



Daily Report

Friday, 19 February 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 19 February 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:32 P.M., 19 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

■ Additional Restrictions Grant: Harlow

Robert Halfon:

[\[151673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding under the Additional Restrictions Grant has been allocated to Harlow Council.

Paul Scully:

The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) was announced in November 2020 to support businesses in England that are not mandated to close but are severely affected by Covid-19 restrictions. An initial £1.1 billion was allocated to Local Authorities to deliver to businesses under this scheme, and a further £500 million in top-up ARG funding was announced in response to the national restrictions that began on 5 January.

This funding is shared between all Local Authorities and they have the discretion to use the ARG scheme to help businesses in the way they see fit. We are working closely with Local Authorities to ensure that support is delivered to businesses that are in scope as quickly as possible. We are not able to share a breakdown of the funding allocated and distributed by Harlow Council at this stage. We will publish information on the scheme as a whole in due course.

■ Boilers

Sarah Jones:

[\[149810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent progress has been made on (a) removing and (b) replacing fossil fuel boilers in (i) public sector and (ii) private sector homes.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

BEIS have been supporting the installation of renewable heating systems in public and private sector homes and buildings via the Renewable Heat Incentive. The Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive has supported 84,707 installations as of December 2020 and the Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive has supported 20,673 installations as of December 2020.

The Green Homes Grant Voucher scheme aims to deliver energy efficiency and clean heat upgrades to 600,000 homes across England. Clean heat measures (including heat pumps, solar thermal panels and biomass boilers) are one of the groups of primary measures funded through the scheme.

The £1 billion Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme provides grants for public sector bodies to fund energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation measures, including low carbon heating. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan included

a commitment for further funding for the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme in the 2021/22 financial year, with more information to be announced in due course.

In addition to this, BEIS' Heat Networks Investment Project has awarded over £125m for the development and construction of heat networks in England and Wales since its launch in 2018. This will enable greater deployment of heat networks as an alternative to domestic boilers.

Sarah Jones:

[\[149811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress has been made on banning the installation of fossil fuel boilers by 2025 in new build homes.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government is committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. We are clear that the continued use of fossil fuels for heating is not compatible with that ambition.

When it is implemented in 2025, the Future Homes Standard will ensure that all new build homes are zero carbon ready. While building regulations themselves do not mandate or ban the use of any specific technologies, we intend to set the performance standard at a level which means that new homes will not be built with fossil fuel heating.

In line with that ambition, the 2020 Energy White Paper committed to consulting on whether it is appropriate to end gas grid connections to new build homes from 2025, in favour of clean energy alternatives. We will provide more detail on the Government's approach in our Heat and Buildings Strategy, which we will publish in due course.

■ **Business: Carbon Emissions**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[150856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the extent to which businesses are on track to meet the Government's 2050 net zero target.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

This year, the eyes of the world will be on the UK as we host the G7 and COP26. Business action on climate is vitally important to achieving a successful summit and presidency and meeting net zero emissions by 2050. Together these provide an excellent opportunity to showcase businesses as global leaders in tackling climate change in the year leading up to COP26.

The Government has appointed my Hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs (Andrew Griffith) as the UK Net Zero Business Champion for COP26. Andrew will drive the action needed to encourage UK businesses to sign up to the Race to Zero. This sends the strongest signal to markets, supply chains, governments and consumers that businesses are committed to the Net Zero transition.

We have met our emissions reductions targets to date, and to monitor emissions across all sectors of the economy, BEIS publishes an annual assessment of projected emissions, including those from business and industry, as part of the department's Energy and Emissions Projections (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/energy-and-emissions-projections>).

■ Business: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell: **[150847]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government plans to expand the State Aid Temporary Framework and financial cap, in line with the EU expansion announced on 28 January 2021, for existing business support measures such as the Local Restrictions Support Grant.

Paul Scully:

The EU State aid rules and limits no longer apply in the UK, except in respect of aid in scope of the Withdrawal Agreement, for example, Article 10 of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Subsidies must instead meet the terms of the EU-UK Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) as well as the other Free Trade Agreements we have reached with the rest of the world and our WTO commitments.

The State aid Temporary Framework provisions set out in previous iterations of local authority grant support guidance should still be applied to these schemes until further guidance on domestic subsidy control related to these schemes is issued.

The Government is currently consulting on its proposed approach for establishing a bespoke UK-wide subsidy control regime. The Government is keeping under close review the impact of subsidy control rules on the ability of businesses to access grants and will publish new guidance as and when circumstances require it.

■ Coal: Cumbria

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: **[150912]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the proportion of coal from the proposed coal mine in Cumbria which will be (a) burned for energy, (b) exported, and (c) used in domestic steel production.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

In their planning application to Cumbria County Council (<https://planning.cumbria.gov.uk/Planning/Display/4/17/9007>), West Cumbria Mining have stated that at full annual production the Whitehaven Mine will produce and sell 2.78 mega tonnes per annum of premium metallurgical coal for the use in steel making. Of this, 360,000 tonnes per annum is destined for use in the UK steel industry and the remaining 2.42 mega tonnes per annum is destined for European steel makers.

■ Conditions of Employment: Coronavirus

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[151685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his policy is on employers insisting that employees receive a covid-19 vaccination to (a) remain employed and (b) receive employment.

Paul Scully:

Scientists are united that the vaccine offers the best form of protection against the virus but it is not compulsory - the UK operates a system of informed consent for vaccinations. Demand has been extremely high with more than 13 million people having been vaccinated by 10 February.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Ruth Jones:

[\[151843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the resources available to vaccine manufacturers seeking to keep up with emerging variants of covid-19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government is undertaking laboratory work as a priority to better understand the impact of the new Covid-19 variants on the vaccines currently in deployment, in particular the risk of vaccine resistance. We maintain close contact with vaccine developers to understand their efficacy studies of their vaccines on variants and the impact on current supply chain arrangements for their manufacture.

We continue to take a portfolio-based approach that monitors the landscape of Covid-19 vaccine development and we remain confident that the three vaccines (Pfizer/BioNTech, Oxford University/AstraZeneca, and Moderna) that we have purchased, which have been authorised by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, will continue to be effective against the virus.

The Government has also established a new partnership with the vaccine manufacturer, CureVac, to rapidly develop new vaccines in response to new Covid-19 variants, should this be needed. The new agreement will utilise UK expertise on genomics and virus sequencing to allow new varieties of vaccines based on messenger RNA technology to be developed quickly against new strains of Covid-19 if they are needed. An initial order has been made for 50 million doses.

■ Delivery Services: Industrial Health and Safety

Rachael Maskell:

[\[150843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to ensure that couriers and delivery drivers are protected from the risk of covid-19 transmission.

Paul Scully:

We have published [guidance](#) for people who work in or from vehicles, including couriers and delivery drivers. As couriers and delivery drivers cannot work from home, they should continue attending their workplace. Employees should work in the same team or shift pattern every day, maintain social distancing, limit time to load and unload vehicles, use electronic paperwork where possible and be trained on Covid-19 safety measures.

When attending other peoples' homes, couriers and delivery drivers should socially distance as much as possible, wear a face mask and sanitise their hands frequently.

■ Employment**Martyn Day:**[\[150865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the Government plans to bring forward an employment Bill.

Paul Scully:

The Government intends to bring forward legislation as soon as Parliamentary time allows. We remain committed to delivering legislation that ensures we have an employment framework that is fit for purpose in the 21st century.

■ Environment Protection**Matthew Pennycook:**[\[150881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Government's Ten point plan for a green industrial revolution, published on 18 November 2020, which infrastructure projects will be funded as part of that plan; how funding for that plan will be distributed across Government departments; and what the planned timescale is for that funding to be spent.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Spanning clean energy, buildings, transport, nature and innovative technologies, the Ten Point Plan will mobilise £12 billion of government investment to unlock three times as much private sector investment by 2030; level up regions across the UK; and support up to 250,000 highly-skilled green jobs. The wide range of sectors with funding outlined in the Ten Point Plan span across Government Departments, including BEIS, DfT and DEFRA and further details of funding will be published over the course of this year through a number of sectoral strategies as well as a Net Zero Strategy.

This includes a range of infrastructure projects funded through the Ten Point Plan. For example, we will be supporting the Offshore Wind industry, investing £160 million into modern ports and manufacturing infrastructure. We are currently running a competitive process to support the development of a large coastal manufacturing site for offshore wind. The deadline for applications was 8th January and we are currently assessing the proposals received.

We will also be investing £1 billion through the Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) Infrastructure Fund which will provide industry with the certainty required to deploy CCUS at pace and at scale. Decisions have not yet been taken on how the Fund will be allocated. In parallel we will continue to develop and implement the necessary CCUS business models to enable deployment and unlock private sector investment in CCUS across power, industry and hydrogen production.

■ Flexible Working

Martyn Day:

[\[150866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the Department plans to launch its consultation on making flexible working the default.

Paul Scully:

The Government has made a clear commitment to encourage flexible working and consult on making it the default unless employers have good reasons not to. A consultation will be issued in due course.

Martyn Day:

[\[150867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government plans to take to support (a) employers and (b) employees to develop flexible working practices for all people once the covid-19 outbreak has concluded.

Paul Scully:

The Government has made a clear commitment to encourage flexible working and consult on making it the default unless employers have good reasons not to. A consultation will be issued in due course.

I have also written to the Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development to commission a further 18 months' work from the Flexible Working Taskforce to help inform the Government's thinking as we develop new policies and navigate the impact of COVID-19 on how we work. The Taskforce can help to take forward the best of what has been learned through the pandemic and help support workers and employers to adapt to new ways of working on a more permanent basis.

■ Fracking

Alexander Stafford:

[\[151895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the proppant squeeze process is prohibited under the Government's moratorium on fracking in relation to seismic activity.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Ministerial Statement of 4 November 2019 makes clear that the moratorium on fracking applies to operations that require Hydraulic Fracturing Consent. The definition of associated hydraulic fracturing is used for the purposes of Hydraulic Fracturing Consent, as set out under section 4A of the Petroleum Act 1998 (inserted by Section 50 of the Infrastructure Act 2015).

This definition was based on the approach taken by the European Commission, which defines high-volume hydraulic fracturing as involving the injection into a well of 1000m³ or more of water per fracturing stage or 10000m³ or more of water during the entire fracturing process.

Activities outside of this definition are not included in the moratorium.

■ Government Assistance

Rachael Maskell:

[150848]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his timetable is for the development of the new subsidy control regime to replace EU state aid rules; and whether he plans to introduce a formal consultation process on that regime.

Paul Scully:

On 3rd February 2021, the Government published a consultation on designing a new subsidy control regime for the UK. The consultation can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/subsidy-control-designing-a-new-approach-for-the-uk>

The consultation will run for 8 weeks, until 31st March 2021, and invites views on the best way to design a bespoke approach to subsidy control that reflects the UK's strategic interests and particular national circumstances.

Subject to the outcomes of this consultation, the Government will bring forward primary legislation in due course to establish, in domestic law, a system of subsidy control that works for the entirety of the UK. This system will advance both the growth of the UK's economy and the interests of its citizens, while reflecting our international obligations.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Matt Vickers:

[149826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to simplify the applications process for the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We have provided updated guidance to both installers and homeowners, so they are clear on the information needed for the scheme administrator to approve an application, for example around providing quotes. We have already made improvements based on feedback received and are working closely with the scheme administrator to identify further improvements and support increasing the numbers of vouchers to be issued. However, applications must be thoroughly checked for compliance with the scheme rules to help ensure value for money, consumer protection, and detect malpractice.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[150963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many applications for Green Homes Vouchers have been (a) received and (b) successful; and what the financial value is of those successful vouchers in the 2020-21 financial year.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As of 8th February, 71,953 applications have been received for the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme, with 22,165 vouchers having been issued to customers. The value of these vouchers is currently £94.1 million.

■ Industrial Health and Safety: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[150844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that members of the public protect themselves from the risk of covid-19 transmission from couriers and tradespeople calling at their homes.

Paul Scully:

On 6 January, the Government updated its guidance for the public, couriers and tradespeople, on how to interact with households. During interactions, maintaining social distancing, using face masks (as appropriate), and ventilating areas, is vital to reduce the spread of Covid-19.

Couriers and tradespeople are asked to minimise contact with households during deliveries, and to utilise electronic methods of payments where possible. They should also communicate with households prior to arrival, and on arrival, should maintain social distancing and good hygiene practices. Businesses should also establish if anyone is vulnerable in a home before entering. No work should be carried out in a household if anyone is vulnerable or at risk.

Businesses need to ensure they take steps to protect both their customers and workers from the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

■ Intellectual Property

Clive Lewis:

[\[149800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has undertaken an impact assessment on potential economic costs for the UK in the event that the proposed World Trade Organisation TRIPS Waiver is not approved.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK Government does not consider waiving IP rights to be an appropriate course of action to boost the manufacturing of safe, effective and quality vaccines.

The existing intellectual property framework has mobilised research and development to deliver a host of new medicines and technologies, to detect, treat and defend against COVID-19. The incentives and access mechanisms provided by the IP

framework have been integral to this success, without which we would not have seen the impressive surge of R&D and the unprecedented scaling up of production.

■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Chris Green:

[\[149256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) competitiveness of electricity prices in the UK and (b) effect of those prices on the UK steel sector's ability to compete internationally.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

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

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

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

Chris Green:

[\[149258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the recommendations made by UK Steel in its February 2021 report, *Closing the Gap*, on reducing the disparity between the UK and the German and French industrial electricity prices.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We welcome this report and will give its recommendations careful consideration.

■ Local Restrictions Support Grant

Rachael Maskell:

[\[150849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether there is a deadline for businesses to claim support via the Local Restrictions Support Grants (Closed) Addendum announced on 5 January 2021.

Paul Scully:

The application closure date for the 42-day payment, in respect of the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Addendum applicable from 5th January, is 31st March 2021.

Ofgem**Alan Brown:**[\[151767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Energy White Paper, on what date his Department plans to begin consulting on a Strategy and Policy Statement for Ofgem.

Alan Brown:[\[151768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Energy White Paper, what the objectives are of the Strategy and Policy Statement for Ofgem.

Alan Brown:[\[151769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Energy White Paper, whether the Strategy and Policy Statement for Ofgem is planned to include an assessment of the effectiveness of Scotland's Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019.

Alan Brown:[\[151770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Energy White Paper, whether the Strategy and Policy Statement for Ofgem is planned to align that organisation's objectives with the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As we said in the Energy White Paper, we will consult later this year on a Strategy and Policy Statement (SPS) for Ofgem. The Energy Act 2013 sets out the procedural requirements for designating a SPS, which includes consultation with Scottish and Welsh Ministers.

The SPS will set out the strategic priorities of our energy policy, the outcomes we seek to achieve and the roles of government, Ofgem and other parties which are collectively responsible for delivering these goals.

The SPS will require the Secretary of State and Ofgem to carry out their regulatory functions in a manner which is consistent with securing the government's policy outcomes. This will include the UK's legally binding target of net zero emissions by 2050, noting the separate targets in Scotland and Wales.

Ofgem's principal duty is to protect the interests of existing and future consumers, which includes their interests in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

■ Parental Leave

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[151877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps the Government has taken to ensure that couples sign up to the Shared Parental Leave scheme.

Paul Scully:

The Government has run significant communications campaigns to promote Shared Parental Leave to parents and employers. We are also currently developing a new online tool to help parents plan Shared Parental Leave and Pay. The tool will be available in the coming months and will make it easier for parents to access the scheme.

In addition, the Government is currently evaluating the Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme in order to better understand the barriers and enablers to parents taking Shared Parental Leave. This evaluation has included commissioning and interrogating information collected through large scale, representative, surveys of employers and parents and a qualitative study of parents who have used the scheme. We intend to publish our findings later this year.

■ Paternity Leave

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[151875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of shared parental leave is currently taken by the male partner in heterosexual couples.

Paul Scully:

The Government is currently conducting an evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme which has included commissioning and interrogating information collected through large scale, representative, surveys of employers and parents and a qualitative study of parents who have used the scheme. We intend to publish our findings later this year and will then be in a position to share detailed data on the scheme.

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[151876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the rules on shared parental leave have to be legally the same for men and women working at the same company.

