.

Kevin Foster:

On 31 January 2021 the UK Government launched a new immigration route for British National (Overseas) (BN(O) status holders, providing the opportunity for them and their eligible family members to live, work and study in the UK. There is no restriction in terms of where they wish to settle in the UK or plan to do so.

Work is taking place across Government and alongside civil society groups and others to support the effective integration of BN(O) status holders arriving in the UK, ensuring they have access to the necessary support to allow them to thrive in the UK.

Volumes

We estimate there are 2.9 million BN(O) status holders eligible to move to the UK, with a further estimated 2.5 million eligible dependants. There remains uncertainty in the numbers of BN(O) status holders we expect to come to the UK.

As set out in the published impact assessment, our central estimates of those who will take up this offer range between 123,000 and 153,700 BN(O) status holders and their dependants coming in the first year and between 258,000 and 322,400 over five years. Details of the impact assessment can be found at:

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2020/70/pdfs/ukia_20200070_en.pdf

Impact on the UK

There will be some costs to public services, but the implementation of this visa is estimated to have a net positive impact on the UK, benefiting the economy by between £2.4 and £2.9 billion over 5 years.

Access to services

As part of preparations for the Hong Kong BN(O) route, the Home Office has been working closely across Government to ensure the UK is prepared for the launch of the BN(O) route.

Officials at the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have written to all local authorities in England and devolved administrations to ensure they were aware of expected numbers coming to their areas. In addition, the Department for Education is fully involved in planning and communications with local authorities, including Regional Schools Commissioners.

Regarding impact on the NHS, BN(O) status holders and their family members will be required to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS). Like other nationals coming to the UK, it is right they contribute to the health care system they will be using. Income from the IHS goes directly into the NHS.

Part of the integration planning for the new BN(O) route includes access to support materials to help BN(O) status holders find work. In addition, to support employers, the Home Office has issued new guidance which clearly sets out the work BN(O) status holders and their family members can do in the UK.

■ Frontier Workers: Northern Ireland

Stephen Farry:

[\[148059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans the Government has to enable family members of frontier workers who work in Northern Ireland and reside in the border region of Ireland to continue to access (a) education, (b) healthcare and (c) other services in Northern Ireland.

Kevin Foster:

Non-UK residents' eligibility for education, healthcare and other services in Northern Ireland is a matter for the relevant UK Government Department in relation to reserved matters and the Northern Ireland Executive where responsibility is devolved.

■ Health Services and Social Services: Migrant Workers

Drew Hendry:

[\[149783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of supporting pandemic health and social care workers with future immigration costs after the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

The UK Government recognises the vital contribution which overseas NHS, health and social care workers have made and continue to make in fighting the pandemic across our United Kingdom.

To provide support to them in terms of future immigration costs, last year the UK Government introduced the Health and Care visa. Thanks to this new visa they, and their dependants, pay significantly reduced visa fees and are exempt from having to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge. Those who are eligible also benefit from fast-tracked processing and can expect a decision within three weeks of enrolling their biometrics.

On 29 January 2021, we expanded the list of occupations which are eligible for the Health and Care Visa, meaning more skilled workers will be able to benefit from this offer. The new visa will be a key part of our immigration system going forward.

Those who are not eligible for the Health and Care Visa, and are working in eligible roles due to having rights to work in the UK which are not tied to a health and care role, may still benefit from the Department for Health and Social Care's (DHSC) surcharge reimbursement scheme which was launched on 1 October 2020.

■ Home Office: Amazon Web Services**Chi Onwurah:**[\[149752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of cloud-based Departmental (a) services and (b) resources are based on Amazon Web Services.

Kit Malthouse:

We use a number of service providers - including Oracle, Amazon Web Services and Microsoft - of which some include hosting and others include software. As the requested information is not held centrally, it would be necessary to review all contracts individually. The information requested could therefore only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Immigrants: Coronavirus**Thangam Debonnaire:**[\[147904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January 2021 to Question 142010, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of moving all in-person reporting to immigration reporting centres to electronic for the duration of the national covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Chris Philp:

On Tuesday 17 March 2020, following Public Health and Government guidance relating to COVID19 and the developing situation, we paused immigration reporting and sent an SMS text message to reportees with a valid mobile telephone number on our systems informing them of this.

On Tuesday 24 March we maintained the decision to close reporting centres and police reporting temporarily following the Prime Minister's address to the nation. This was because we were not confident that we could practice safe social distancing and operate within a COVID secure environment.

Immigration Enforcement recommenced face to face reporting in July and August for limited, priority cohorts of people. We have implemented Safe Systems of Working (SSOW) and Risk Assessments in all our Reporting Centres where we have put in place robust social distancing measures; health screening questions are asked as a person enters; face masks are offered to those who have travelled without them; and one-way systems and sanitiser stations are placed throughout our buildings. We continue to review our current reporting arrangements in line with any new local and national COVID restrictions that are put in place.

Following the announcement on Monday 4 January 2021 we decided to maintain face to face reporting for priority cohorts of people. Our robust Safe Systems of Working and Risk Assessments remain in place and still adhere to current Government guidance. Those that are required to report at this time are covered for movement under The Health Protection Regulations 2020 where movement is permitted for the purpose of fulfilling a legal obligation, including attending court or satisfying bail conditions, or to participate in legal proceedings.

We continue to keep in contact with the overall reporting population by telephone to update individuals on the current reporting position. An SMS text or email/letter is sent to those required to recommence reporting informing them of the date and time they should report, along with relevant advice on COVID. We have also updated the reporting pages on GOV.UK for those who report and their representatives. This information includes how to travel most safely by public transport, avoiding both busy transport hubs and traveling at peak times; advice on reporting alone where possible; and what to do if those reporting have symptoms or are shielding and how to contact their local reporting centre.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[148830]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January to Question 142016 on Immigrants: Coronavirus, what comparative assessment the Government has made of the effect on the transmission rate of covid-19 of the decision to (a) to continue in-person reporting of migrants to immigration reporting centres during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021 and (b) the decision to close immigration reporting centres during the covid-19 lockdown announced in March 2020; and what assessment she has made of the effect of those decisions on migrants.

Chris Philp:

Initially, there was a temporary suspension on in-person reporting for those who would otherwise be required to report, which was applied from 17 March 2020. Following the introduction of large-scale testing and a reduction in the rates of transmission, and in light of the scientific advice as to the measures that could be implemented to enhance public safety, reporting centres then re-opened, initially

through two pilot schemes commencing on 20 July 2020, and then through other centres. COVID-19 risk assessments and safe systems of working were introduced, together with other safety measures, including, where appropriate, an adjustment of the time slots for reporting.

Following the introduction of further national restrictions in November 2020 and January 2021, the Home Office's approach was reviewed and revised again, as reflected in the latest COVID-19 interim guidance, "Reporting and offender management – interim guidance" (Version 2.0, 25 January 2021)

Significant changes have been made to bail conditions, and in particular to reporting requirements, in light of the evolution of the current pandemic. Based on recent data, only a very small percentage of the reporting population are currently required to report in-person as a condition of bail at this time

The position is kept under on-going review, having regard to public health considerations as well as the public interest in the maintenance of immigration control.

■ Immigrants: Rough Sleeping

Helen Hayes: [\[147935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of no recourse to public funds rules on levels of rough sleeping.

Helen Hayes: [\[147936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with (a) the Chancellor of the Exchequer and (b) the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, on the cost to local authorities of supporting households with no recourse to public funds.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not hold data on the total number of people rough sleeping in the UK who are subject to no recourse to public funds (NRPF). We are working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to reduce the incidence of rough sleeping among non-UK nationals. The Home Office's Rough Sleeping Support Service (RSSS) also offers an enhanced service for local authorities and registered charities to establish whether a rough sleeper has access to public funds. Part of this service includes the RSSS contacting Home Office casework teams (where there is an open application) to request that the case is prioritised.

The NRPF is a condition applied to most temporary migrants, who are required to demonstrate that they can maintain and accommodate themselves and their families in the UK when they make an immigration application. However, individuals whose basis of stay in the UK is based on their family life or human rights can apply to have the NRPF condition lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if there are

exceptional circumstances related to financial circumstances, to avoid destitution and rough sleeping. Other groups, such as refugees, are exempt from the condition.

The Home Office has published its policy equality statement on the impact of the No Recourse to Public Fund (NRPF) policy on migrants on the 10-year human rights route. It can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-change-of-conditions-of-leave-to-allow-access-to-public-funds-if-your-circumstances-change>

To avoid destitution and sleeping rough, those without immigration status, who also have no recourse to public funds, should regularise their stay or leave the UK. There is support available to do this through the Voluntary Returns Service which offers practical support for people who are in the United Kingdom with no right to reside, as well as those who have, or are claiming, asylum and have decided they want to return home. This is with the exception of Foreign National Offenders, who are not eligible for the service.

With regard to the cost to local authorities of supporting households with no recourse to public funds, the Government has provided local authorities with unprecedented support during the pandemic with a package of over £7.9 billion so far. This funding is designed to support communities in England, including those who may be sleeping rough. The Government has also provided additional funding for the devolved administrations under the Barnett formula as part of the wider government response.

More information on the support available to migrants during the pandemic, including those with NRPF, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-get-support-if-youre-a-migrant-living-in-the-uk>.

■ Organised Crime and Undocumented Migrants: Coronavirus

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[149157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the contribution of (a) illegal immigrants and (b) drug dealers to the spread of covid-19.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not hold any information within the remit of your question.

■ Prime Minister: Official Cars

John Spellar:

[\[146767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Prime Minister's vehicle is manufactured in the UK.

Kit Malthouse:

It is in the public domain that the Metropolitan Police Service provides a Jaguar for Prime Ministerial travel; this is an iconic British brand and Jaguar Land Rover's headquarters are in the UK.

■ Refugees: Families**Ruth Jones:** [\[147997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps her Department has taken to expand the refugee family reunion rules to allow wider family members to safely reunite.

Chris Philp:

The Government provides a safe and legal route to bring families together through its family reunion policy. This allows a partner and children under 18 of those granted protection in the UK to join them here, if they formed part of the family unit before the sponsor fled their country. Over 29,000 visas have been issued under this route in the last 5 years.

There are separate provisions in the Rules to allow extended family to sponsor children to come here where there are serious and compelling circumstances. Refugees can also sponsor adult dependent relatives living overseas to join them where, due to age, illness or disability, that person requires long-term personal care that can only be provided by relatives in the UK.

■ Refugees: Resettlement**Ruth Jones:** [\[147999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the introduction of the new refugee resettlement scheme.

Chris Philp:

The UK will continue to welcome refugees through resettlement following the completion of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). We have been working closely with key domestic and international partners on plans to both complete VPRS and to assess the scale of our resettlement activity over the course of 2021/22.

This commitment, alongside a firm and fair asylum system, will ensure we continue to offer safe and legal routes to the UK for vulnerable refugees in need of protection. Our focus will remain on helping people directly from regions of conflict and instability.

■ Visas: Migrant Workers**Caroline Lucas:** [\[147812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to support people visiting the UK on a temporary work visa who cannot get home as a result of flight cancellations from the UK related to UK Government border quarantine policy; if she will make it her policy to allow visa extensions for people in those circumstances until they are able to secure a flight home; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

Those individuals who are unable to leave the country due to issues with available flights are able to apply for Exceptional Assurance. This protects their status in the UK from removal action during this time.