Paul Scully:

Parents who are eligible for Shared Parental Leave and Statutory Shared Parental Pay have the flexibility to share up to 50 weeks of Leave and 37 weeks of Statutory Pay between them, as they see fit. Both parents can use Shared Parental Leave to take leave in blocks separated by periods of work, or take it all in one go. They can also choose to be off work together or to stagger the leave and pay. For both parents,

Shared Parental Pay is paid at the rate of £151.20 a week or 90% of their average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

Some employers may wish to offer occupational parental schemes for men and women taking shared parental leave, beyond the statutory requirements. The Shared Parental Leave and Pay: Employer's technical guide published on gov.uk (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shared-parental-leave-and-pay-employers-technical-guide>) clearly states that if an occupational scheme is offered to a mother on Shared Parental Leave, it could constitute sex discrimination if such an occupational scheme were not offered to fathers/a mother's partner.

■ Post Office: Finance

Alan Brown:

[149787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, on what date he plans to publish the aggregate amount of payments made by the Government to Post Office Ltd.

Paul Scully:

The information requested is available in the public domain. Post Office Ltd publishes their reports and accounts annually and lays them before Parliament. These reports include information on the funding provided to the Post Office by the Government and can be found here: <http://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/secure-corporate/our-financials/post-office-annual-report-accounts-2020/>.

In the Government's most recent Spending Review, it was announced that we will be investing £227m in the Post Office in 2021/22. This reflects our commitment to the role that post offices play across our communities. Since 2010, successive governments have provided over £2.4 billion in subsidy.

■ Post Office: Subsidies

Alan Brown:

[149788]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much money he has allocated for the services of general economic interest referred to in Annex A of the Entrustment Letter used as the basis for the roll out of the Post Office Ltd subsidy.

Paul Scully:

The term 'Services of General Economic Interest' was associated with the EU state aid regime which no longer applies now the UK has left the EU. To date, the term services of general economic services has been used to describe the services provided by the Post Office network including postal services, banking and payment services. For the spending review period April 2021 to March 2022, the Government has maintained the subsidy to the Post Office network at £50 million to safeguard these services in the uncommercial parts of the network. The Government has also allocated a further £177 million which will allow Post Office Ltd to invest for the future and to ensure they remain a vital force on our high streets.

Alan Brown:

[149789]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the end of the transition period on (a) the Post Office Ltd subsidy entrustment letter written to align with EU requirements and (b) how that subsidy is distributed to subpostmasters.

Paul Scully:

The Post Office entrustment letter for the last spending review period was in part put in place to ensure compliance with EU State aid rules. The EU State aid rules no longer apply now the UK has left the European Union. For the next Spending Review Period, which will take effect in April 2021, a new funding agreement will be agreed with Post Office. This will take full account of the new Trade and Cooperation Agreement requirements on subsidy.

The £50m network subsidy will be distributed to postmasters by Post Office Ltd and is therefore an operational matter for Post Office Ltd.

■ Renewable Energy

Alan Brown:

[151765]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of Ofgem's proposed reforms to network charging on renewable energy development (a) in Scotland and (b) across the UK.

Alan Brown:

[151766]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the reforms in Ofgem's Targeted Charging Review on renewable energy development (a) in Scotland and (b) across the UK.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Network charging is a matter for Ofgem as the independent regulator. Ofgem is leading two major charging reforms: the Targeted Charging Review (TCR), where final decisions were announced in December 2019; and the Access and Forward Looking Charges Significant Code Review (Access SCR), which is ongoing. Collectively, this programme of work seeks to ensure that regulatory and market arrangements reflect and enable the energy system transition, as we move towards net zero emissions, and that consumers benefit from the changes.

Ofgem's TCR reforms seek to ensure all parties connected to the electricity network make a fair contribution to its fixed costs, and it has published an analysis of the expected impacts at: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/electricity/transmission-networks/charging/targeted-charging-review-significant-code-review>. This analysis indicates that the reforms could affect the investment decisions of some renewable energy projects across Scotland and GB more widely, but also suggests that overall

the combined impact of the TCR changes will reduce carbon emissions compared with no reforms.

Ofgem's Access SCR is seeking to ensure the electricity network is used efficiently and flexibly, allowing consumers to benefit from new technologies and services. Ofgem is currently developing proposals, and intends to consult on these later this year. It will publish an impact assessment alongside that consultation.

■ Small Businesses

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[150855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will work with regulators to expand the definition of microbusiness in the (a) energy and (b) communications sectors to ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises have access to redress.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The independent GB regulator, Ofgem, defines a microbusiness as - employing 10 or fewer full-time employees with an annual turnover of 2m Euros or less OR typically spending £10,000-£12,000 per year on gas or electricity.

An energy supply licence obligates suppliers to proactively identify their microbusiness customers and provide information on their formal complaints process. If microbusinesses cannot resolve their complaints in this way, they can complain to the Energy Ombudsman.

Ofcom, the independent UK telecommunications services regulator, has put in place general conditions, which all communication providers must follow, that offer protections to businesses of any size relating to specific provisions on contracting, tariff information, billing procedures and number porting. Ofcom's rules also provide additional protections to businesses with fewer than 10 employees, including access to alternative dispute resolution and protections against mis-selling. All providers must be registered with either the Consumer Ombudsman or the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution.

The Government takes the view that larger businesses are better able to represent their interests by negotiating contracts for supply, and to make use of approved dispute resolution procedures where necessary.

■ UK Emissions Trading Scheme

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[150885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to extend the UK Emissions Trading Scheme to the two thirds of uncovered emissions, as set out in the Energy White Paper.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS) replaced the UK's participation in the EU ETS on 1 January 2021. The UK ETS initially applies to energy-intensive industries, electricity generation and aviation.

In the Energy White Paper, we committed to exploring expanding the UK ETS to the two thirds of uncovered emissions, including how the UK ETS could incentivise the deployment of greenhouse gas removal technologies. We will set out our aspirations to continue to lead the world on carbon pricing in the run up to COP26.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme: Coronavirus**Chris Law:**[\[151741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that people most adversely affected by the covid-19 pandemic receive the warm home discount to which they are entitled.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

This winter (2020/21), around 1 million Pension Credit Guarantee Credit recipients will receive the rebate automatically on their energy bills, as a result of data matching between the Department for Work and Pensions and participating energy suppliers. A further 200,000 low income pensioners, who meet some 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 claimed a rebate through calling the helpline so far.

To make sure that all eligible pensioners claim the support to which they are rightly entitled, in 2020 Government ran a nationwide 12-week campaign to raise awareness of Pension Credit, and launched a new online claim service, which improves access.

In addition to the Core Group, over 1.1 million vulnerable and low income households will also receive a Warm Home Discount rebate through the Broader Group, which is administered by energy suppliers.

To help vulnerable energy customers during the pandemic, Government negotiated a Voluntary Agreement with energy suppliers, to support customers impacted by COVID-19 who may be struggling with their energy bills and help to keep them on supply. Additionally, the Energy Price Cap has continued to protect around 15 million households on default and prepayment meter tariffs. Government also operates other schemes, such as the Cold Weather Payments and Winter Fuel Payment, which help vulnerable households with their winter energy costs.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus**Carolyn Harris:**[\[150857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he made of the effect on women of job losses in the wedding industry due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce, established to represent all parts of the UK Weddings sector, to understand the impact of COVID-19 on wedding businesses and jobs in the sector.

Carolyn Harris:[\[150858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what economic impact assessment his Department has undertaken of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the extended closure of the wedding industry.

Paul Scully:

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

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

Carolyn Harris:[\[151772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment has been made of the effect the number of guests allowed to attend weddings when the sector reopens will have on the sector's financial viability.

Paul Scully:

I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce to understand the impact of COVID-19 on wedding businesses and jobs in the sector.

As my Rt Hon friend the Prime Minister has said, we intend to publish our plan for taking the country out of lockdown in the last week of February.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Cabinet Office: Public Appointments****Chi Onwurah:**[\[148773\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, who was on the selection panel for the appointment of (a) Paul Willmott as Chair of the Central Digital and Data Office, (b) Joanna Davinson as Executive Director of the Central Digital and Data Office and (c) Tom Read as the new Chief Executive Officer of Government Digital Service.

Julia Lopez:

Tom Read was appointed as CEO of Government Digital Service following an external recruitment overseen by the Civil Service Commission. The selection panel included the Civil Service Chief Operating Officer, the Director General for Digital and Media Policy, Jacqueline De Rojas, and a Civil Service Commissioner.

Joanna Davinson was transferred within the Civil Service, and Paul Willmott was a direct appointment to an advisory role.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Rachel Reeves: [\[149219\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the (a) social value, (b) ethnic diversity and (c) gender diversity in the awarding of public sector contracts relating to the covid-19 response.

Rachel Reeves: [\[149220\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the process is for (a) identifying and (b) evaluating the capacity of companies being considered for contracts relating to the covid-19 response.

Rachel Reeves: [\[149221\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will outline the steps taken by the Government to identify which parts of its response to the covid-19 outbreak should be outsourced to private companies.

Julia Lopez:

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

Further to the Outsourcing Playbook, available on gov.uk, and as has been the case under successive administrations, public sector contracting authorities are responsible for their own commercial decisions, such as the award and monitoring of contracts. New commercial policy relating to the evaluation and delivery of social value outcomes through central government procurement did not come into force until 1 January 2021. It is therefore unlikely that a formal assessment of social value was made in relation to direct award contracts relating to the covid-19 response. Regarding cyber security, details of the Cyber Essentials scheme is available on gov.uk. The requested information on service credits is not held centrally.

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

■ Government Departments: Procurement

Dan Carden:

[\[145868\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the 26 November 2020 National Audit Office report on its investigation into Government procurement during the covid-19 pandemic, how the process of making referrals to the High Priority Lane for procurement was made known; what criteria were used for identifying those who should be informed of the High Priority Lane; and (c) who was informed of the High Priority Lane process.

Dan Carden:

[\[145869\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the findings of the Boardman Review published on 8 December 2020, what timetable the Government has in place for implementation of the review's recommendations; and whether Ministers plan to provide regular updates on their progress to Parliament.

Julia Lopez:

The Government has published on gov.uk a [statement](#) following press coverage regarding the NAO report.

The process of implementing the Boardman recommendations began immediately, and the programme is being assured by the Cabinet Office Audit and Risk Committee (COARC). We committed to provide an update on implementation six months after publication.

■ Knives: Crime

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[145748\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of knife crime in the last 10 years.

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 PQ 145748 [PQ Response to PQ 145748.pdf]

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Paul Maynard:

[\[150741\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether plans for international travel will be covered in the covid roadmap scheduled for 22 February 2021.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Prime Minister has said that the Government will set out our plan for further reopening schools, and gradually the economy and society in England, in the week of 22 February.

This overall plan is currently in development.

By the week of 22 February, we will have a clearer picture of the data, including the impact that our current restrictions and vaccine programme is having on infections, hospital admissions and deaths.

■ UK Relations with EU: Parliamentary Scrutiny**Afzal Khan:**[\[143898\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the recommendations of the Committee on the Future Relationship with the European Union's report entitled, The Shape of Future Parliamentary Scrutiny of UK-EU Relations, published on 14 January 2020, what steps his Department is taking to ensure effective future scrutiny of the UK-EU relationship.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Government will be responding to the report in due course.

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement establishes a set of committees to oversee its operation.

We are committed to facilitating parliamentary scrutiny of our new relationship with the EU as we do with other international agreements.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus**Mr Jonathan Lord:**[\[135916\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Government will adjust the current restrictions on wedding ceremonies to allow them to be held in England with up to five people, including the couple, witnesses and the officiant, providing that the venue's capacity allows for 2m social distancing.

Mr Jonathan Lord:[\[135917\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of allowing virtual wedding ceremonies to take place in England during covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Tulip Siddiq:[\[137257\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what scientific evidence his Department is using to base its decision to restrict marriage ceremonies to only couples with exceptional circumstances under the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Alberto Costa:

[151757]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish a timeline for the return to normal proceedings for wedding ceremonies.

Penny Mordaunt:

On 4 January, the Prime Minister announced a National Lockdown for all of England, in accordance with growing evidence of virus prevalence. Under these new restrictions, weddings and civil partnership ceremonies should only take place in exceptional circumstances. Up to six people can attend (including the couple). Anyone working is not included in that limit.

We recognise the restrictions may be disappointing for those planning such events. By their nature, weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are events that bring families and friends together, including from across the country and sometimes across the world, making them particularly vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19. We do not wish to keep restrictions in place for any longer than we have to, and restrictions will be kept under review in line with the changing situation. For further information, please refer to the guidance for small weddings and civil partnerships <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>. There is different advice for [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).

The government continues to regularly make available scientific evidence supporting its COVID-19 response, including at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/scientific-evidence-supporting-the-government-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19>.

On 22 February, the Prime Minister will set out the plan for reopening schools, and gradually reopening the economy and society, in a sustainable way in England.

For further information, please refer to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) page on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus), which will publish further information regarding the roadmap on 22 February, <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Church Commissioners: Carbon Emissions

Jim Shannon:

[147847]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church Commissioners are taking to make sure their investments support a net zero carbon economy.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: The Church Commissioners have committed to reaching a net-zero portfolio in 2050 and the Church of England's National Investing Bodies joined the UN Net Zero Asset Owner Alliance in 2020. More detail about the

alliance can be found here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/church-england-national-investing-bodies-join-un-convened-net>

The Church Commissioners have instituted further climate-related investment restrictions to capture companies that have significant greenhouse gas emissions but are not taking seriously their responsibilities to assist with the transition to a net-zero emissions economy. We are also setting our first interim emissions reduction target as members of the Net Zero Asset Owner Alliance, working with our public equities managers to achieve it.

The Church Commissioners are committed to the decarbonisation of the real economy, through engagement with policymakers and companies. The vision is for a net-zero carbon emissions global economy by 2050.

■ Church Schools: Coronavirus

Jim Shannon:

[146882]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what support the church is providing to schools to help children's education during the covid-19 lockdown.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: Church of England schools remain open for key worker children and also where possible for those who are unable to study at home. All teachers and staff in Church schools who are providing teaching and care at this difficult time deserve our deep gratitude. Church schools moved rapidly to provide online lessons and resources, looking after children of key workers and overseeing the distribution of free school meal vouchers and technology to make online education possible. The Church is also delighted to have partnered with the Oak National Academy to provide assemblies and weekly collective worship for parents who are home-schooling.

■ Churches: Coronavirus

Jim Shannon:

[145792]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what additional support has been provided to (a) clergy and (b) churches to help people attend church (i) in person or (ii) online during lockdown.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: Since the first lockdown, the Church Commissioners' Cathedrals Sustainability Fund has enabled many cathedrals to improve their digital output, including live streaming of services. There were nearly 36 million viewings of the Church's Christmas "Comfort and Joy" series. For those who prefer the telephone, the Daily Hope worship line has received 350,000 free calls.

The National Church Institutions have now offered digital training to over 7,000 people, equipping them with practical skills in streaming services on a variety of different platforms. The national Sunday Service has been watched on 2.5 million

individual devices, and many parishes and cathedrals are now live streaming regular daily services to their local communities.

■ Churches: Fees and Charges

Michael Fabricant:

[149723]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Commissioners plan to take to enforce the Statutory Fees Table fixed church fees by law, in response to reports of a number of churches inflating costs on their websites which may deter people from marrying in their local church.

Andrew Selous:

The Church of England wishes to welcome all couples eligible to be married in its churches. The Church provides yourchurchwedding.org as a resource to couples seeking information about all aspects of a church wedding, and this has proven to be a popular resource which is now used by over a million couples a year.

The General Synod and Parliament approve the fees charged by the parishes of the Church of England for these and other services via the Parochial Fees Order. Details of the current fees set for 2021 can be found here:

https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Parochial%20Fees%20A4_21.pdf

The cost of getting married in a church remains very modest when compared to other locations. Weddings are bespoke services, and all churches have a basic charge that covers the ceremony, including the calling of banns, the banns certificate, marriage certificate, and administration cost. Should a couple wish to opt for bells, choir, organist and flowers, etc. they are arranged by the parish for an additional fee to cover people's time and additional administration costs. An incumbent priest also has the discretion to waive some of the fees for pastoral reasons.

The National Church Life Events team has worked with Archdeacons across the country to encourage all parishes to distinguish between the statutory fee and additional charges clearer. The local Archdeacon would be best placed to discuss any individual case.

■ Churches: Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Jim Shannon:

[147848]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what progress the church is making in reducing its greenhouse gas emissions across all its activities.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: The National Church Institutions are currently assessing the carbon footprint of all church buildings through an Energy Footprint

Tool. This enables parishes to input data from energy bills to create an energy rating. The tool suggests a plan for reducing the footprint of each building

You can read more about the project here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/policy-and-thinking/our-views/environment-and-climate-change/about-our-environment/energy-footprint-tool>

Over 5,000 church buildings have currently received feedback from the Energy Footprint Tool, and we hope many more will engage in the project this year when the scheme reopens. More information about the project one year on can be found here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/one-year-church-moves-forward-carbon-reduction-target>

Across the Church Commissioners Agricultural property portfolio, the Commissioners are encouraging our tenants to farm sustainably and join environmental stewardship schemes to plant trees and hedgerows wherever possible. In addition, we are undertaking a natural capital assessment, which will provide a baseline and trajectory of progress towards achieving lower carbon outputs.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Jim Shannon:

[146880]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the church is taking to support families during covid-19 lockdown.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: The three lockdown periods of the last 12 months have seen considerable innovations by clergy and youth workers across the Church.

The Education Office of Church House Westminster has partnered with the Government's online Oak Academy to provide educational resources and materials for parents to use in home-schooling. Clergy have also been developing new resources, including virtual prayer services, school assemblies, study groups, fellowship meetings and craft workshops. That is in addition to online church services, bereavement counselling, marriage preparation and marriage support services.

Jim Shannon:

[146881]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what types of support the church has provided to people in need during the covid-19 lockdown.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: We owe a great debt of gratitude to the many clergy and volunteers across the country who throughout the pandemic have kept running the approximately 36,000 community projects run or supported by local parish networks. These projects provide a range of services to the community, including food banks, debt advice services and other crisis facilities to ensure that those in greatest need still have access to support. Clergy have also supported

vulnerable families, the bereaved and homeless throughout this time to find the help they need.

■ English Churches and Cathedrals Sustainability Review

Jim Shannon:

[\[146883\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what discussions the Church has had with the Government on the Taylor review on the sustainable upkeep of places of worship.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: The Church of England is responsible for around 16,000 church buildings in England, including 42 cathedrals, around three-quarters of which are listed (and more than half Grade I or Grade II*). The Church Buildings Division of the Archbishops' Council is in regular contact with the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and is in ongoing conversations with Government about how to ensure the sustainability of these important national assets in the long term. The staff of the Church Buildings Division also have regular meetings with government officials and Historic England, looking at the most effective way to support churches. This has necessarily changed through the COVID19 crisis and current work is drawing on the government-funded Taylor pilot projects in order to establish the best form of partnership to support recovery.

■ Ministers of Religion: Hospitals

Jim Shannon:

[\[146884\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what role hospital chaplains are playing in supporting (a) patients and (b) the NHS during the covid-19 pandemic.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: NHS chaplains have given their all in response to the unprecedented need for pastoral and spiritual support during the pandemic, with patients, in liaison with families unable to visit their loved ones, and with NHS staff under stress. Chaplains are an essential component in the care for the whole person that is central to the NHS's vocation.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has also been supporting patients at St Thomas's Hospital, London as part of the chaplaincy team there and is regularly making time to speak to patients and support families and staff.

■ Religious Freedom

Jim Shannon:

[\[145793\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the church is taking prevent the persecution of believers of all faiths.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 5 February 2021]: The Church speaks up on behalf of all those who are unable to exercise their right to freedom of religion or belief.

The Church of England is part of an international consortium that has just received £5.6 million from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to equip parliamentarians and religious leaders in eight countries in Africa and Asia to meet these challenges. As part of the new project, the Church of England and other consortium members will be helping parliamentarians and religious leaders with technical assistance and other expertise they need to propose solutions to such terrible human rights abuses in their own countries

The Church of England is continuing to engage with the International Panel for Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion and Belief. More information about that work is available here: <https://www.ippforb.com/>

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Boxing: Regulation**

Stephen Farry: [\[150970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies on the regulation of the sport of boxing of the allegations made in the BBC's Panorama programme on the role of Daniel Kinahan in that sport, broadcast on 1 February 2021.

Stephen Farry: [\[150971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that professional boxing in the UK or associated with the UK is not influenced by people alleged to be involved in organised crime.

Stephen Farry: [\[150972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans the Government has to bring forward legislative proposals on improving the regulation of professional boxing in the UK or associated with the UK.

Stephen Farry: [\[150973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans the Government has to introduce a fit and proper person test for those involved in professional boxing consistent with such tests used in other professional sports.

Stephen Farry: [\[150974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans the Government has to introduce proposals on the regulation of people who act as advisers to professional boxers.

Nigel Huddleston:

While fit and proper persons tests do exist within other sports to ensure propriety of ownership in club structure, these are a matter for the national governing bodies, concerning corporate ownership, and in line with company law.

We do not intend to intervene in this autonomy at this time but we expect national governing bodies and competition structures to put adequate levels of protections in place.

This Government takes the matter of tackling corruption in sport seriously, and this is why we have played a leading role in developing the International Partnership against Corruption in Sport.

■ Broadband: Scotland and Wales**Ben Lake:****[151800]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has had discussions with his counterparts in the Scottish and Welsh Governments on the implementation of the Outside-In programme in Scotland and Wales.

Matt Warman:

Matt Warman, Minister for Digital Infrastructure, met with Paul Wheelhouse Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands - Scottish Government on 16 December 2020, to discuss the UK Gigabit programme and the implementation of the Outside-In programme in Scotland.

He highlighted that UK government has started the roll-out of gigabit capable full fibre in Scotland with more than £22m invested already in a number of projects including:

- a) The Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme with over £4.9m committed
- b) Local Full Fibre Network project awarded £4.3m in the Highlands for 152 public sites
- c) Local Full Fibre Network project awarded £1.9m in Unst and Yell (Shetland) for 21 public sites
- d) Local Full Fibre Network project awarded £5.9m in Tay Cities for 228 public sites
- e) Rural Gigabit Connectivity project awarded £1.4m in Dumfries and Galloway for 35 public sites
- f) Rural Gigabit Connectivity project awarded £2.1m for NHS Scotland for 51 public sites
- g) Rural Gigabit Connectivity project awarded £2m in the Highlands for 37 public sites (in addition to the Local Full Fibre Network sites above)

Similarly the UK government has also started the roll-out of gigabit capable full-fibre in Wales with more than £29m committed in a number of projects including:

- a) Support to the Superfast Wales project, which is delivered by the Welsh Government, and has provided almost 733,000 properties across Wales with access to fast fibre broadband. The contract intervened where the Private Sector had no plans to do so (at the time of procurement). The current phase, which runs to June '22, will reach up to 39k more prems.
- b) The Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme with over £3.8m committed
- c) Local Full Fibre Network project awarded £8m in North Wales with 6 local authorities for 350 public sites
- d) Local Full Fibre Network project awarded £1.2m in Pembrokeshire for 70 public sites
- e) Local Full Fibre Network project awarded £12m to the Welsh Government for the South Wales Strategic Road Network project
- f) Local Full Fibre Network project awarded £3.16m to the Welsh Government for the Cardiff Capital Region project for 174 public sites in the ten authorities in SE Wales
- g) Rural Gigabit Connectivity project awarded £1.25m to the Welsh Government for 103 public sites in 11 Local Authority areas

The UK government, through BDUK, has commenced regular collaborative engagement with Scottish and Welsh Government Officials on the planning for the UK Gigabit programme. They have set up a number of workstreams to ensure the optimal mix of approaches to Outside-In in Scotland and Wales is achieved.

The Minister also met with Lee Waters MS, the Deputy Minister for Economy & Transport on 1 May 2020, to discuss the Shared Rural Network. They discussed the benefits of the programme and acknowledged that the SRN was positive but Mr Waters had some concerns about the length of time for the full benefits of the programme. Both ministers agreed to meet again in the near future to discuss how they can collectively create an environment in which they can accelerate developments whilst maximising existing resources and infrastructure to reduce overall cost on the public purse. The Minister is committed to continue working collaboratively with his Scottish and Welsh counterparts on the implementation of the Outside-In programme in Scotland and Wales.

■ Cultural Heritage

Sir John Hayes:

[151612]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to measure Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government fully recognises the contribution that the UK's oral traditions, social practices and festive events make to the country's cultural fabric. While it is not possible to measure all intangible heritage, as it is constantly evolving, there are many programmes to help communities continue to practice those traditions which are important to them. For example, organisations such as Arts Council England and

the National Lottery Heritage Fund provide grants for community organisations to support such intangible customs as traditional craft skills, languages and artistic expressions.

■ Cultural Heritage: Wales

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[150755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on that government's proposals to support (a) historic houses and (b) the wider heritage sector during the recovery from the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

Heritage is a devolved matter and as such, the Secretary of State has not met with the Welsh Government to discuss the above. He has however held meetings with the UK-wide organisation the National Trust on heritage sector recovery.

DCMS officials have worked with representatives of Cadw and Historic Houses (representing 26 properties in Wales) throughout the pandemic, including the Heritage COVID Working Group which both are invited to.

I also met with the President and Director General of the Historic House Association. This organisation represents more than 1,600 private and charitably owned historic country houses, including 26 houses in Wales. At this meeting, the short, medium and long term recovery of the sector were discussed.

■ Culture Recovery Fund

Daisy Cooper:

[\[143126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many cultural organisations met all of the criteria for funding from the Culture Recovery Fund but were not awarded that funding as a result of an oversubscription for those grants in their area.

Caroline Dinanage:

For the first round of the Culture Recovery Fund, in order to deliver the fund in time to support the sector, the Arts Council delegated fixed budgets to regional assessment panels to make decisions on the smallest applications.

When those panels were oversubscribed, and there were more organisations which met the criteria than could be funded, organisations were considered against the published Balancing Criteria and prioritised for funding accordingly. As such, a very small number of organisations (94) that applied to Arts Council England and met the primary criteria were not awarded funding on the basis of over-subscription, and how

they compared to the Balancing Criteria. All of these applications were for less than £1m.

In general, success rates across Round 1 of the Fund were high, averaging 67% in the latest data we have.

Any unspent funds across the Arms Length Bodies will be allocated to the second round of the Culture Recovery Fund, which will deliver further support for cultural organisations during Spring and Summer 2021.

■ Festival UK* 2022

Kenny MacAskil: [\[151861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much of the £120 million budget for Festival UK 2022 he plans to allocate to (a) Scotland, (b) the Queen's Platinum celebrations, (c) the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham and (d) Coventry City of Culture.

Caroline Dinenage:

£120 million has been announced for Festival UK 2022. There are Barnett allocations to Scotland and the other home nations from the £120 million budget, which is administered by HM Treasury. None of this funding has been allocated to The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, or Coventry City of Culture.

■ Festival UK* 2022: Tickets

Kenny MacAskil: [\[151862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the revenue accruing to the public purse from ticket sales for Festival UK 2022.

Caroline Dinenage:

There are no plans to sell tickets for any events in Festival UK 2022.

■ Gambling: Internet

Martyn Day: [\[148844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has had recent discussions with representatives from online gaming platform providers on their codes of conduct for online gaming; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Dinenage:

Ministers and officials regularly hold meetings and discussions with online gaming platform providers on a range of issues, including online safety. Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

Under new online safety legislation, all companies in scope will need to tackle illegal content on their platforms, and protect children accessing their services from harmful content and activity. Gaming platforms which host user-generated content or facilitate online interaction will need to take decisive action to protect users on their services, particularly children. For example, they will need to protect children from harmful user-generated content such as bullying.

■ Gaming: Coronavirus

Ian Lavery:

[150803]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether adult gaming centres are non-essential retail as classified in the Government's Shops Guidance; and if he will bring forward legislative proposals to enable those centres to reopen with other non-essential retail when covid-19 lockdown restrictions are lifted.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

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

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

■ Internet: Safety

Robert Halfon:

[151666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including in his legislative proposals on online harms a requirement for companies offering services to UK users to establish UK teams to moderate content from UK users which is reported to breach the platform's standards to improve the accountability of those companies to UK users.

Caroline Dinanage:

As part of the new online harms regulatory framework, Ofcom will set out how companies can fulfil their duty of care via codes of practice. The codes will outline the systems and processes companies must have in place to keep their users safe, including procedures on the training and support of human moderators.

Local Press: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[151804]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what information his Department holds on the effect of reduced advertising revenues during the covid-19 outbreak on local newspapers.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government recognises the vital role of local newspapers in supporting communities and local democracy through their provision of reliable, high-quality information. The government has been engaging closely with the sector, including publishers present in Slough, and with market experts to continue to inform our understanding of the financial pressures the industry has been facing, including with respect to the reduction in advertising revenues, and the impact of this on business continuity. Many local newspapers have been able to benefit from a unique and unprecedented government advertising partnership, designed to deliver important messages to UK citizens. Newspapers received up to £35 million additional government advertising revenue as part of the first phase of our coronavirus communications campaign. The campaign has subsequently been extended with at least 60% funding going to smaller regional and local titles.

We are aware that the pandemic has had a significant effect on many local newspapers and, in some cases, has led publishers to make difficult decisions with regard to title closures or suspensions and staff redundancies. We will maintain our dialogue with the sector as the situation continues to develop, ensuring that we have the information needed to inform the development of effective support measures.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[151808]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment has he made of the effect of (a) suspension and (b) permanent closure of local newspapers during the covid-19 outbreak on local democracy.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government recognises the vital role of local newspapers in supporting communities and local democracy through their provision of reliable, high-quality information. On 6 October last year, the government published Research into Recent Dynamics of the Press Sector in the UK and Globally, a report on the importance of newspaper provision to local communities which explored the impact of suspensions and closures on local democracy. The research, which was conducted before the onset of Covid-19, found that changes in news provision and consumption over time had a direct impact on participation levels in local elections in England, underlining the vital importance of a sustainable local news industry to a properly functioning democracy.

Throughout the pandemic, I have kept in close contact with stakeholders from across the sector to understand the financial pressures they have been facing and how these are impacting business continuity. We do not hold comprehensive figures on

the number of titles suspended or closed but are continuing to develop our understanding of the impact of Covid-19-related title closures and suspensions on local news provision and democratic engagement in the light of the findings of our research.

■ **National League: Coronavirus**

Stephen Morgan: [\[151829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the £10 million grant to National League clubs in steps 4-6 in supporting them through and beyond this lockdown period.

Nigel Huddleston:

On 27th January 2021, the government confirmed that Steps 3-6 of the National League System will receive up to £10 million of grant support from the Sports Winter Survival Package. This is designed to protect the immediate future of approximately 850 clubs over the winter period. This support is being distributed at pace by the Football Foundation and is available with immediate effect.

Stephen Morgan: [\[151830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what level of restrictions will be lifted for clubs in steps 4-6 in the National League to allow fan attendance after the covid-19 lockdown period.

Stephen Morgan: [\[151831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of clubs in steps 4-6 of the National League on (a) mental wellbeing, (b) community projects, (c) economic prosperity and (d) other aspects of the local community.

Nigel Huddleston:

Football clubs at all levels make a significant contribution to their local communities. National League clubs have demonstrated this more than ever throughout the pandemic, from delivering care packages for the vulnerable through to raising money for front-line charities, they are at the heart of their communities.

The Government therefore confirmed that Steps 3-6 of the National League System will receive up to £10 million of grant support from the Sports Winter Survival Package. This is being distributed at pace by the Football Foundation. This funding is designed to protect the immediate future of approximately 850 clubs over the winter period.

We also understand the importance of spectators to these clubs and have shown our commitment to getting fans back into stadia when infection rates are reduced. The

Prime Minister is due to set out a roadmap to recovery in the week commencing 22 February.