The provision of Exceptional Assurance is under constant review as the pandemic continues. Information regarding Exceptional Assurance can be found via:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents>

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION**■ Speaker: Ceremonies****Michael Fabricant:****[149158]**

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will (a) restore as its home and (b) exhibit the Speaker's State Coach at the Palace of Westminster.

Pete Wishart:

The Speaker's State Coach is currently on loan to the National Trust for display at their Carriage Museum at Arlington Court in Devon. The current loan contract is being renewed for two additional years to allow full consideration to be given to the future of the coach.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Flats: Construction****Dr Julian Lewis:****[149717]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the (a) rights and (b) quality of life of existing leaseholders in apartment blocks of policies that encourage the construction of additional floors above them while they are in residence.

Christopher Pincher:

We have recently introduced new permitted development rights to allow certain existing buildings to extend upwards by two storeys to create new homes. The rights are subject to prior approval by the local planning authority on specific matters including a proposals potential impact on the amenity of neighbours. This ensures that people who might be affected by such a development can feed their views into the decision making process.

The terms of individual leases will determine whether a freeholder can add additional floors to a property with or without the consent of existing leaseholders.

■ Mining: Cumbria**Caroline Lucas:**[\[147810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the letter dated 29 January 2021 from the Chairman on the Committee on Climate Change on his decision not to call in the decision of Cumbria County Council to grant planning permission to a new deep coking coal mine in Cumbria.

Christopher Pincher:

The Secretary of State's powers to call in a case are used very selectively. On 6 January 2021 the Secretary of State decided not to call in this application. The responsibility for determining it is with Cumbria County Council. Further representations when received are carefully considered.

■ Natural Gas: Storage**Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[149739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many (a) gasworks and (b) former gasworks sites (i) there are in total, (ii) are being redeveloped and (iii) have been redeveloped in (A) London and (B) England.

Christopher Pincher:

Statistics published by BEIS show that the last gas works in England closed in 1988. Information is not held centrally on the number of former gasworks sites that there are in London or in England as a whole.

Robust figures are not held centrally by MHCLG on the numbers of former gasworks sites that have been redeveloped, or are being redeveloped, in London or in England as a whole.

■ Planning Permission**Catherine West:**[\[149808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department is considering an extension to planning permissions previously extended in the Planning and Business Act 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

The Business and Planning Act 2020 introduced measures to enable certain planning permissions and listed building consents in England which had lapsed or were due to lapse during 2020 to be extended to 1 May 2021. These measures provide for the power to extend the eligibility date for permissions and the time period for implementation. This is being kept under review at this time.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Trade Agreements

Gareth Thomas:

[\[147716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department takes to model economically the potential effects of any trade deals under consideration; and what steps her Department takes to consult experts in its preparation of economic models used in trade deals.

Greg Hands:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has published scoping assessments that set out a preliminary DIT analysis of the potential long-run economic impacts of trade deals with the US, Australia, New Zealand, and an impact assessment providing analysis of the agreement with Japan, which includes both external modelling commissioned from Prof. Joe Francois as well as DIT's own analysis.

The published analysis uses Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) modelling. This approach is widely used internationally for trade analysis. The Department also operates a Partial Equilibrium trade model that was developed for DIT by InterAnalysis at Sussex University, which is used to inform policy development. The Department initiated a review of its approach to modelling in September 2020, which is led by Prof. Tony Venables, and we expect to conclude in September 2021.

■ Trade Agreements: Maldives

Sir David Amess:

[\[149716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to establish equivalent trading agreements between Maldives and the UK as exist with similar Commonwealth countries.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

British agreements with similar Commonwealth countries were 'rolled over' from previous European Union (EU) agreements. My Hon. Friend will know that the Maldives did not have a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the EU.

HM Government has not been able to negotiate trade deals with our friends around the world for almost fifty years. Now that we have control of our independent trade policy, the Department for International Trade is actively pursuing agreements with our trading partners, under an ambitious programme of work – including with the United States, Australia and New Zealand – as well as seeking accession to the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The United Kingdom and the Maldives already have a strong bilateral relationship. Trade in goods and services was worth £151m in 2020. In that context, we are working with the Maldivian Government to explore ways to increase trade and investment across a range of sectors of mutual interest, including food and drink, defence, education, fitness and health, and in environmental science and sustainable development.

■ Trade Agreements: NHS**Stuart Anderson:**[\[149812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what safeguards are in place to ensure that the (a) price of drugs and (b) NHS including its services and patient data are not compromised in future trade deals.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The NHS, the price it pays for drugs and its services are not for sale. The United Kingdom's published objectives for negotiations with new trade partners make it clear that we will not agree measures that undermine HM Government's ability to deliver on our manifesto commitments to the NHS.

The United Kingdom's trade agreements do not undermine the safeguards that we have in place around health and care data. HM Government is clear that health and care data should only ever be used and/or shared where used lawfully, treated with respect, held securely and where the right safeguards are in place. The United Kingdom's high standards of data protection will be maintained.

JUSTICE**■ Courts****Philip Davies:**[\[147797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many outstanding (a) Magistrate's court cases and (b) Crown court cases there were in (i) March 2020 and (ii) January 2021.

Chris Philp:

The volume of outstanding cases in the criminal courts is published routinely. The latest monthly data available for the number of cases outstanding in (a) the magistrates' courts and (b) in the Crown Court of England and Wales, is November 2020. The table below sets out the outstanding number of cases in March 2020 and November 2020.