■ **Press: Coronavirus**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[151805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to introduce sector-specific financial support for (a) public interest journalism and (b) local newspapers affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government recognises the vital role of newspapers in supporting communities and democracy at a local and national level through ensuring the provision of reliable, high-quality information.

We understand the acute financial pressures newspapers have been facing due to steep drops in advertising revenues and the particular implications of lockdowns on print circulation. To support news publishers to date, the government has introduced a series measures including the extension of business rates relief for local newspapers in England for an additional five years; and the zero-rating of VAT on e-newspapers, which was brought forward to May 2020 in response to the effects of the pandemic. The introduction of further Covid-19-related financial support is the responsibility of the Treasury.

Many newspapers have benefitted from a unique and unprecedented government advertising partnership, designed to deliver important messages to UK citizens. Newspapers received up to £35 million additional government advertising revenue as part of the first phase of our coronavirus communications campaign. The campaign has since been extended, with at least 60% funding going to smaller regional and local titles. Some publishers have also made use of wider government measures as well, such as the job-retention scheme which we have extended until the end of April 2021.

Longer term, we will continue to consider all possible options in the interests of promoting and sustaining high-quality news journalism, including pursuing options for financial support such as funding for innovation in the sector and tax reliefs.

■ **Public Libraries**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[151613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many new libraries have been opened in the last five years.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[151614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many libraries have closed in the last five years.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Libraries Taskforce published the 'Public libraries in England: extended dataset' on 11 January 2018 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-libraries-in-england-basic-dataset#history>) provides details of static libraries (statutory and non-statutory) in England as at 1 April 2010 and 1 July 2016, and includes information on permanent library closures, as well as new libraries opening.

Details relating to static libraries as at 31 December 2019 has been collected by Arts Council England and will be published shortly.

■ Social Media: Antisemitism**Robert Halfon:****[151667]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of advising Ofcom as the Government's intended social media regulator to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism and ensure that social media companies comply with it to help tackle the increase in online antisemitic attacks.

Caroline Dinenage:

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

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

The Online Safety Bill, which will give effect to the regulatory framework outlined in the Full Government Response, including the appointment of Ofcom as the regulator, will be ready this year. There are no plans to specify the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

■ Social Media: Crime**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[147967]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that individuals in the UK who publish criminal acts or statements on social media can be brought to justice.

Caroline Dinenage:

Whilst the vast majority of social media usage has nothing to do with serious violence, we know there is evidence of harmful and/or illegal content available online which glorifies violence and criminality.

That is why we have provided £1.5million to the Metropolitan Police Service to deliver the Social Media Hub which includes a dedicated team of police officers and staff.

This additional police resource is taking action against online gang related material, focusing on investigative, disruption and enforcement work against specific gang targets, as well as making referrals to social media companies so illegal and harmful content can be taken down.

■ Social Media: Hate Crime**Mark Menzies:**[\[150765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to online hate speech posted on social media using country-specific language or tropes which might not be identifiable as such elsewhere or via an algorithm, whether the online harms Bill will include a requirement for social media companies to operate specific UK moderating teams which will be able to recognise country-specific language.

Caroline Dinenage:

As part of the new online harms regulatory framework, Ofcom will set out how companies can fulfil their duty of care via codes of practice. The codes will outline the systems and processes companies must have in place to keep their users safe, including procedures on the training and support of human moderators.

■ Social Media: Racial Discrimination**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[150775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to tackle racism on social media platforms.

Caroline Dinenage:

We are clear that the online racist abuse is unacceptable. We must do all we can to tackle it. We are taking steps through the online harms regulatory framework to ensure that online abuse is addressed. Under a new legal duty of care, companies will need to remove and limit the spread of illegal content, including illegal online abuse. All companies will need to take swift and effective action against such content.

Companies providing high-risk, high-reach services will also need to undertake regular risk assessments to identify legal but harmful material on their services. These companies will need to set clear terms and conditions which explicitly state what categories of legal but harmful material they accept (and do not accept) on their service. Companies will need to enforce these terms and conditions consistently and transparently and could face enforcement action if they do not. The Online Safety Bill, which will give effect to the regulatory framework, will be ready this year.

■ Telecommunications Systems

Martyn Day: [\[150861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the number of vulnerable people who will be affected by the switch off of the Public Switched Telephone Network.

Martyn Day: [\[150863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the switch off of the Public Switched Telephone Network on businesses in the UK.

Martyn Day: [\[150864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to communicate the switch off of the Public Switched Telephone Network to (a) residential consumers and (b) businesses.

Matt Warman:

The retirement of the public switched telephone network (PSTN), and its replacement with Internet Protocol technology, is being led by Openreach and Virgin Media, as the relevant infrastructure owners. Openreach and Virgin Media have publicly set out their plans to withdraw these services by the end of 2025. The migration is likely to affect all fixed exchange lines, of which there are 31.3 million in the UK.

Ofcom estimates that 81% of UK households have a landline service, with 4% of UK adults living in a home with a landline and no mobile phone and 3% of UK households having only a landline without any broadband. The government, Ofcom, and industry are working to ensure that the needs of vulnerable consumers are considered and Ofcom regularly monitors how communication providers are taking steps to ensure they identify and protect vulnerable customers.

In June 2020, the Broadband Stakeholder Group, a government advisory forum on telecoms policy, launched the [‘Future of Voice’](#) website. This consumer-facing website is designed to inform the public and businesses of the PSTN switchover process. The website has been developed with the support of telecoms companies, Ofcom and DCMS.

The government will also continue to work closely with various stakeholders, including the telecoms industry, Ofcom, and other government departments to ensure the country is prepared for the withdrawal of the PSTN, and will continue to consider the best course of action to prepare for the migration.

■ Television Licences: Fees and Charges

Jim Shannon:

[\[151714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has had discussions with the BBC on the reason for the increase in the TV licence fee; and whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to ensure that pensioners are not subject to such increases.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government has honoured the commitment made to the BBC during the last licence fee funding settlement negotiations in 2015 to increase the licence fee in line with inflation. The BBC's Royal Charter (cl 43.1) required the Secretary of State to make a settlement agreement which covered the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2022.

The CPI increase was agreed as part of the wider settlement during which the BBC accepted responsibility for the Over 75s TV Licence Fee concession from June 2020. The Government is disappointed with the BBC's decision to restrict the over 75 licence fee concession to only those in receipt of pension credit. We recognise the value of free TV licences for over-75s and believe they should be funded by the BBC.

The Secretary of State will make future decisions about the level of the licence fee following discussions with the BBC on the next settlement, which the Charter states must cover the period from 1st April 2022 for at least the next 5 years.

■ Travel Information

James Wild:

[\[149821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent estimate he has made of the number of (a) staffed and (b) unstaffed tourist information centres in England.

Nigel Huddleston:

My Department has made no recent estimate of the number of staffed and unstaffed tourism information centres in England.

Both my Department and VisitEngland remain in regular contact with regional tourism stakeholders around the country, for example through forums such as the Tourism Industry Council, which meets regularly.

There are an estimated 150 Destination Management Organisations in England, though there are a number of other organisations that may manage tourist information centres.

■ Young People: Coronavirus

Seema Malhotra:

[\[151723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the findings of the Jack Petchey report entitled, Shaping our Future - The Covid-19 Youth Survey.

Seema Malhotra:

[\[151724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the findings of the Jack Petchey report entitled, Shaping our Future - The Covid-19 Youth Survey.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Secretary of State has not had any discussions with Cabinet Colleagues on the findings of the Jack Petchey report, Shaping our Future - The Covid-19 Youth Survey.

The Government recognises the significant impact of Covid-19 on young people and the important role of youth services in supporting them. We have supported the development of specific Covid-19 guidance for the youth sector, which has helped tens of thousands of organisations feel confident in safely delivering vital services to young people.

We also recognise that young people have an important role to play in the nation's recovery from the pandemic. Since the beginning of March, Government ministers have continued to engage directly with young people, through our youth engagement programme, on the impacts of Covid-19, from employment support to mental health and loneliness.

We are also engaging with young people as part of DCMS' Youth Review, announced by HM Treasury as part of the 2020 Spending Review. Their views will help to set a clear direction for the out-of-school youth agenda.

■ Youth Centres: Closures

Seema Malhotra:

[\[151722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the number of local youth clubs that have permanently closed since April 2020.

Mr John Whittingdale:

My department does not hold data around the number of youth clubs that have closed since April 2020.

Government recognises the important role that youth groups play in communities, which is why we recently announced the £16.5 million Youth Covid-19 Support Fund (YCSF) that will protect the immediate future of grassroots and national youth services across the country. The YCSF opened on Friday 15 January 2021 and will remain open until 19 February. It will help to mitigate the impact of lost income during

the winter period due to the coronavirus pandemic, and ensure services providing vital support can remain viable.

This funding will be drawn from the unprecedented £750m package for the voluntary and community sector. More than £60m of this has already been directed towards organisations supporting children and young people.

EDUCATION

■ Adoption Support Fund

Rachael Maskell: [\[150842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the budget is for the Adoption Support Fund for the financial year 2021-22.

Vicky Ford:

Following the Spending Review settlement in November 2020, the department is finalising individual programme allocations for the 2021-22 financial year. The budget for the Adoption Support Fund will be considered as part of that process.

■ Children: Day Care

Sir Mark Hendrick: [\[149724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending 15 hours of free childcare to one-year olds.

Vicky Ford:

All three and four-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours of free childcare each week, providing children with high-quality early education and helping parents to return to work. The government currently has no plans to extend these schemes.

A small number of two-year-olds are also able to access up to 15 hours of free childcare each week. The core purpose of the two-year-old entitlement is to provide a developmental boost to disadvantaged children from low-income families who are less likely to use formal childcare, but who stand to benefit from it the most. Whilst the entitlement provides some practical support with the cost of childcare, this is not its purpose, with the primary focus of the entitlement remaining improving outcomes for children.

The 2012 effective pre-school, primary and secondary education study in England and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development analysis of international Programme for International Student Assessment data both found no additional child development benefits of starting in childcare under the age of two.

In addition to the free early education entitlements, the government offers tax-free childcare for children from 0 to 11 years old, or up to 16 if disabled. This scheme means that for every £8 parents pay their provider via an online account, the

government will pay £2, up to a maximum contribution of £2,000 per child each year, or £4,000 if disabled.

Working parents on a low income may also be eligible for help with up to 85% of their childcare costs through Universal Credit childcare. This is subject to a monthly limit of £646 for one child or £1108 for two or more children, payable in arrears.

■ Department for Education: Data Protection

Darren Jones:

[150910]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish his (a) response, (b) agreed actions and (c) timetable for change to the Information Commissioner's compulsory audit of his Department, published on 7 October 2020, which was due to be published in January 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The official departmental response to the 2020 Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) data protection audit of the Department for Education is publicly available and was deposited in the House Libraries 28 January 2021. The document can be found through the following link:

<https://depositedpapers.parliament.uk/depositedpaper/2282906/files>.

The Department continues to work with the ICO to deliver against the recommendations identified within the audit report. The official response sets out that the Department is committed to a programme of work and will publish a further update in June 2021.

■ Education: Coronavirus

Wes Streeting:

[148845]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 29 January 2021 to Question 131337 on Students: Coronavirus, what the terms of reference are for the group monitoring and advising on lost and differential learning due to the covid-19 outbreak; when the members were appointed to that group; if he will publish the membership of that group; how many times that group plans to meet; and when that group plans to report.

Nick Gibb:

The Department recognises that school closures have had a significant impact on the education of young people across the country, and that disruption will have been felt differently by individual students, depending on their circumstances. We will work in collaboration with the wider education sector to develop a long-term plan to make sure children and young people have the chance to make up their education over the course of this Parliament. Sir Kevan Collins, in his role as Education Recovery Commissioner, will work with Government and the Department's stakeholders on assessing and addressing the impact of differential learning loss for students.

To support students to catch up with their education, the Government has announced a catch-up package worth £1 billion to support children and young people. This

includes a 'Catch up Premium' worth £650 million and a £350 million National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged pupils. The Department has also announced that we will provide a further programme of catch up. This will involve a further £300 million for early years, schools and colleges for tutoring and we will work in collaboration with the education sector to develop specific initiatives for summer schools and a COVID Premium to support catch up.

■ Educational Visits: Coronavirus

Daniel Kawczynski: [150731]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to lift the ban on residential trips so that the (a) School Travel Sector Stakeholder Group and (b) other organisations can plan for reopening.

Daniel Kawczynski: [150732]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of underwriting school deposits for residential trips to provide that sector with a cashflow and help ensure it is ready to reopen as soon as conditions allow.

Nick Gibb:

Schools are advised against all educational visits at this time. This advice will be reviewed in February 2021. Due to the uncertainty of when and how COVID-19 national restrictions will be lifted, at this time providing a specific date for the resumption of educational visits would be inappropriate. Further guidance for schools can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

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

There are no plans for underwriting of school deposits for residential trips.

■ Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [150713]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will investigate for what reason pupils eligible for free school meals attending independent special schools cannot access the Free School Meals Voucher scheme.

Vicky Ford:

Independent schools, including independent special schools and special post-16 institutions, are not able to access the national voucher scheme as they have no statutory nor regulatory duty to provide free school meals, and are not funded to do so by the department.

Maintained schools and academies are supported by the scheme as both types of school are under a duty to provide free school meals under section 512ZB of the

Education Act 1996. Non-maintained special schools can also access the scheme because they have an identical duty to provide free school meals to eligible pupils under the Non-Maintained Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015.

Where a placement in an independent special school has been funded on a discretionary basis by a local authority, any payments for meals, including meals where the pupil is absent from school, would be subject to the terms and conditions of the placement agreement.

If families need urgent help, they can contact their local council to find out what services are available in their area. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-local-help>.

During February half term, vulnerable families will continue to receive meals and other essentials through the £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme, as they did during the Christmas holidays. Launched in November 2020, the scheme is helping families struggling with the costs of fuel and food and is ringfenced, with 80% earmarked to support families until the end of March 2021.

■ Harlow College: Finance

Robert Halfon:

[151670]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much additional funding has been allocated to Harlow College under the (a) Getting Building Fund and (b) recent funding made available for T-Level delivery.

Gillian Keegan:

Significant central government funding has been provided to Harlow College for proposed remodelling of buildings, which will support T level delivery. This includes capital recently awarded through the T levels capital fund to support the delivery of Construction, Digital and Health and Science.

£1.5 million of the Getting Building Fund, administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, has also been awarded to extend the scope of the remodelling to provide additional workshop spaces, higher quality teaching areas, and a sustainable energy centre. This supports significant job creation in key sectors for Harlow and the surrounding areas.

■ Higher Education: Greater London

Stephen Timms:

[150652]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he made of salary levels in London in deciding that London weighting should be removed from the higher education teaching grant; and if he will make a statement.

Michelle Donelan:

On 8 February 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to the Office for Students (OfS) to set out his priorities for the forthcoming year. This

letter can be accessed here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/48277145-4cf3-497f-b9b7-b13fdf16f46b/ofs-strategic-guidance-20210208.pdf>.

One of these priorities is to change the name of the Teaching Grant to the Strategic Priorities Grant. This is to ensure the name of this funding reflects its important role in supporting providers and students to develop the skills and knowledge needed locally, regionally and nationally, to support the economy.

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

London weighting funding is a small proportion of the overall income of providers and it is right for the government to re-allocate public money where it is most needed. Universities should not receive additional investment for teaching simply because of where they are located. Excellent provision can be delivered across the country.

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

The analysis we offer at this stage, as presented in the annex to the letter to the Office for Students (OfS), gives a broad indication of the impact of the changes to aid understanding. This letter can be accessed here:

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

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

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

This money is in addition to the £256 million of Student Premium funding higher education providers are able draw on this academic year towards student hardship funds, including the purchase of IT equipment, and mental health support, as well as to support providers' access and participation plans.

Furthermore, we have asked the OfS to allocate £15 million towards student mental health in 2021/2022 through the proposed reforms to Strategic Priorities grant funding, to help address the challenges to student mental health posed by the transition to university, given the increasing demand for mental health services. This

will target those students in greatest need of such services, including vulnerable groups and hard-to-reach students.