Monthly management information (MI) for January 2021 is expected to be available from 11th March 2020. Weekly MI that covers the period from March 2020 to 27th December 2020 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmcts-weekly-management-information-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

MONTH	MAGISTRATES' 1-4 OUTSTANDING	CROWN 1,2 OUTSTANDING
Mar-20	338,675	40,037
Nov-20	403,568	53,950

Notes:

1) The management information presented in this table reflects what is recorded on relevant case-management systems on the date of extraction. The case-management systems are continually updated and so the information presented will differ from previously published information.

2) The management information presented is different from the quarterly MOJ official statistics published due to timing and definitional reasons. The official statistics go through a more comprehensive quality assurance and analysis process to ensure quality and coherence.

3) Only criminal cases are included (civil and enforcement cases are excluded). Any cases entered in error have been removed.

4) Figures above include all case offence types. However, MOJ published statistics are filtered to include only the following offence types: Triable-either-way, Indictable Only, Summary Motoring, Summary Non-Motoring, Breaches.

■ **Criminal Proceedings: Legal Costs**

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[147942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of ensuring that defendants who are acquitted of criminal charges do not suffer financial detriment as a result of legal costs incurred and a lack of access to representation at legal aid rates.

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 last year, and we are committed to ensuring help continues to be available into the future.

Legally aided representation at the Crown Court is available for all defendants with a disposable income of less than £37,500 per annum. Those who are not eligible on application, who pay privately and are subsequently acquitted in court can apply to have their fees reimbursed. This is done at legal aid rates to ensure best value for the taxpayer.

As part of the Legal Support Action Plan, we announced a review of the means test for legal aid. The review is assessing the effectiveness with which the means test protects access to justice. We are considering the full range of means-testing criteria

including the disposable income thresholds for criminal legal aid. We will publish a consultation on our proposals in Spring 2021.

■ Evictions

Mick Whitley: [\[148010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of allowing judges to consider the personal circumstances of tenants when deciding whether to approve section 21 evictions.

Alex Chalk:

In section 21 cases, as in all cases, the defendant has a right to reply and file a defence. This allows the judge to consider, and take into account, the information provided by the defendant about their circumstances.

In addition, temporary working arrangements in the courts in response to the coronavirus pandemic, introduced to coincide with the resumption of possession cases in September 2020, include the requirement that landlords provide the court with information on how tenants have been affected by the pandemic.

Renters continue to be protected, with an extension to the ban on bailiff evictions for all but the most egregious cases – until at least 21 February.

■ Gambling: Females

Margaret Ferrier: [\[147874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women are serving (a) custodial and (b) suspended sentences where gambling has been identified as a relevant motivational factor in the offence.

Lucy Frazer:

Centrally held sentencing data in England and Wales does not identify where gambling, or any other factor, has been identified as a relevant motivational factor in the offence. The information may be held on court records but to be able to identify such cases would require accessing individual court records which would be of disproportionate cost.

■ Grendon Prison and Spring Hill Prison: Public Transport

Greg Smith: [\[149819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of (a) staff and (b) visitors at (i) HMP Grendon and (ii) HMP Springhill arrive by public transport.

Lucy Frazer:

The information requested is not held.

There is a bus service supporting the local area which can be used by both staff and visitors, however, the majority arrive by private car or taxi. The nearest train station to the prison is Bicester which is approximately 15-20 minutes away by taxi. The prison

has the facility to use its own transport to do pick-ups, however, demand for this is currently low.

■ **Juries: NHS**

Justin Madders:

[\[147887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether NHS employees are currently exempt from jury service.

Chris Philp:

At this time, the Government does not expect frontline emergency services staff, including those in the NHS, to be serving on juries.

Anyone in these groups, or any Key Worker working in education, the food supply chain or in any other frontline role who is summoned for jury service should contact the Jury Central Summoning Bureau (JCSB). While by law we cannot automatically defer jurors, HMCTS has issued guidance to help staff deal sympathetically with all requests from the public who wish to be released or deferred from jury service as a result of COVID-19. This also includes jurors who are in self-isolation, household isolation or those who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Each application for deferral/excusal is considered on its own merit, that is both fair to the individual and consistent with the needs of the court in providing a representative jury.

The process for applying to defer or be excused from jury service is set out in the summons pack sent out, or available online here: <https://www.gov.uk/jury-service/delaying-or-being-excused-from-jury-service>. Further information for people summoned for jury service is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-courts-and-tribunals-planning-and-preparation#jury-trials-and-jury-service>

■ **Prisoners: Buckinghamshire**

Greg Smith:

[\[149816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners held in (a) HMP Springhill and (b) HMP Grendon were resident in each postcode area of Buckinghamshire prior to their sentencing.

Greg Smith:

[\[149817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners serving sentences in each prison across the prison estate were resident in Buckinghamshire prior to their sentencing.

Lucy Frazer:

As at 31 December 2020 (latest data available), there were 7 prisoners held across HMPs Grendon and Springhill* who had a recorded home address in a Buckinghamshire local authority area.

As at 31 December, there were 371 sentenced male and female prisoners aged 18 and over held in other prisons and young offender institutions in England and Wales who had a recorded home address in a Buckinghamshire local authority area. However, most of these individuals were not suitable to be held in either Grendon or Springhill due to their security category, their time left to serve, their individual resettlement needs or their specific offending behaviour requirements, which are best provided at other prisons.

Grendon and Springhill are both designated as national resources and can, at any time, reasonably expect to hold prisoners from across England and Wales. In the case of Grendon, this is because of the unique suite of interventions that they provide. In the case of Springhill, this is because there is not an even geographical spread of Open Prisons and, therefore, they are all designated as national resources. This means that, although every effort is made to ensure that most prisoners are in the closest Open Prison to their release address, this is not always in their home county.

There are complex and wide-ranging issues involved in transferring and locating prisoners, and allocation decisions must reflect both the specific needs and circumstances of the prisoner, including their security category, as well as the operating environment and range of services at the receiving prison.