The OfS has also been asked to allocate £5 million to providers in order to provide additional support for student hardship. This is to mitigate the rise in student hardship due to COVID-19 impacts on the labour market which particularly affect, for example, students relying on work to fund their studies, students whose parents have lost income and students who are parents and whose partner's income has been affected.

We have also asked the OfS for a £10 million increase to the specialist provider allocation, to support these institutions which are particularly reliant on Strategic Priorities Grant funding, many of whom are London-based. We want to ensure that our small and specialist providers, including some of our top music and arts providers, receive additional support, and that grant funding is used to effectively support students.

■ Pupils: Coronavirus

Mr Steve Baker: [R] [\[150785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of year 7 to 11 secondary school pupils have had their parents' consent to be tested for covid-19 in school.

Mr Steve Baker: [R] [\[150786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of year 7 to 11 secondary school pupils have had their parents not consent to their being tested for covid-19 in school.

Mr Steve Baker: [R] [\[150787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of year 7 to 11 secondary school pupils have had their parents abstain from giving permission to their being tested for covid-19 in school.

Mr Steve Baker: [R] [\[150788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of year 12 and 13 pupils have (a) not self-consented and (b) had their parents not consent on their behalf to their being tested for covid-19 in their academic setting.

Mr Steve Baker: [R] [\[150789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of year 12 and 13 pupils have (a) abstained and (b) had their parents abstain on their behalf on their being tested for covid-19 in their academic setting.

Mr Steve Baker: [R] [\[150790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of year 12 and 13 pupils have (a) self-consented and (b) had their parents consent on their behalf to their being tested for covid-19 in their academic setting.

Nick Gibb:

Schools are the individual data controllers responsible for processing any personal data, including obtaining and maintaining records of consent, for testing carried out on their sites. As part of testing, schools share data on tests carried out with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), at which point DHSC becomes the data controller. Therefore, the Department for Education does not hold the requested information.

Tulip Siddiq:[\[150878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to allow children with Education, Health and Care plans repeat a school year where the parents and school believe that this is in their best interest as a result of the educational consequences of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

Despite restrictions to schools for the majority of pupils, teachers and school staff are working extremely hard to give face-to-face education to vulnerable children (this includes those who have an education, health and care plan) and the children of critical workers.

Once a child has been admitted to a school, it is for the head teacher to decide how best to educate them. This may, on occasion, include deciding that a child should be educated in a year group other than the one indicated by their age. Such decisions should be based on sound educational reasons and in consultation with parents.

The Department does not currently anticipate that children and young people will need to repeat a school year as a consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak. We continue to look at all options to make sure children and young people get the support they need to continue their education during the outbreak and make up for time spent out of school.

However, it remains possible for headteachers to agree this in individual cases, if they think it is appropriate.

■ Remote Education**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[151815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial support is available for families on low incomes in (a) Slough and (b) England that are required to purchase educational resources as a result of school closures during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department continue to expect all primary schools, secondary schools, and further education (FE) institutions in England to provide remote education for the majority of their pupils and students.

The Government is providing over £400 million to support remote education and online social care, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. This includes over one million laptops and

tablets that were delivered to schools, FE institutions, academy trusts and local authorities by 15 February 2021. More information on the number of devices delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities can be viewed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data/2021-week-7>.

The laptops and tablets are to help support schools, academy trusts and local authorities to provide access to remote education and online social care. Schools, colleges, academy trusts and local authorities are responsible for distributing the laptops and tablets and are best placed to know which children and young people need access to a device.

The Department has also made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy both for the summer term of the academic year 2019-20, and then for the 2020-21 academic year, to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects for Reception up to Year 11.

All four major mobile network operators, Vodafone, O2, Three and EE, have also committed to working together to make access to Oak National Academy free for school children. The Department is grateful to BT and EE, who have made access to BBC Bitesize resources free from the end of January 2021.

The BBC has adapted their education support for the 2021 spring term and is making educational content available on the television. This helps to ensure all children and young people can access curriculum based learning from home, even if they do not have access to the internet.

The Department is aware that this is a challenging time for parents, carers, and children and that many parents and carers are balancing various responsibilities while supporting their children with education at home.

The Department has published information for parents and carers on remote education and how they can best support their child while being taught from home. This includes resources and advice to help parents and carers on how to establish a routine with their child, and how best to support mental health and wellbeing during this period. The published information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/supporting-your-childrens-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19?priority-taxon=b350e61d-1db9-4cc2-bb44-fab02882ac25>.

Parents and carers should not feel that they need to set work and/or are required to purchase educational resources for their child. If parents or carers feel they need further support or additional materials for their children, they are encouraged to discuss this with their school or FE institution first.

■ Remote Education: Computer Software

Siobhain McDonagh:

[147717]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria the Department used to include (a) Microsoft and (b) Google but not other commonly used platforms in its list of

suggested providers in the Constituency framework: education and childcare setting (excluding universities) guidance.

Siobhain McDonagh: [\[147718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what framework he used to determine which digital platforms are included in the Department's Constituency framework: education and childcare setting (excluding universities) guidance.

Siobhain McDonagh: [\[147719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he made of the potential merits of different platforms prior to including (a) Microsoft and (b) Google and not other commonly used platforms in the Constituency framework: education and childcare setting (excluding universities) guidance.

Siobhain McDonagh: [\[147720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he is taking steps to ensure that the list of suggested digital education platforms in the Constituency framework: education and childcare setting (excluding universities) guidance includes the full range of common platforms used by schools beyond Microsoft and Google.

Siobhain McDonagh: [\[147721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the cost to the public purse has been of technical support to help schools set up accounts for Google and Microsoft during lockdown; and (b) how much funding is left for that purpose.

Siobhain McDonagh: [\[147722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has plans to increase the funding for technical support to enable schools to access remote education platforms.

Siobhain McDonagh: [\[147723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the geographic variation in the uptake of funding to help schools set up remote learning platforms.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is currently working with Google and Microsoft providers to deliver the Digital Education Platforms programme. The programme provides Government funded support for schools and colleges to get set up on one of two free to use digital platforms, which includes G Suite for Education (Google Classroom), and Office 365 Education (Microsoft Teams).

The funding covers the technical set up of the platform including all staff, pupil and student accounts.

Support is available to state funded:

- primary schools
- secondary schools

- special schools
- pupil referral units
- further education colleges
- sixth-form colleges

The funded support is for schools and colleges that:

- do not have a digital education platform
- have access to Office 365 Education or G Suite for Education, but are not yet set up to assign work and communicate with pupils and students

The Microsoft and Google platforms were chosen as they are free to use to the education sector and had the unified technology and support to set up and deliver effective remote education provision.

Google and Microsoft also offer several features and functionalities that are suitable for school needs.

As of 1 February 2021, £4.8 million has been spent out of a programme budget of £14.23 million, leaving £9.43 million of remaining funding.

The numbers of schools applying to the programme by RSC region is as follows:

- South East England and South London: 968
- North West London and South Central: 937
- Lancashire and West Yorkshire: 851
- East Midlands and the Humber: 579
- West Midlands: 525
- South West England: 519
- East of England and North East: 481
- North of England: 273

The Department wants to ensure all schools are set up with a remote learning platform and are keeping this under constant review.

■ Remote Education: Greater London

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[149337]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) laptops, (b) devices and (c) tablets his Department has provided to schools under the Get help with technology during coronavirus scheme in (i) London, (ii) Lambeth and (iii) Streatham since March 2020.

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. This significant injection of laptops and

tablets is on top of an estimated 2.9 million already owned by schools before the start of the outbreak.

The laptops and tablets are to help support schools, academy trusts and local authorities to provide access to remote education and online social care. Schools, colleges, academy trusts and local authorities are responsible for distributing the laptops and tablets and are best placed to know which children and young people need access to a device.

As of Monday 8 February 2021, over 980,000 laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, trusts, local authorities and further education providers.

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

■ Remote Education: ICT

Siobhain McDonagh: [\[145732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) laptops and tablets and (b) 4G wireless routers have been delivered to (i) schools, (ii) local authorities and (iii) academy trusts as of 28 January 2021.

Siobhain McDonagh: [\[145733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with regards to the remote education support scheme being offered by mobile phone networks in partnership with the Department for Education, how many pupils are receiving the support offered by (a) EE, (b) O2, (c) Sky Mobile, (d) SMARTY, (e) Tesco Mobile, (f) Three, (g) Virgin Mobile, (f) Vodafone as of 28th January 2021.

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 8 February 2021, over 986,000 laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, trusts, local authorities, and further education providers.

Laptops and tablets are owned by schools, 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 is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data/2021-week-6>. These figures are broken down by local authority and academy trust.

The Department have already provided over 63,000 4G wireless routers, with free data for the academic year, and continue to provide 4G wireless routers where children need to access remote education. Data regarding the number of routers delivered is also published at the site above.

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 supporting this offer. We are continuing to invite a range of mobile network providers to support the offer. Data regarding the number of pupils receiving free mobile data will be published shortly.

Rachel Hopkins:

[148979]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what methodology his Department uses to calculate the allocation of devices to schools to facilitate remote working.

Nick Gibb:

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

The laptops and tablets are an injection of support to help schools, academy trusts and local authorities to provide access to remote education and online social care. Schools, colleges, academy trusts, and local authorities are responsible for distributing the laptops and tablets and are best placed to know which children and young people need access to a device.

The Department has based allocations on estimates of the need of disadvantaged children in Years 3 to 11 using data on the number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals data and external estimates of the number of devices that schools already own.

We have extended support to disadvantaged 16-to-19 year olds, including those in further education. Schools with sixth forms, colleges and other further education institutions are being invited to order laptops and tablets to further support disadvantaged students to access remote education.

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

Rachael Maskell:

[150853]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent progress has been made on the provision of dongles for the purpose of home education online.

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.

To date, over 60,000 4G wireless routers have been delivered to pupils without a connection at home.

We have also partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online. We are grateful to EE, Lycamobile, O2, Sky Mobile, Smarty, Tesco Mobile, Three, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile and Vodafone for supporting the mobile data offer. We are currently engaged with additional mobile network operators and continue to invite a range of mobile network providers to support the offer.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[151813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to support school pupils and families with access to (a) technology and (b) broadband and WiFi in (i) Slough and (ii) England (A) during the covid-19 outbreak and (B) in the long term.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[151814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to ensure that school pupils and their families have access to the educational resources they need to support learning at home in (a) Slough, (b) the South East and (c) England during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[151816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the press release published by his Department on 20 December 2020 entitled One million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people, what progress has been made on distributing the 440,000 devices to assist pupils with home learning.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[151817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure that all children in (a) Slough and (b) England have access to (i) a device, (ii) broadband and WiFi, (iii) stationery and (iv) space for home schooling.

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

The laptops and tablets are to help support schools, academy trusts and local authorities to provide access to remote education and online social care. Schools, colleges, academy trusts and local authorities are responsible for distributing laptops

and tablets and are best placed to know which children and young people need access to a device.

As of Monday 15 February, over one million laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, trusts, local authorities, and further education providers. This includes over 490,000 laptops and tablets delivered since the 4th January 2021. We are making further deliveries all the time and expect to achieve our overall commitment of delivering 1.3 million devices by the end of the spring term.

We have partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online as well as delivering 60,000 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home.

A number of these laptops, tablets and routers have been delivered to Slough local authority and academy trusts in Slough, details of which are available through this link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data/2021-week-7>.

Where pupils continue to experience barriers to digital remote education, we expect schools to work to overcome these barriers. This could include distributing school-owned laptops or supplementing digital provision with different forms of remote education, such as printed resources or textbooks. This should be supplemented with other forms of communication to keep pupils and students on track or answer questions about work.

Guidance, resources and support for teachers and school leaders on educating pupils and students during the current COVID-19 restrictions are available on the get help with remote education page: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-remote-education>.

We know this is a challenging time for parents, carers, and children and that many parents and carers are balancing various responsibilities while supporting their children with education at home. We have published information for parents and carers on remote education and how they can best support their child while learning from home, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/supporting-your-childrens-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19?priority-taxon=b350e61d-1db9-4cc2-bb44-fab02882ac25>. This includes resources and advice to help parents and carers on how to establish a routine with their child, and how best to support mental health and wellbeing during this period.

Some pupils and students who have difficulty engaging in remote education may be considered to be vulnerable children and young people and therefore eligible to attend provision. It is up to the child or young person's education provider or local authority to make this decision. The decision would be based on the needs of the child or young person and their family, and a range of other factors as set out in the guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision#vulnerable-children-and-young-people>.

[people](#). Lack of access to a device and/or the internet in itself does not automatically mean that the child is vulnerable.

■ Remote Education: Southwark

Ms Harriet Harman:

[146749]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many devices for remote learning were provided in 2020 to (a) primary schools and (b) secondary schools in (i) Camberwell and Peckham and (ii) Southwark; and what types of devices have been provided.

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, over 980,000 laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, trusts, local authorities and further education providers.

Laptops and tablets are owned by schools, academy trusts, local authorities or further education providers who can lend these to the children and young people who need them most, during the current COVID-19 restrictions. Device types include Microsoft Windows laptops, Microsoft Windows tablets, Google Chromebooks and Apple iPads. The specification of the devices can be viewed through the following link: <https://get-help-with-tech.education.gov.uk/devices/device-specification>.

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.

More information on the number of devices delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities, can be viewed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data>. Figures by Parliamentary constituency are not available.

Where schools need additional devices, in order 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.

■ Schools: Cambridgeshire

Daniel Zeichner:

[149777]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much additional funding for costs arising from the covid-19 outbreak has been made available to schools in Cambridgeshire during the 2020-21 academic year.

Nick Gibb:

The first window for schools to claim funding back for exceptional costs due to COVID-19 incurred between March and July 2020 closed on 21 July 2020. Payments

against claims made within the scope of the fund were made for schools and academies in September and November 2020.

In the first window, claims were also permitted for costs outside of the published scope of the fund. After a period of assessment, it was decided that the Department would not reimburse costs made outside of the standard categories.

A second claims window, covering the same period for the standard categories but with the additional category of summer holiday food, closed on 22 December 2020. Claims made in this window are due to be paid in March 2021.

The data in the following table shows the total value of claims made by schools in Cambridgeshire. The table also shows the value of payments made against these payments to date, the amount due to be paid, and the total amount of funding the Department will have paid to schools in Cambridgeshire following the payment of claims made in the second window.

	VALUE OF CLAIMS RECEIVED	VALUE OF CLAIMS PAID	VALUE OF CLAIMS DUE TO BE PAID IN MARCH	TOTAL VALUE OF FUNDING
Cambridgeshire	£1,899,769	£1,201,730	£448,733	£1,650,463

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Marco Longhi:

[148031]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has reduce the schools' six week summer break to four weeks, to allow school children to receive additional classroom-based education.

Nick Gibb:

Despite restrictions to schools for the majority of pupils, teachers and school staff are working extremely hard to give face-to-face education to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. In addition, schools are offering robust remote learning for those who are not attending in person.

On 3 February 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, and my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, confirmed the appointment of Sir Kevan Collins as the Education Recovery Commissioner. He will advise on the approach for education recovery, with a particular focus on helping students catch up on learning lost because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Department will be working in collaboration with the education sector to develop short, medium and long-term plans to make sure children and young people have the chance to make up their learning over the course of this Parliament, further details will be made available in due course.

Charlotte Nichols:

[150965]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will update the guidance entitled Children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings, to provide a list of specific critical worker roles.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has made guidance available on Children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>. This sets out the high-level role types which can be considered critical to the COVID-19 outbreak or EU transition response. The list in the guidance is not exhaustive, but it should offer sufficient information to help parents and carers to identify if their work falls under one of the umbrella groups.

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

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

The Department publishes weekly national-level data on pupil attendance. The latest published data (for 4 February) shows that attendance in state primary schools in England was at 23% and at 5% in state secondaries: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>. In aggregate, attendance so far this term has been much lower than full attendance – on average only 5% of secondary pupils and 20% of primary schools pupils have been attending face-to-face, and so we are seeing the desired reduction in social contacts.

■ **Schools: Harlow**

Robert Halfon:

[151669]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools in Harlow have received funding from the (a) Condition Improvement Fund scheme and (b) £560 million of capital funding for school repairs and upgrades announced by the Prime Minister on 29 June 2020.