HMPPS is committed to ensuring, where practicable, that prisoners are accommodated as close as possible to their resettlement communities and families. Whilst this is a priority, it is not always possible due to a variety of factors including wider population pressures, or where individuals have specific sentence planning needs which can only be met at certain establishments.

* If a request is made for information and the total figure amounts to five people or fewer, the MoJ must consider whether this could lead to the identification of individuals and whether disclosure of this information would be in breach of our statutory obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018. For this reason, the MoJ has chosen not to provide an exact figure where the true number falls between one and five. The figures for HMP Grendon and HMP Springhill have therefore been presented as a composite and breakdowns by individual prison have not been provided.

■ Prisons: Construction

Greg Smith:

[149815]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many sites for new prison developments are currently being considered by his Department; how many developments are being prepared for public consultation; and how many of those proposed developments are in the public consultation phase.

Lucy Frazer:

The Ministry of Justice is currently considering a number of sites for potential new prison developments, delivering a mix of places based on population type and category.

We have received outline planning permission for one site, adjacent to the existing prison at HMP Full Sutton, and we are preparing for pre-planning public consultation for another two.

There are no further sites currently undergoing public consultation. The pre-planning public consultation phase for our proposed new prison on land adjacent to HMP Grendon/Springhill formally started on 2 December 2020 and concluded on 29 January 2021. This was extended to accept any feedback received by email until 18:00 on Friday 5 February 2021, to ensure that all constituents had the opportunity to do so.

Potential new prison sites will be made public should they progress to pre-planning public consultation or if we make a public announcement. However, they are currently exempt from disclosure due to commercial sensitivities and to protect the development/formulation of government policy.

■ Prisons: Staff**Greg Smith:**[\[149818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what information his Department holds on the average distance travelled by prison officers and staff from their home to place of work.

Lucy Frazer:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

SCOTLAND**■ Local Growth Deals: Ayrshire****Alan Brown:**[\[149786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2021 to Question 145055 on Local Growth Deals: Ayrshire, on what dates he has raised the matter with the Chancellor.

Mr Alister Jack:

I am in regular discussion with the Chancellor and wrote to him raising this and other matters on 2 February.

TRANSPORT■ **Bicycles: Repairs and Maintenance**

Emma Hardy: [\[148897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department plans to release further vouchers under the Fix Your Bicycle voucher scheme.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department plans to release further vouchers as soon as possible and no later than Easter if lockdown restrictions allow.

■ **Diesel Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions**

Tulip Siddiq: [\[149304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the extension of the Ultra Low Emissions Zone in London in 2021, whether his Department plans to offer financial support to people who have replaced their older diesel vehicles for a model that meets emission standards.

Rachel Maclean:

The expanded Ultra Low Emission Zone is being introduced by the Mayor of London in line with his responsibility for tackling pollution levels in the capital, and the Mayor is able to provide support schemes for the cost of upgrading to compliant vehicles if he chooses. The Government already helps motorists with the cost of switching through a tax regime that rewards drivers who choose cleaner vehicles, including favourable benefit in kind tax rates for zero emission vehicles out to 2025. All zero emission cars are also exempt from vehicle excise duty. Government grants continue to be available to help reduce the up-front purchase price of plug in vehicles and help consumers take advantage of cheaper running costs compared to a petrol or diesel equivalent. To support industry and consumers make the transition to zero emission vehicles, the Government is investing £1.3 billion to accelerate the roll out of charging infrastructure and £582 million for plug in vehicle grants.

TREASURY■ **Beer: Excise Duties**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[147758\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reducing beer duty to taxation levels in other European countries.

Kemi Badenoch:

The tax cuts at Budget 2013, 2014 and 2015 – followed by further duty freezes in 2016, 2017 and 2018 – mean that the average tax charged on a typical pint of beer is estimated to be 16p lower this year than it otherwise would have been since ending the beer duty escalator in 2013. All taxes are kept under review, including

consideration of international comparisons, and any major announcements are made at fiscal events.

■ Events Industry: VAT

Patrick Grady:

[\[149780\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the reduced 5 per cent VAT rate on ticket sales for live events for financial year 2021-22.

Patrick Grady:

[\[149781\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with representatives of the (a) theatre and (b) live event industry regarding the potential effect of an increase in VAT on ticket sales to 20 per cent.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary VAT reduced rate came into effect on 15 July 2020 and was initially scheduled to end on 12 January 2021.

In order to continue supporting the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and to protect 2.4 million jobs, the Government extended the temporary reduced rate of VAT (five per cent) to goods and services supplied by the tourism and hospitality sectors until 31 March 2021.

The Government keeps all taxes under review, and all stakeholder views are carefully considered. Any future decisions on tax policy will be made at Budget.

■ Hospitality Industry and Procurement: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes:

[\[149805\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the (a) level of support provided to (i) the hospitality sector and (ii) its supply chains during the third covid-19 lockdown and (b) adequacy of that support in light of the cost of rent and pre-purchased produce.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government understands that this is a very challenging time for the UK's hospitality sector and its supply chain. The Government is constantly reviewing its package of COVID-19 related support, to ensure that any decisions best meet the evolving public health outlook, and at the upcoming Budget the Government will outline the next stages of its plan for jobs to support businesses and families across the UK.

In January, to support businesses through to the Spring, the Chancellor announced one-off top up grants for closed businesses worth up to £9,000. The cash is provided on a per-property basis to support businesses through the latest restrictions and is to help cover operating costs. This grant support is expected to benefit over 600,000 business properties, worth £4 billion in total across all nations of the UK. This grant

comes in addition to the Local Restriction Support Grants worth up to £3,000 a month for closed businesses.