Nick Gibb:

Schools and those responsible for school buildings receive condition funding through different routes depending on their size and type. Local authorities, larger multi-academy trusts (MATs) and large voluntary aided school bodies, such as dioceses, receive a School Condition Allocation (SCA) to invest in priorities across the schools for which they are responsible. Smaller or stand-alone academy trusts, other voluntary aided schools and sixth form colleges are able to bid to the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF). All schools are also allocated devolved formula capital to spend on small projects that meet their own priorities.

In financial year 2020-21, an additional £560 million of funding was allocated through SCAs and CIF, on top of over £1.4 billion in condition funding already committed this year. Of the £560 million, £182 million was allocated through CIF.

Four schools in Harlow initially benefitted from four projects being funded through CIF in 2020-21. A further three schools and three projects were successful, following the announcement of the additional funding, bringing the total to seven schools and seven projects.

As SCA funding is paid to bodies that span constituency boundaries, and decisions on investing in individual schools are taken at a local level, it is not possible to confirm how much SCA has been invested in schools in Harlow in 2020-21.

In 2020-21, Essex local authority was allocated £9,689,827 in SCA, including £3,072,985 from the additional £560 million to invest in its maintained schools, including schools in Harlow. Large MATs and large voluntary aided school bodies also received additional SCA funding from the £560 million to invest in schools for which they are responsible.

We have allocated £9.5 billion in condition funding since 2015 to maintain and improve school buildings, including the additional £560 million in the financial year 2020-21.

Capital allocations and annual CIF outcomes are published on GOV.UK.

■ Students: Coronavirus**Hilary Benn:****[151622]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to follow the Northern Ireland Executive in giving students a £500 payment due to the disruption caused to their education by the current lockdown.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is aware of the disruption caused to education due to the current lockdown but we will not be providing cash payments to individual students, instead we created a wider support package to aid students during this difficult time. We are making available an additional £50 million of hardship funding this financial year. In total we have made £70 million of funding available for student hardship given the £20 million made available to higher education providers in December 2020.

This is a difficult and uncertain time for students, but we are working with the sector to make sure all reasonable efforts are being made to enable students to continue their studies and to ensure students are able to access the support they need. The new student hardship support will really benefit those students most in need by putting money into their pockets.

The £70 million of student hardship funding will be distributed by the Office for Students to higher education providers in the approved (fee cap) category of registration, who will have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to students, including international and self-funded students, in a way that will best prioritise those in greatest need. We would encourage all students who need assistance to reach out to their university as soon as possible.

Dr Luke Evans:

[151873]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress he has made with the QAA, professional bodies and the Office for Students on ensuring that (a) undergraduate and (b) postgraduate students studying during the pandemic leave university with valuable qualifications that reflect their achievements and give them parity in future job markets.

Michelle Donelan:

I have met with key professional bodies and providers to discuss how we can ensure students can graduate with professional status and move into their chosen fields and will continue to do so.

Higher education (HE) providers are responsible for the administration of their own exams and assessments and will build on the experience of last year's arrangements.

We expect providers to ensure that continuing and prospective students receive the clear, accurate and timely information needed to make informed decisions. This includes making students aware of any potential for changes to arrangements for the administration of exams and/or assessment at the earliest opportunity. Providers will make their own judgements based on the latest national and local public health guidance, taking account of the need to minimise risk to staff and students.

The Office for Students (OfS), the HE regulator in England, has produced information and guidance setting out expectations about provider approaches to teaching and assessment of both undergraduates and postgraduates during this time, further details are available here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/guidance-on-quality-and-standards-during-coronavirus-pandemic/>. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has also published resources for providers on practical ways in which students can complete their studies whilst ensuring quality and standards are upheld – further details can be found here: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/support-and-guidance-covid-19>.

The government will continue to work closely with the QAA, professional bodies and the OfS to ensure students continue to leave university with qualifications that have real value, reflect their hard work and allow them to progress.

■ Universities: Greater London

Munira Wilson: [150956]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the proposed removal of London Weighting from the Teaching Grant on the number of students able to afford university.

Munira Wilson: [150957]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of removing the London weighting from university grants on the quality of university teaching and facilities.

Munira Wilson: [150958]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the reduction in funding will be to (a) London universities and (b) the University of London from the proposed removal of London Weighting from the Teaching Grant.

Munira Wilson: [150959]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has undertaken an impact assessment of the proposed removal of London Weighting from the Teaching Grant on (a) disadvantaged students and (b) BAME students.

Munira Wilson: [150960]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the proposed removal of London Weighting from the Teaching Grant on university rent fees for students.

Michelle Donelan:

On 8 February 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to the Office for Students (OfS) to set out his priorities for the forthcoming year. This letter can be accessed here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/48277145-4cf3-497f-b9b7-b13fdf16f46b/ofs-strategic-guidance-20210208.pdf>.

One of these priorities is to change the name of the Teaching Grant to the Strategic Priorities Grant. This is to ensure the name of this funding reflects its important role in supporting providers and students to develop the skills and knowledge needed locally, regionally, and nationally to support the economy.

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

London weighting funding is a small proportion of the overall income of providers and it is right for the government to re-allocate public money where it is most needed. Universities should not receive additional investment for teaching simply because of where they are located. Excellent provision can be delivered across the country.

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

The analysis we offer at this stage, as presented in the annex to the letter to the Office for Students (OfS), gives a broad indication of the impact of the changes to aid understanding. This letter can be accessed here:

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

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

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

This money is in addition to the £256 million of Student Premium funding that HE providers are able draw on this academic year towards student hardship funds, including the purchase of IT equipment, and mental health support, as well as to support providers' access and participation plans.

Furthermore, we have asked the OfS to allocate £15 million towards student mental health in 2021/2022 through the proposed reforms to Strategic Priorities grant funding, to help address the challenges to student mental health posed by the transition to university, given the increasing demand for mental health services. This will target those students in greatest need of such services, including vulnerable groups and hard-to-reach students.

The OfS has also been asked to allocate £5 million to providers in order to provide additional support for student hardship. This is to mitigate the rise in student hardship due to the COVID-19 impacts on the labour market which particularly affect, for example, students relying on work to fund their studies, students whose parents have lost income and students who are parents and whose partner's income has been affected.

We have also asked the OfS for a £10 million increase to the specialist provider allocation, to support these institutions which are particularly reliant on Strategic Priorities Grant funding, many of whom are London-based. We want to ensure that our small and specialist providers, including some of our top music and arts providers, receive additional support, and that grant funding is used to effectively support students.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Subsidies****Chris Loder:****[150940]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of payments made by the Rural Payments Agency are received on time.

Victoria Prentis:

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) has a number of schemes which provide financial support to the rural economy. The three main land schemes, which offer an annual payment, are Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Countryside Stewardship (CS) and the Environmental Stewardship Scheme (ES).

Farmers submitting a valid claim under these schemes will normally receive a payment between 1 December and 30 June the following year.

For 2019 we released by 30 June:

- o BPS 2019 – 84,225 (99.9%) payments worth £1.79bn
- o CS 2019 – 10,899 (94.2%) worth £88.46m
- o ES 2019 – 12,020 (97.7%) worth £182.22m

There are several reasons for why payments may be delayed beyond the 30 June such as ongoing discussions with claimants, the resolution of probate, or ongoing fraud investigations.

Payments for 2020 claims began in December and are ongoing. The RPA delivered its best ever December payment performance, paying around 98% of BPS claims by the end of the year, despite the challenges caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.

■ Air Pollution**Wera Hobhouse:****[151795]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what new powers he plans to afford to local authorities under changes to the local air quality management framework in the Environment Bill.

Rebecca Pow:

Local authorities already have a number of powers available to them to tackle air pollution – for example powers to tackle idling and smoke emissions from domestic chimneys.

The Environment Bill will improve the local air quality management framework to enable greater local action on air pollution by ensuring that responsibility for addressing air pollution is shared across a wider range of partners. We are amending the Local Air Quality Management Framework so that it brings in neighbouring authorities and where relevant, the Environment Agency, and can be extended to include additional relevant public authorities.

Through the Environment Bill we are also making it easier for local authorities to use their existing powers to tackle a major contributor to fine particulate matter emissions – domestic solid fuel burning, and are expanding the scope of the power for local authorities to enable them to tackle smoke emissions from vessels within a smoke control area.

■ Animal and Plant Health Agency

Alan Brown:

[\[149790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's average response time is for enquiries from an hon. Member on behalf of constituents relating to the Animal Plant Health Agency.

Victoria Prentis:

The Animal and Plant Health Agency reply to Minister enquiries on behalf of constituents within 15 working days. In the event of a response not being available within 15 working days the requestor is informed of this in writing.

Alan Brown:

[\[149791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect on the level of inquiries to the Animal Plant Health Agency of the post-transition period export process; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

The increase in enquiries received by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) concerning export processes after the transition period are in line with expected volumes.

Prior to the end of transition, APHA stress tested its services in order to prepare for an increase in enquiries. As a result, contingency measures including the recruitment of additional staff, were put in place to ensure there was sufficient capacity to accommodate an expected increase in demand.

APHA regular monitors all its activities related to EU transition and looks to improve its services provided to exporters and other stakeholders continually.

Alan Brown:

[\[149792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of a dedicated MP helpline to submit inquiries on exports and customs processes overseen by the Animal Plant Health Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) provides a range of support on Export Health Certification and Phytosanitary Certification including a helpline and GOV.UK content for interested stakeholders. Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) provides a similar service for customs related queries.

A step-by-step guide for exporting from the UK can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/export-goods>. For matters overseen by APHA, members of the public can contact exports@apha.gov.uk or 03000 200 301. There is a dedicated line for the Movement Assistance Scheme for all exports of live animals, products of animal origin, plants and plant products (agrifood goods) from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, which is 0330 0416 580.

Defra has a dedicated process for MPs to raise queries and APHA follows this system.

■ **Aquariums and Zoos: Coronavirus**

Scott Benton:

[150964]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he is having with zoos and aquariums in relation to providing information which would give those organisation sufficient preparation time to allow them to open up their attractions to the public later in 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

I am aware of the pressure that the current coronavirus restrictions are placing on zoos and recognise this has been an extremely tough time for the sector. The Government has not yet announced how and when the current coronavirus restrictions applying to zoos and aquaria will be eased. In preparation for an announcement, we have worked closely with BIAZA (British and Irish Association for Zoos and Aquariums) on their reopening guidance to ensure that zoos and aquariums have the information on how to open safely. Defra officials have also met with the CEOs of the largest charitable zoos and BIAZA to understand the measures that zoos have put in place to manage social distancing. We are also aware that a number of zoos and aquariums have secured the Visit Britain 'We're Good To Go' COVID-19 industry standard and consumer mark. This mark provides reassurance that the business adheres to Government and public health guidance and that the necessary COVID-19 safety processes have been put in place.

■ **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks: Public Appointments**

Ruth Jones:

[151835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to appointments of new members to England's National Park Authorities and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Conservation Boards in July 2020, what proportion of (a) applicants, (b) interviewees, (c) candidates shortlisted for the Secretary of State's consideration and (d) appointees had (i) had skills and experience in nature conservation, (ii) were female, (iii) were under 65, (iv) identified as members of a black, Asian or minority ethnicity and (v) considered themselves disabled.

Rebecca Pow:

186 applications were received for the 18 National Park Authorities and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Conservation Board public appointments made in July 2020. The candidate field is summarised in the table below.

PERCENTAGE WITH CHARACTERISTIC	APPLICANTS %	INTERVIEWEES %	CANDIDATES SHORTLISTED FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S CONSIDERATION %	
			APPOINTEES %	
Skills and experience in nature conservation	16%	26%	27%	28%
Female	37%	48%	50%	50%
Under 65	74%	75%	88%	83%
Identified as a black, Asian or minority ethnicity (BAME)	3%	*	*	0%
Declared a disability	6%	8%	*	*

* Where the numbers are less than five, data is withheld, since with small numbers individuals could be identified. This is in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. Applicants that identified as BAME and declared a disability were shortlisted for the Secretary of State's consideration. No BAME candidates were appointed.

■ **Bees: Imports****Daniel Zeichner:**[\[149775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the level of restrictions facing British importers of bees (a) prior to and (b) after 1 January 2021.

Daniel Zeichner:[\[149776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what (a) steps his Department is taking and (b) discussions he has had with devolved Administrations on addressing new restrictions for importers of bees after 1 January 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

Prior to 1 January 2021, queen honey bees could be imported into Great Britain, along with packages and colonies of bees. Now that we are trading with the EU as a

third country, queen bees can continue to be imported into Great Britain but not packages or colonies. In 2020, more than 21,000 queens were imported in contrast to just under 1,900 packages and 400 colonies of bees.

Guidance on the new rules for importing bees was published prior to the end of the transition period. We are aware of concerns raised by some beekeepers and we continue to listen to beekeepers and their associations as part of our monitoring of the new trading arrangements.

Regular discussions take place between Defra and colleagues in the Devolved Administrations working in this policy area. We are keeping the situation under review to ensure that there are suitable trading arrangements for the UK beekeeping sector.

■ Biodiversity

Caroline Lucas:

[150981]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on improving the natural environment of the findings of the Final Report, The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review, published by HMT on 2 February 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government thanks Professor Dasgupta for his independent Review on the Economics of Biodiversity, and its considerable contribution to the important issue of global biodiversity loss. Protecting and enhancing our natural assets, and the biodiversity that underpins them, is crucial to achieving a sustainable, resilient economy. The Government will draw on the strong intellectual basis provided by the Review to drive the ambitious change and investment needed to protect and enhance the natural environment.

The UK Government has recently taken numerous actions to address biodiversity loss including: announcing support for a global target to protect 30% of the world's land and ocean by 2030; committing to protect 30% of the UK's land by 2030; committing to invest at least £3 billion over five years in climate change solutions that protect and restore nature and biodiversity; launching the £640 million Nature for Climate Fund to plant more than 40 million trees and restore 35,000 hectares of peatland in England; legislating to prevent illegal deforestation in the supply chains of large UK companies; pioneering the Leaders Pledge for Nature, which has now been signed by 82 countries; and strengthening Government guidelines for policy appraisal to ensure environmental impacts are taken into account.

The Government will examine the Review's findings closely and respond formally in due course on the ways in which the government intends to draw and build on the Review, both domestically and internationally.

■ Electrical Control Equipment: Sulphur Hexafluoride**Dr Matthew Offord:****[150773]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning the use of SF6 as an insulating material in electrical installations on the energy network.

Rebecca Pow:

The Department has a legal requirement to review the F gas Regulation and publish a comprehensive report by no later than 31 December 2022. This will include a review of the availability of technically feasible and cost-effective alternatives and will include an assessment of the use and alternatives to SF6 in electrical installations. The Department is now beginning internal work on the review and intends to engage with stakeholders on this work later this year.

■ Forests: Environment Protection**Stephen Farry:****[149827]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to publish a timetable for implementing legislative proposals on the use of forest risk commodities in commercial activity.

Rebecca Pow:

We recently introduced legislation to the Environment Bill to help to ensure that key forest risk commodities used in the UK are not contributing to illegal deforestation or habitat conversion. This initiative is in line with the recommendations of the Global Resource Initiative taskforce, widely supportive feedback to our public consultation on the proposal, as well as our international objectives at the upcoming Glasgow United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26).

We are the first country to introduce such legislation. We intend to move swiftly to lay the necessary secondary legislation. Subject to the passage of the Environment Bill and consultation, our aim is to do so shortly after the November COP26 Climate conference where we will be convening a global dialogue on trade in forest and agricultural commodities that we will draw on as we finalise our approach.

■ Game: Birds**Ruth Jones:****[151840]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to avian influenza, what steps he has taken to ensure gamebird breeders (a) register captive gamebird flocks and (b) comply with all other relevant aspects of legislation.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra encourages all keepers to register their birds with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and keep contact details up to date, so APHA can contact them quickly if there is a disease outbreak in their area and they need to take action.

If keepers have more than 50 birds, they are legally required to register their flock within one month of their arrival at their premises. If the keeper has less than 50 birds, including pet birds, they are still strongly encouraged to register.