A further £594 million is also being made available for Local Authorities and the Devolved Administrations to support other businesses not eligible for the grants, that might be affected by the restrictions, such as those businesses in the hospitality supply chain. This funding also comes in addition to £1.1 billion further discretionary grant funding for Local Authorities.

The Government is also delivering support to the hospitality sector and its supply chain through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) which has been extended until April; Government backed finance through loan schemes, 'Pay as You Grow' long-term repayments options, a VAT cut, a VAT deferral for up to 12 months, a 12-month business rates holiday; and a moratorium on evictions to protect commercial tenants.

■ Self-Employed and Small Businesses: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[\[147982\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what long-term plans his Department has to support small businesses and self-employed people throughout and after the period of covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced in January 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

Since March the Government's priority has been to save lives and protect jobs, businesses, and livelihoods. To support workers and businesses across all sectors the Government has provided an unprecedented package of support worth more than £280 billion.

As of 5 January, England entered nationwide restrictions to manage a new variant of Coronavirus. With these restrictions, businesses in retail, hospitality and leisure facing forced closure in England are eligible for a one-off grant worth up to £9,000 to help them through to spring. This is on top of the existing Local Restriction Support Grant (Closed) which will continue to offer businesses support of up to £3,000 for each month they closed.

Local authorities are being provided with a top up to the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) worth £500 million, bringing the total value of ARG to over £1.6 billion. This grant ensures local authorities can support, on a discretionary basis, businesses not eligible for other grants but still affected by restrictions. Business grant policy remains a fully devolved area, with the Devolved Administrations receiving their share of this funding through the Barnett formula in the usual way.

Businesses across the UK can continue to apply for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which as of mid-December had supported 9.9 million jobs at the cost of over £45 billion, and its extension until the end of April 2021 will give many businesses and workers much-needed security. The Government has also extended the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) until the end of April 2021, with a boosted package of support providing the self-employed with grants covering

80% of average trading profits. So far SEISS has seen 2.7 million self-employed workers make claims under the scheme totaling £13.7bn.

Businesses needing access to liquidity can also apply for guaranteed loans through various loan schemes, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, until the end of March 2021. Over 1.4 million small and medium sized companies have received government-backed loans, worth over £68 billion

This support comes on top of billions of pounds' worth of Rate Reliefs, tax deferrals, and other labour market schemes.

As announced by the Prime Minister on 3 February, a gradual and phased approach to easing England-wide restrictions will be set out in the week beginning 22 February.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Commission On Race and Ethnic Disparities

Helen Hayes:

[\[148849\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what progress the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities is making on their call for evidence work; and what the timeframe is for that Commission's recommendations to be published.

Helen Hayes:

[\[148850\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions she (a) has had and (b) plans to have with representatives of (i) the Local Government Association and (ii) local authorities throughout the UK on (A) the work of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities and (B) how local authorities can work with that Commission.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities' call for evidence closed on 30 November 2020 and the Commission aims to provide its full report to the Prime Minister by the end of this month. The Commission also intends to publish its results on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk), following submission of its full report to the Prime Minister. As per its terms of reference, the Commission will then draw to a close.

I am aware that the Commission, in carrying out its work, has considered evidence from a wide range of organisations (including Local Authorities), from across the UK as well as individuals.

We look forward to receiving the Commission's final report at the end of this month, to which the government will respond in due course. On receipt of the report, the government will consider what further engagement is necessary with Local Authorities and other bodies.

■ Disadvantaged: Coronavirus**Liz Twist:** [\[912159\]](#)

What steps she is taking to tackle inequality during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

We recognise that COVID-19 is impacting people in different ways, as I noted in my first quarterly report to the Prime Minister. Addressing these disparities is a priority for the whole Government. Our economic response is protecting people right across society – saving jobs, keeping businesses afloat and ensuring those most impacted have the support they need.

We are also working hard through local networks to ensure key information reaches all segments of society – for example through investing in our £23 million Community Champions scheme.

We're seeing very positive developments in our vaccine roll-out – as recognised recently by the Bank of England. It's vital the vaccine programme reaches all parts of our community and we have established a National Equalities Board to ensure that happens.

The Government is determined that our recovery from this virus will build back fairer for everyone.

■ Domestic Abuse: Immigrants**Layla Moran:** [\[912149\]](#)

What discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on barriers to support for migrant women domestic abuse survivors.

Kemi Badenoch:

This Government is committed to supporting all victims of domestic abuse, regardless of their immigration status. That is why, in December 2020, we launched a £1.5m support for Migrant Victims package, to provide access to safe accommodation and support for those with no recourse to public funds.

Throughout development of our scheme we have responded to concerns about potential barriers to support for migrant victims of domestic abuse, including by adapting the duration of the scheme and its linked prospectus.

■ Employment: Sexual Harassment**Sir Mark Hendrick:** [\[145744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department is taking to tackle the increase in incidents of online workplace sexual harassment.

Kemi Badenoch:

Under the Equality Act 2010 employers have a legal responsibility to take all reasonable steps to protect their employees against workplace sexual harassment. If they fail to do so, the employer is vicariously liable for any sexual harassment

committed by their employees during the course of their employment; this includes online.

The Government expects employers to take these responsibilities seriously. If they fail, employees can seek advice from ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) and, if necessary, take legal action in an Employment Tribunal.

Last year the Equality and Human Rights Commission, with the Government's support, published guidance on harassment and sexual harassment at work. This made clear that employers should ensure policies on IT, communications systems and social media include appropriate warnings against online harassment and encourage workers to report it.