Mandatory requirements to register kept gamebirds can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/poultry-including-game-birds-registration-rules-and-forms>.

The public can register with the APHA alerts service to receive email and text alerts for exotic notifiable diseases, which includes Avian influenza (AI).

AI is a notifiable animal disease. If a bird keeper or the public suspect any type of AI in poultry or captive birds they must report it immediately by calling the Defra Rural Services Helpline. Failure to do so is an offence and enforced by local authorities.

An Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) has been declared across the whole of England. The AIPZ means all bird keepers in England (whether they have pet birds, captive gamebirds, commercial flocks or just a few birds in a backyard flock) are required by law to take a range of biosecurity precautions including from the 14 December 2020 keeping their birds indoors except in very specific circumstances.

Further details of the measures that apply in the AIPZ including biosecurity guidance and housing measures can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Greg Smith:

[151871]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure Natural England has adequate resources to assess applications to the interim licensing regime for the 2021 to release game birds on or near European protected sites.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra is working closely with Natural England to ensure that they have the capacity and capability to assess individual applications for the forthcoming interim licensing regime for pheasants and red-legged partridges on and near European Protected Sites. We will be launching a public consultation on the interim licensing regime shortly.

Natural England is very aware of the timeframes involved and the need for decisions to be made promptly to align with the shooting industry's annual calendar of activity.

Greg Smith:

[151872]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to review the effect of (a) sport and leisure and (b) other activities on European protected sites; and what other activities will be covered by the interim licensing scheme for release of game birds in 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

Natural England, and other competent authorities, have a duty to review consents for activities on areas subsequently designated as European sites, within a reasonable timeframe.

We plan to shortly consult on our proposals for the interim licensing of game bird releasing. We are committed to achieving an interim licensing regime which is both effective and workable for users.

■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[150772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's timeframe is for the review to remove the use of fluorinated gases.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK has a legal requirement to review the Fluorinated Gas (F gas) Regulation and publish a comprehensive report of this review by no later than 31 December 2022. The Department is now beginning internal work on the review and intends to engage with stakeholders on this work later this year. The review will include an assessment of opportunities for faster and further action on phasing down F gases.

■ Honey: Sales

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[149773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of measures to ensure that honey sold in the UK is not adulterated and bulked out with cheap sugar syrups.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[149774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of imports of cheap honey on British beekeepers.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK is renowned for its high food safety and quality standards. We have robust rules in place on honey which set strict composition and labelling rules to protect consumers and ensure the authenticity of honey sold in the UK. The Honey (England) Regulations 2015 include detailed specifications for honey which ensure the quality of this important commodity is maintained whether it is produced domestically or imported into the UK.

Responsibility for assessing business compliance with the majority of food legislation rests with local authorities. They will consider any areas of non-compliance with food law and take appropriate enforcement action in line with a hierarchy of enforcement powers to ensure the business takes the necessary steps to achieve compliance. Each situation will be judged on its own merits by the relevant local authority to determine the proportionate course of action.

The UK is reliant on honey imports to meet consumer demand. Our national rules mean that all honey imports must meet the same high standards as that produced in the UK. Imports are regularly checked on import and at point of sale.

This Government continues to work closely with stakeholders to ensure consumer confidence is maintained and to deter those wishing to commit fraud in the honey supply chain.

■ **Horses: Animal Welfare**

Robert Halfon:

[151677]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to stop horse tethering in dangerous locations.

Victoria Prentis:

This country leads the way in animal welfare, including setting standards for horse welfare. Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, all owners and keepers of horses must provide for the welfare needs of their animals. The statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and Their Hybrids provides owners and keepers with general welfare information, including a specific section on the correct choice of site to tether a horse. Whilst it is not an offence to breach the Code, if proceedings are brought against someone for a welfare offence under the 2006 Act, (including failing to tether a horse appropriately) it could be used as evidence in support of those proceedings. In addition, the equine welfare sector promotes good welfare practice through their respective websites and via social media e.g. National Equine Welfare Council's compendium: <http://www.newc.co.uk/advice/>.

■ **Nappies: Recycling**

Daisy Cooper:

[151858]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will introduce minimum environmental standards for reusable nappies.

Rebecca Pow:

In line with our Resources and Waste Strategy, we are seeking powers, through the Environment Bill that will enable us to, where appropriate and subject to consultation, to introduce ecodesign standards and consumer information requirements for products. We will decide on priority products taking on board relevant evidence.

We have commissioned an updated Life Cycle Analysis of the impacts of disposable versus washable nappies to help inform any future policy interventions on nappies.

■ **Pest Control: Advisory Services and Research**

Munira Wilson:

[150953]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing an independent advice and research facility for farmers and agronomists on best practice for adopting integrated pest management systems.

Munira Wilson:

[\[150954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has been made of the potential merits of phasing out the use of amenity pesticides.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra and the Devolved Administrations are currently consulting on the draft revised National Action Plan for Sustainable Use of Pesticides (the NAP). It outlines our intention to work with demonstration farms, agronomists and advisory services to support the development and uptake of Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

The draft NAP also outlines how we plan to improve regulation, support the uptake of Integrated Pest Management including in the amenity sector, improve safe use, improve metrics, and review the governance and implementation of UK pesticides policy.

Our strict regulation only allows the use of pesticides that are shown to meet high standards for the protection of people and the environment. Therefore, we currently have no plans to phase out amenity use of pesticides.

■ Pesticides: Health Hazards

Munira Wilson:

[\[150950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of long-term exposure to pesticides on the health of nearby residents as a result of spray drift from fields.

Munira Wilson:

[\[150951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of long-term exposure to (a) pesticides (b) developmental toxins (c) neurotoxins and (d) carcinogens in cities on the health of residents.

Munira Wilson:

[\[150952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of long-term exposure to pesticides on children in London.

Munira Wilson:

[\[150955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing mandatory prior notification for the public for when pesticides are being sprayed near them.

Victoria Prentis:

Pesticides are only authorised for use in situations where scientific assessment finds that this will not harm human health, including that of local residents and bystanders, and will not pose unacceptable risks to the environment. The assessment looks at potential risks to children and takes account of the setting in which the pesticide will

be used. Those using pesticides are required to take all reasonable precautions to protect human health and the environment and to confine the application of the pesticide to the area intended to be treated.

The Government operates a range of schemes which collect and analyse data on potential health impacts from pesticides. Biomonitoring studies have provided information on how actual exposure to pesticides compares with predictions. The draft UK National Action Plan, currently out for consultation, proposes that over the next five years, we will work with stakeholders to consider the potential for development of a human biomonitoring programme, to monitor exposure within the UK population to pesticides as well as other chemicals.

Monitoring the long-term effects of exposure to pesticides and other chemicals is challenging. The Prospective Investigation of Pesticide Applicators' Health collects long-term data on the health of certified pesticide users.

The Code of Practice for using plant protection products has a specific section on "Protecting the Public." This deals with the assessments that must be made of any risks to the public before using pesticides, notification of adjacent occupiers before spraying and particular care that may be needed for especially vulnerable groups. The Government does not believe it is appropriate to introduce a statutory requirement for operators to provide advance notice of planned spray operations to members of the public.

■ **Sewage: Seas and Oceans**

Stephen Morgan: [\[151826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February to Question 141594 on Sewage, what assessment has he made of the implications of going beyond providing more and better information to reduce frequency and harm of discharges from storm overflows, particularly to offshore public water bodies; and what plans are in place to reduce those discharges.

Stephen Morgan: [\[151827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with (a) industry representatives and (b) stakeholders on reducing the frequency and harm of discharges from storm overflows, particularly into offshore public water bodies.

Stephen Morgan: [\[151828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effectiveness of the Environment Bill in protecting offshore public water bodies from Combined Sewage Overflows (CSOs) and Sanitary Sewage Overflows (SSOs) which are linked to inland rivers and water bodies.

Rebecca Pow:

I met water company CEOs last year and made clear that the volume of sewage discharged into rivers and other waterways in extreme weather must be reduced. To

achieve this, our new Storm Overflows Taskforce has been established, bringing together representatives from the Government, the water industry, regulators and environmental Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to set out clear proposals to address the harm and frequency of sewage discharged into our rivers and other waterways from storm overflows. As announced on 22 January, this Taskforce has agreed a long-term goal to eliminate harm from storm overflows.

This Taskforce has commissioned a research project to gather a comprehensive evidence base about the costs, benefits and feasibility of different options. This research project is due to be completed in the spring.

We are also taking key steps through the Environment Bill by requiring sewerage undertakers to produce Drainage and Sewerage Management Plans on a statutory basis. Plans will fully assess network capacity, and set out the measures undertakers plan to take to develop their drainage and sewerage systems. The plans aim to deliver more actions to help sewerage companies better address the risks that some sewerage assets, such as storm overflows, may pose to the environment. Undertakers started developing plans on a non-statutory basis in 2018.

We have introduced the requirement for at least one legally binding, water target in the Environment Bill. This target will complement existing regulations and legislation, moving us closer to achieving our goal of clean and plentiful water set out in Defra's 25 Year Environmental Plan.

■ Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Ruth Jones:

[\[151834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many and what proportion of Sites of Special Scientific Interest have not received an assessment by Natural England in the last six years.

Rebecca Pow:

3,230 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) (78% of the total number) have not had a visit to determine their condition in the last six years (since 11 February 2015), recorded on Natural England's internal systems. Sites are visited for other purposes, such as agri-environment scheme management and to agree onsite activities such as necessary management.

In 2010 Natural England adopted a risk-based approach rather than a fixed six-year cycle. Natural England is also developing an approach to the monitoring of SSSIs which will make better use of new technologies, such as remote sensing, and greater partnership involvement, including supporting and encouraging partners in the work they themselves do to undertake SSSI condition assessments.

■ Sites of Special Scientific Interest: Environment Protection

Ruth Jones:

[\[151837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many Compliance Certificates have been issued under paragraph 5 of Schedule 4 to the

Environmental Civil Sanctions (England) Order 2010 discharging the 50 Enforcement Undertakings that Natural England has accepted relating to SSSIs.

Ruth Jones:

[151838]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many times Natural England has (a) served a (i) variable monetary penalty notice, (ii) compliance notice, (iii) restoration notice and (b) brought criminal proceedings in response to non-compliance with Enforcement Undertakings relating to SSSIs.

Ruth Jones:

[151839]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps Natural England has taken to ensure that the five Stop Notices in respect of which Completion Certificates have not been issued according to Natural England's Register of Enforcement are complied with.

Rebecca Pow:

In response to the 50 enforcement undertakings that Natural England has accepted relating to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Natural England has issued 2 completion certificates.

In response to non-compliance with enforcement undertakings relating to SSSIs, Natural England has not served any civil sanctions or undertaken any criminal proceedings. Natural England is nevertheless planning to undertake comprehensive compliance/success monitoring of their enforcement undertaking outcomes in the forthcoming field season. COVID-19 restrictions may impact this work but where necessary enforcement visits will continue to ensure that our protected sites are looked after in an appropriate manner.

In monitoring compliance with stop notices, Natural England takes a risk based approach. Where non-compliance has been suspected this has been subject to further investigation. In regard to the five Stop Notices in respect of which completion certificates have not been issued, further enforcement action was not found to be necessary. In the one case where non-compliance was discovered, the offender was able to be swiftly brought back into compliance through advice.

Information on Natural England enforcement action is available on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/register-of-enforcement-action-taken-by-natural-england>).

■ Sites of Special Scientific Interest: Nature Conservation

Ruth Jones:

[151836]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many times Natural England has used the statutory powers provided by (a) Management Schemes under section 28J of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, (b) Management Notices under section 28K of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, (c) Compulsory Purchase under section 28N of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and (d) Byelaws under

section 28R of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to conserve Sites of Special Scientific Interest since those powers came into force on 31 January 2001.

Rebecca Pow:

Since the 31 January 2001, Natural England has used the statutory powers provided by management schemes under section 28J of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (the Act) on nine occasions; management notices under section 28K of the Act have been used on one occasion; compulsory purchase under section 28N and byelaws under section 28R of the Act have not been used.

■ **Water: Meters**

Martyn Day: [\[150868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to bring forward legislative proposals to mandate the universal rollout of smart water meters.

Martyn Day: [\[150869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) there are sufficient incentives supporting the Water Industry to install smart water metering technology and (b) barriers to rollout of that technology are removed.

Martyn Day: [\[150870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the role of smart water meters in (a) protecting the sustainability of the UK's water supply and (b) reducing carbon emissions.

Martyn Day: [\[150871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to co-ordinate its work with regulatory bodies on supporting the water industry in the roll-out of smart water meters to protect the sustainability of the UK's water supply and reduce carbon emissions.

Rebecca Pow:

The Department will set out its policy in relation to smart meters in the Government's response to the 2019 consultation on measures to reduce personal water consumption, which we intend to publish in 2021.

■ **Zoo Animals Fund**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[151635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 8 February 2021, Official Report, column 134, which aspects of the Zoo Animals Fund are currently under active review; and what changes to the support available for zoos and aquariums are being considered.

Victoria Prentis:

I am aware of the pressure that the current coronavirus restrictions are placing on zoos and recognise this has been an extremely tough time for the sector. I would like to assure zoos that we remain committed to ensuring the sector can deliver the best possible care for its animals and we are currently considering options. We keep all aspects of the Zoo Animals Fund constantly under review to ensure that it is meeting its aims. Changes that we have made include extending the criteria to include maintenance costs, easing the evidence requirement for these maintenance claims, introducing the ability to apply ahead of reaching 12 weeks reserves and most recently extending the application deadline for the Zoo Animals Fund to 26 February 2021. We have ongoing communications with the sector to ensure updated information is shared as soon as situations change. For now, we urge any zoos in need of support to put in an application.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Belarus: Press Freedom and Human Rights****Huw Merriman:**[\[150835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his counterpart in the Belarussian Government on (a) the case of the arrest and detention of independent journalist Andrei Aliaksandrau and his wife Irini Zloblina and (b) freedom of the press and human rights in Belarus.

Wendy Morton:

The Government is deeply concerned by the continuing attacks on media freedom in Belarus. There have been more than 400 reported incidents of persecution of media figures in Belarus. The Government has repeatedly called on Belarus to release journalists who have been arbitrarily detained and hold to account those responsible for attacks on journalists, including the case of Mr Aliaksandrau. The Government has increased financial support to independent media organisations in Belarus and condemns the actions of the Belarusian authorities in international fora. I spoke out on Belarus at the UN Security Council (Arria Forum) on 11 January. As co-chair of the Media Freedom Coalition, the UK was joined by 25 other nations in a statement, which condemns the authorities actions against journalists in Belarus and which highlights the plight of Mr Aliaksandrau.

■ British Nationals Abroad: Travel Restrictions**Nickie Aiken:**[\[150938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with (a) EU and (b) other international counterparts on the relaxation of visa term limits for UK citizens abroad while global travel restrictions remain in place due to the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

The current advice for those across the UK remains to stay at home and not travel abroad unless it is for a legally permitted reason. Our advice to British nationals abroad is that they should follow the public health advice of the country which they are in, including current COVID-19 restrictions. Other countries maintain their own visa regimes. Requirements for stays beyond visa or visa free periods are subject to national procedures for each country. Any queries on applicable regimes are for the relevant immigration authorities in that country.

If a British national overseas requires consular assistance, the FCDO can be contacted by phone or email 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year. The kind of assistance we offer is tailored to the individual circumstances of each case. Ministers raise specific issues of concern affecting British nationals overseas as appropriate. As of 1 January 2021, British Citizens do not need a visa when travelling to the EU for visits of up to 90 days in any 180-day period, for tourism and similar activities.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Gareth Thomas:****[150658]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with (a) his counterparts in the G7 and (b) the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential need for ongoing annual financial support to ensure the suppression of covid-19 in low- and middle-income nations; and if he will make statement.

James Cleverly:

The UK is at the forefront of the international COVID-19 response, committing up to £1.3 billion of new ODA to counter the health, economic, and humanitarian impacts of COVID-19, including £500 million to COVAX to provide vaccines to low- and middle-income countries. We have also adapted over 300 existing programmes to respond to the challenges created by COVID-19.