■ **Pregnancy: Coronavirus**

Kevin Brennan: [\[912147\]](#)

What recent representations she has received on the effect of Government policies on pregnant women during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

I refer the hon. Member to my answer to Question [910500](#) on 13 January.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ **Funeral Payments**

Fleur Anderson: [\[148937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications for social fund funeral expenses payments her Department has received since April 2020.

Guy Opperman:

In the period 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020, there were approximately 34,000 applications received for Funeral Expenses Payments, in England and Wales.

This figure is drawn from the Social Fund Policy, Budget, and Management Information System. It is not quality assured to the same extent as Official / National statistics.

■ **Housing: Natural Gas**

Fleur Anderson: [\[148030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he has taken to support (a) tenants and (b) property managers through the regulation of best practice measures for the Gas Safe Industry.

Mims Davies:

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations places duties on landlords to maintain gas fittings and flues in a safe condition, and to have these checked for safety annually. To support tenants and property managers understand these duties,

and what landlords need to do to comply with them, extensive guidance can found on the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) website -

www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/index.htm.

The [Gas Safe Register](#) (delivered on behalf of HSE) also provides advice for tenants and landlords - [Gas safety in rented properties. Landlord and Tenant Guides - Gas Safe Register](#)

■ Poverty

Jon Trickett: **[148696]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 11 December 2020 to Question 124122, if she will publish an anti-poverty strategy.

Will Quince:

I refer the Hon (or Rt Hon) Member to the answer I gave on 11 December 2020 to question number [124122](#)

This Government champions the principle of work as the best route out of poverty and towards financial independence. Getting people back to work and supporting them to progress is at the heart of our approach and our new £30 billion Plan for Jobs is the first step on the ladder to achieving this.

■ Social Security Benefits

Seema Malhotra: **[147858]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many mandatory reconsideration requests her Department received from claimants affected by the benefit cap in each month of 2020.

Mims Davies:

The available information is in the table. It shows the total number of Universal Credit Mandatory Reconsiderations requested by people in households where the benefit cap applies, and the reconsideration may not be related to the application of the benefit cap.

MONTH	MANDATORY RECONSIDERATIONS REQUESTED FROM UC BENEFIT CAP CASES
Jan-20	280
Feb-20	210
Mar-20	300
Apr-20	210
May-20	310

MONTH	MANDATORY RECONSIDERATIONS REQUESTED FROM UC BENEFIT CAP CASES
Jun-20	320
Jul-20	280

Table covers Great Britain only

Mandatory Reconsiderations by month requested

Answers are rounded to the nearest 10

■ Unemployment: Older People

Seema Malhotra:

[\[147857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 25 January 2021 to Question 140818 on Unemployment: Older People, how many Older Claimant Champions are employed by her Department.

Mims Davies:

We currently have 10 Older Claimant Champions at DWP regional level who work collaboratively with our 34 District Older Claimant Champions to raise the profile of our older claimants. The champions act as a single point of contact for cascading messages, communications and best practice to colleagues locally and nationally. They raise awareness with Work Coaches, employers and providers of the products available to them for example local groups, online tools and more.

■ Unemployment: Young People

Sir David Evennett:

[\[147742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the level of youth unemployment in (a) the Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency, (b) Bexley Borough and (c) Greater London.

Mims Davies:

The Department regularly publishes statistics on the Alternative Claimant Count, and these are available by local authority and constituency, this includes information defined by different age groups and is available on StatXplore, please see link below:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus**Hywel Williams:**[\[149727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the APPG on Poverty's £20 uplift report published on 1 February 2021, what recent assessment she has made of the (a) removal of the £20 uplift to universal credit and working tax credit; (b) decision not to extend the £20 uplift to legacy and related benefits and (c) suspension of the benefit cap.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

The £20 per week uplift to 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. As the Government has done throughout this crisis, it will continue to assess how best to support low-income families, which is why we will look at the economic and health context before making any decisions.

There are no plans to extend the temporary £20 uplift to legacy benefits. Claimants on legacy benefits can make a claim for Universal Credit (UC) if they think they will be better off and should check carefully their eligibility and entitlements under UC before applying, as legacy benefits will end when claimants submit their UC 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. Neither DWP nor HMRC can advise individual claimants whether they would be better off moving to UC or remaining on legacy benefits.

No assessment has been made with regards to suspending the benefit cap. There are currently no plans to change the Benefit Cap.

■ Universal Credit: Fines**Shabana Mahmood:**[\[145769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to Answer of 22 January 2021 to Question 134402 on Universal Credit, how many universal credit claimants with a deduction for court fines (a) applied, (b) were approved, (c) were declined for a reduction in deductions in each month since November 2018.

Will Quince:

This information is not held. The Department does not take applications to reduce court fine deductions but signposts the claimant to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service. Magistrate Courts impose Fines and Compensation orders on offenders, and can instruct DWP to make a deduction from Universal Credit. The deduction rate is set out in regulations at a minimum rate of 5% of the standard allowance and up to a maximum rate of £108.35 per assessment period, as long as there is sufficient UC in payment. The maximum deduction will not exceed 30% of the claimant's standard allowance.

Work Coaches can refer claimants to more specialist support for personal budgeting, money guidance and debt advice if required, including through the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS).

■ Universal Credit: Overpayments

Drew Hendry:

[\[149784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending time frames for debt recovery of Universal Credit overpayments during the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

No such assessment has been made.

Debt recovery, including the recovery of Universal Credit overpayments, was paused for 3 months from April 2020, so that Debt Management staff could support processing in excess of three million new Universal Credit claims following the outbreak of COVID 19.

Those staff have subsequently been able to return to their roles in Debt Management and we have adopted a phased and controlled approach to re-instating debt recovery, allowing us to manage the demand on services.

There are no current plans to re-instate the suspension of debt recovery, but we will keep the situation under review.

We have always recognised that there will be some people who may be experiencing financial difficulty, and anyone unable to afford the rate of recovery is encouraged to contact DWP so an affordable rate of repayment can be negotiated based on their individual circumstances.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Consultation on the expansion of the NFI Data Matching Purposes and the proposed new Code of Data Matching Practice (the Code)

Parliamentary Secretary (Julia Lopez):

[\[HCWS777\]](#)

The Cabinet Office is looking to consult on widening the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data matching powers and updating the NFI Code of Data Matching Practice. The powers are embedded within the Local Audit and Accountability Act, 2014 (the Act). The powers are:

1. to assist in the prevention and detection of crime (other than fraud);
2. to assist in the apprehension and prosecution of offenders;
3. to assist in prevention and detection of errors and inaccuracies; and
4. to assist in the recovery of debt owing to public bodies.

Currently, the NFI can only match the data it collects for the purposes of detecting and preventing fraud [1]. These proposals focus on increasing NFI's operational efficiency and value for the public sector by widening those purposes. Early estimates suggest that by better utilising data already collected by NFI, supplemented by additional data collection where appropriate, enactment of these powers could deliver early efficiency savings (within the first 3 years) of at least £10 million a year to key public sector organisations. We would expect savings to be far greater over a longer time period. Critically, research shows that there are clearly important wider outcomes for citizens overall; i.e. the data matching powers would help:

- the police solve crimes other than fraud, or find offenders more efficiently than is currently the case;
- local authorities and government departments to reduce debt owed to public bodies while adhering to the Fairness in Debt Management Principles; and
- agencies or departments to reduce any errors that might exist in official data records and thereby helping to deliver more effective services or to ensure citizens receive the benefits they are entitled to.

Operating within a strong governance framework since 1996, the NFI already collects over 8000 datasets, 300 million records of data from over 1300 participant organisations [2]. To date it has already enabled participants to prevent and detect fraud and overpayments across the UK worth £1.9 billion through data matching. The powers were embedded into the Act in 2014 when the NFI transferred to the Cabinet Office and are not part of the current Covid-19 emergency response or legislation. Our work to date shows that the powers will create longer term efficiency savings that will help public services. This aligns with the Cabinet Office role of creating efficiencies across Government and the Government's manifesto commitment to improve the use of data in the process of

Government. We are committed to transparency on these proposals. Work to enact the powers was one of the five key objectives set out in the NFI strategic delivery plan, 2018 to 2022. The results of this consultation will be instrumental in determining the way forward. The consultation documents are available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and will be open for responses until 10/03/2021.

[1] *Data matching compares data to identify anomalies that might represent a fraud. The NFI is not permitted to identify patterns and trends in an individual's characteristics or behaviour which suggest nothing more than the individual's potential to commit fraud in the future.*

[2] *The NFI has both mandatory and voluntary participants. Participants include all local authorities, NHS trusts, police authorities, passenger transport executives (PTEs), Fire & Rescue Services and Combined Authorities in the UK. Government departments and private sector organisations can participate on a voluntary basis.*

TRANSPORT

■ Government consultation on environmental objectives for the spaceflight regulator

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Rachel Maclean):

[\[HCWS776\]](#)

I am today publishing the consultation on the Government's environmental objectives which the spaceflight regulator will take into account when exercising its spaceflight functions under the Space Industry Act 2018. We are also consulting on the associated guidance to the regulator on how the Government expects it to interpret these environmental objectives. Responses to the consultation are sought by Wednesday 24 March 2021.

This Government is committed to growing the space sector in the UK and cementing our leading role in this sector by unlocking a new era in commercial spaceflight across the UK. Government and industry have set a target to grow the UK's share of the global market to 10 per cent by 2030. The UK space sector directly employs 41,900 people and contributes £5.7 billion to UK gross domestic product (GDP). The space sector will need another 30,000 people if it is to achieve its ambition to secure 10% of the world market by 2030. To support this, our spaceflight programme will enable commercial spaceports to be established in the UK that will facilitate a variety of spaceflight activities, including vertical and horizontal satellite launch and sub-orbital spaceflight. Growing the UK's launch capability will help bring new jobs and economic benefits to communities and organisations right across the UK, as well as inspiring the next generation of space scientists and engineers. Harnessing the opportunities provided by commercial spaceflight will feed into our emerging National Space Strategy, the Government's agenda to level-up the UK, and Global Britain.

Access to space and the use of space-based technology also brings many benefits to the environment, allowing us to, for example, observe weather patterns, monitor climate change, manage natural resources, and monitor for harmful activities such as illegal

deforestation, fishing and animal poaching. The UK space sector has an established world-class satellite manufacturing capability and technical expertise, which already makes a significant contribution to global efforts to monitor and understand the Earth's environment. For example, the 2018 British-built satellite Aeolus is used to revolutionise the accuracy of weather forecasting, providing benefits to all citizens on Earth.

The introduction of commercial spaceflight to the UK will have environmental implications at the global, national, regional and local level. The objectives and guidance recognise that to deliver the Government's economic, social and environmental objectives, we need to balance mitigating the potentially negative environmental impacts of spaceflight activities with enhancing the strong contributions commercial spaceflight can make to both the economy and our local and global efforts to monitor the environment.

The Space Industry Act 2018 requires applicants for a spaceport or launch operator licence to submit an assessment of environmental effects (the Assessment) as part of their licence application. The objectives and guidance that Government propose setting explain how the spaceflight regulator will take into account the Assessment when deciding licence applications and setting licence conditions.

We have worked with environmental agencies, public bodies and Government departments to ensure coherence with our national and international policies and obligations.

Our intention is to have these objectives in place by the time the secondary legislation and guidance (on which we consulted on 29 July 2020) comes into force this summer and the regulator begins receiving and assessing applications.