The UK will continue to play a leadership role, including through our G7 Presidency, to strengthen the international response to, and recovery from COVID-19 in low- and middle-income countries. Investing in global health is one of seven ways the UK will prioritise ODA in 2021, to tackle COVID-19 and promote global health security.

We have supported the multilateral development banks to make over \$200 billion available to developing countries and will continue to work with the International Financial Institutions and Development Finance Institutions to support a green, inclusive, and resilient recovery globally.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Clive Lewis:

[\[149801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the effect on global equality of access to the covid-19 vaccines in the event that the proposed WTO TRIPS Waiver is not adopted.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, and is playing a leading role in financing the global effort, and identifying solutions that ensure affordable access for all.

The UK Government does not consider waiving intellectual property (IP) rights to be an appropriate course of action in boosting the manufacturing of safe, effective, and quality vaccines. The existing intellectual property framework has mobilised research and development to deliver a host of new medicines and technologies to detect, treat, and defend against COVID-19. The incentives and access mechanisms provided by the IP framework have been integral to this success, without which we would not have seen the impressive surge of research and development, and the unprecedented scaling up of production.

■ International Court of Justice

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[151690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made for implications of his policies on the decision of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in issuing a decision claiming jurisdiction in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza.

James Cleverly:

We closely follow the important work of the International Criminal Court and are looking at the implications of this decision.

■ Myanmar: CDC

Stephen Doughty:

[\[149771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to review or suspend CDC investments in Myanmar as a result of the military coup in that country.

Nigel Adams:

CDC has no investments in military or state-owned companies in Myanmar and does not directly work with or partner with the government. Over the past two years, CDC has tightened its due diligence process to mitigate the risk of UK funds going to military owned companies.

CDC is reviewing the impact of the 1st February Myanmar coup on its investments in the country.

■ Overseas Aid**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[150901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2021 to Question 144797 on Overseas Aid, whether that internal planning will be completed by the start of the 2021-22 financial year.

James Cleverly:

We are working through our internal business planning process. No decisions have yet been made on individual budget allocations for 2020/21.

■ Palestinians: Remote Education**Scott Benton:**[\[149822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what mechanisms are in place to monitor self-learning educational materials distributed by the UN Relief and Works Agency to Palestinian children in the West Bank and Gaza.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government has zero tolerance to incitement of violence, and we have raised this issue with UNRWA. FCDO monitors UNRWA's performance via programme monitoring and annual assessments to ensure it continues to deliver quality services.

We contacted UNRWA directly regarding this issue and understand that as soon as the mistake was identified, UNRWA took swift action to correct the issue and conducted a thorough review to identify and address any education materials in breach of its policies.

We continue to monitor the situation to ensure self-learning materials remain in line with UN values.

Scott Benton:[\[149823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the UK Government is conducting an investigation into reports that the UN Relief and Works Agency distributed educational material to Palestinian children allegedly inciting violence against Israel during the covid-19 pandemic to aid home learning; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government has zero tolerance towards incitement of violence and we have raised this issue with UNRWA.

UNRWA informed us that they had identified the material in question through their own regular monitoring and took swift action to correct the issue. The Agency also conducted a review to identify and address any education materials in breach of its policies. UNRWA has reported that these materials are no longer circulated and are not used in current lessons.

We continue to monitor the situation to ensure self-learning materials remain in line with UN values.

■ **Selehattin Demirtas**

Hilary Benn:

[\[150688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his international counterparts on the release of Selehattin Demirtas former co-President of the HDP who has been in detention in Turkey since 2016.

Wendy Morton:

We regularly raise human rights issues with the Turkish authorities. I did so in December 2020 with my Turkish counterpart. We remain concerned about the four-year imprisonment of Selahattin Demirtaş, former co-chair of the People's Democratic Party (HDP), in Turkey. With our international partners, we call on Turkey to meet its obligations as a founding member of the Council of Europe and release Demirtaş from his extended pre-trial detention. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe will supervise the implementation of the judgment in Demirtaş (No.2) v Turkey, a process in which the United Kingdom actively participates. Working with our international partners, we will continue to encourage Turkey, including at Ministerial level, to act in line with the conventions of the Council of Europe and to make greater progress on wider human rights reforms.

■ **South Sudan: Elections**

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[151703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that elections in South Sudan take place in line with the timetable outlined in the Peace Agreement.

James Duddridge:

Despite significant delays to implementation of the 2018 Agreement, including a nine month delay in forming the Transitional Government of National Unity, the UK welcomes recent progress, notably finalising state governor appointments. Alongside our Troika partners (US and Norway), we continue to encourage South Sudan's leaders, including President Kiir and First Vice-President Machar, to expedite implementation, including setting the conditions for elections, ensuring a lasting end to violence and addressing the grave humanitarian crisis. As I [Minister Duddridge] made clear during a visit to South Sudan in October 2020, all parties must work together to create the conditions needed for elections to take place, including political progress and improvements to the security situation. More recently, the Foreign Secretary and I [Minister Duddridge] discussed stability issues including South Sudan with President Kenyatta on 20 January, given the important role of regional partners in supporting delivery of the 2018 Agreement. The UK Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan discusses these issues regularly with international and

regional partners, including IGAD, Sudan, and with President Museveni in December 2020.

Alexander Stafford: [\[151890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he has taken to help ensure that free and fair elections can take place in South Sudan in March 2022.

Alexander Stafford: [\[151893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the leaders of South Sudan on (a) the election timetable and (b) improving security within the country.

James Duddridge:

Despite significant delays to implementation of the 2018 Agreement, including a nine month delay in forming the Transitional Government of National Unity, the UK welcomes recent progress, notably finalising state governor appointments. Alongside our Troika partners (US and Norway), we continue to encourage South Sudan's leaders, including President Kiir and First Vice-President Machar, to expedite implementation, including setting the conditions for elections, ensuring a lasting end to violence and addressing the grave humanitarian crisis. As I [Minister Duddridge] made clear during a visit to South Sudan in October 2020, all parties must work together to create the conditions needed for elections to take place, including political progress and improvements to the security situation. More recently, the Foreign Secretary and I [Minister Duddridge] discussed stability issues including South Sudan with President Kenyatta on 20 January, given the important role of regional partners in supporting delivery of the 2018 Agreement. The UK Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan discusses these issues regularly with international and regional partners, including IGAD, Sudan, and with President Museveni in December 2020.

■ South Sudan: Overseas Aid

Alexander Stafford: [\[151894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the UK's aid programme to South Sudan in supporting democratic development in that country.

James Duddridge:

The UK has a longstanding role supporting peace and stability in South Sudan through our aid programme, where the dire situation means the majority of UK assistance is targeted at supporting the most vulnerable with humanitarian aid and basic services. For example, in 2019 UK aid reached over 200,000 people with food assistance and one million people with vaccinations for preventable illnesses, while our support to education helps build stability by supporting over 500,000 children to attend school. Beyond this, we also support a number of other initiatives aimed at promoting peace and democratic development in line with the 2018 Peace

Agreement. This includes support to grassroots mediation activities via the UK Peacebuilding Opportunities Fund, support to civil society such as the South Sudan Council of Churches and the Association for Media Development in South Sudan, and the UN Mission in South Sudan to which the UK contributed £57.9 million in 2020-21.

■ South Sudan: Politics and Government

Alexander Stafford:

[\[151891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on (a) improving the security situation in South Sudan and (b) preventing violent actions by armed groups in that country.

James Duddridge:

South Sudan's best chance of a more stable and prosperous future remains in the full implementation of the 2018 Peace Agreement. However, we are concerned at the current slow pace of implementation, which is contributing to recent increases in violence and a worsening humanitarian crisis. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council and member of Troika (with Norway and the US), the UK is at the forefront of international efforts to pressure South Sudan's leaders to deliver their commitment to end conflict through implementing the 2018 Agreement. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary and I discussed regional stability issues, including South Sudan, with President Kenyatta on 20 January.

The UK Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan discusses these issues regularly with international and regional partners, including President Kenyatta in January and President Museveni in December. The UK Special Representative is also engaged with ongoing talks under the 'Rome Process' aimed at encouraging the participation of non-signatories to the 2018 Agreement and reduce conflict involving these groups. In addition, we work closely with the UN peacekeeping mission and other partners in-country to bring about much needed improvements to the security situation.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[151892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made representations to (a) regional leaders in east and central Africa, (b) the African Union and (c) the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to encourage them to increase their focus on South Sudan.

James Duddridge:

South Sudan's best chance of a more stable and prosperous future remains in the full implementation of the Peace Agreement, brokered by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and its members in 2018. Given the important role of the region we remain in close contact to work together to urge the South Sudanese Parties to deliver their commitment to end the conflict. When I visited South Sudan in October 2020, I pushed for political progress in meetings with President Kiir and Vice

President Machar, and discussed regional engagement with Ambassador Ismail Wais, IGAD Special Peace Envoy to South Sudan. Most recently the Foreign Secretary and I discussed cooperation on regional stability issues, including South Sudan, with President Kenyatta on 20 January. In addition, the UK Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan meets regularly with African Union, IGAD and regional partners to ensure the South Sudanese deliver progress on the Peace Agreement and tackle the worsening humanitarian situation. This includes meetings with President Kenyatta in January and with President Museveni in December.

■ Tigray: Peace Negotiations

Paul Blomfield:

[\[150782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Ethiopian counterpart on restoring peace and stability in the Tigray region.

James Duddridge:

We are concerned about the continued violence in Tigray region and its impact on regional security. We have consistently urged all parties to end the conflict, prioritise the protection of civilians and allow unfettered humanitarian access. The Foreign Secretary raised these points when he met with Prime Minister Abiy on 22 January and also pressed for a political dialogue to bring a lasting peace to Tigray.

The Foreign Secretary spoke with Prime Minister Abiy after he visited Gondar, in the neighboring Amhara region on 22 January and saw first-hand how £11m of UK Aid is supporting the World Food Programme and NGOs to ensure the delivery of aid to those affected by the conflict.

■ West Bank: Demolition

Hilary Benn:

[\[150686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Government of Israel on the demolition of structures provided as humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians living in the West Bank.

Hilary Benn:

[\[150689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the reported demolition by the Government of Israel of a donor-funded water network serving 700 Palestinians during the covid-19 pandemic.

James Cleverly:

The UK regularly raises demolitions with the Government of Israel. The Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa called on Israel to stop demolitions on 5 February 2021 and raised his concerns about demolitions of Palestinian and humanitarian structures with the Israeli Ambassador on 29 October 2020. UK officials from the British Consulate in Jerusalem have made regular visits to areas at risk of demolition and eviction to reiterate UK support for those communities. The UK is

clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process.

■ **Western Sahara: Politics and Government**

Ben Lake:

[151799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the UN commission announced in 2016 on the situation in Guerguerat, Western Sahara issued a report.

James Cleverly:

UN reports on Western Sahara can be found on the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) website:

<https://minurso.unmissions.org/secretary-general-reports>

■ **Western Sahara: Trade Agreements**

Ben Lake:

[151798]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer to Question 142046, on Western Sahara: Trade Agreements, whether the EU (a) consulted the UN recognised representatives of the Saharawi people and (b) asked for consent.

James Cleverly:

The European Commission's report, which includes the list of stakeholders consulted, can be found here: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=SWD:2018:346:FIN&from=FR\(opens%20in%20a%20new%20tab\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=SWD:2018:346:FIN&from=FR(opens%20in%20a%20new%20tab))

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs: Rehabilitation**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[151650]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to statistics on alcohol and drug treatment in secure settings 2019 to 2020, published on 28 January 2021, what assessment he has made of the reasons for the (a) decrease in the proportion of young people completing substance misuse treatment in secure settings and (b) increase in the proportion of young people declining substance misuse treatment.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment has been made.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are responsible for the commissioning of substance misuse services within secure and detained settings. In addition to structured treatment, unstructured treatment is also provided which can include harm

reduction advice, brief interventions, mutual aid groups and signposting and information. This is not reported in National Drug Treatment Monitoring System data.

■ **Alzheimer's Disease: Diagnosis**

Jim Shannon:

[\[149762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Royal College of Nursing on early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease through identification of vulnerable brain cells.

Helen Whately:

The Department has had no such recent discussions.

■ **Autism and Learning Disability**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[131265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people with (a) learning disabilities and (b) autism have the right care and support available and in place to prevent the need for hospital admissions.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The NHS Long Term Plan commits to an extra £4.5 billion a year for primary care and community health services by 2023/24 to enable more people to receive personalised care in the community and reduce preventable admissions to inpatient services. This will include developing seven-day specialist multidisciplinary services and crisis care.

In the Reforming the Mental Health Act white paper, published in January 2021, we propose reducing the number of circumstances in which someone with a learning disability or an autistic person could be detained under the Act. We also propose creating new duties on commissioners to ensure that there are sufficient community-based services to support people with a learning disability and autistic people.

■ **Breast Cancer: Complementary Medicine**

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[146809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendation 46 of the Achieving World-Class Cancer Outcomes: A Strategy for Cancer 2015-2020, what progress his Department has made on ensuring all metastatic breast cancer patients receive holistic needs assessments.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS Long Term Plan, set a clear ambition that where appropriate every person diagnosed with cancer, including those with secondary cancers, should have access to personalised care by 2021, which includes the holistic needs assessment.

The latest public data from December 2019 show that 94% of trusts offered personalised care and supporting planning for breast cancer patients.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Jon Trickett:

[150685]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cancer treatment referrals were made (a) from 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2019 and (b) from 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020.

Jo Churchill:

The information requested is shown in the following table:

PERIOD	NUMBER OF TWO WEEK WAIT FROM GENERAL PRACTITIONER URGENT REFERRAL TO FIRST CONSULTANT APPOINTMENTS
1 October 2019 to 31 December 2019	609,613
1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020	609,826

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

■ Cancer: Medical Treatments

Sir Charles Walker:

[149173]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the 2020 Spending Review, what additional resources he plans to allocate to the NHS to clear the backlog of cancer treatments as a result of the response by the NHS to the covid-19 outbreak; and whether his Department has plans to publish a detailed cancer strategy once that outbreak has concluded.

Jo Churchill:

In August 2020, the National Health Service announced a £160 million initiative to extend access to 'COVID-19 friendly' cancer treatments and in October £150 million funding was provided to expand diagnostic capacity. A further £325 million for diagnostic equipment was announced in November's Spending Review. Cancer patients continue to be prioritised within the additional £1 billion announced within Spending Review 2020 to tackle the elective backlog.

NHS England's Cancer Recovery Plan sets out the aims and actions needed to recover from the impact of COVID-19, while the NHS Long Term Plan remains the detailed strategy for cancer services and will continue to apply after the pandemic.

■ Care Homes: Closures

Jonathan Ashworth:

[150811]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) care homes and (b) nursing homes closed in 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: The Department does not routinely collect data on care home closures. While the Care Quality Commission publishes data on care home deactivations, this is not the same as a closure. For example, a location may have deactivated and re-registered because it has made changes to its legal structure or changed address.

■ **Care Homes: Coronavirus**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[146893]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many care homes have experienced outbreaks of covid-19 in each week since the start of the outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: Since 8 October 2020, Public Health England has published data on COVID-19 in care homes as part of its wider national flu and COVID-19 surveillance reports which are available at the following link:

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

The data on care homes reports on the weekly percentage of new cases in care homes. Data on the number of new cases are published alongside the report in the supplementary tables.

Helen Hayes:

[148847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) availability of covid-19 testing for home care staff, including (i) priority access to PCR testing in the event of being symptomatic and (ii) regular rapid lateral-flow testing and (b) risks to people being cared of their carers not having access to those tests.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: On 23 November 2020, we began offering Care Quality Commission registered domiciliary care organisations access to regular, weekly COVID-19 testing for their carers looking after people in their own homes. This will help identify more asymptomatic cases and protect care recipients who are more vulnerable to COVID-19.

We will be expanding testing further to all other homecare workers, including live in carers and personal assistants. We will provide further details in due course about how these groups can access testing.

Daisy Cooper:

[92898]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of the proposal by One Dementia Voice of designating relatives of care home residents as key workers in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 September 2020]: In the face of a new variant of the virus we have had to act to protect those most at risk in care homes and ensure visits can continue safely in some form. All care homes, except in the event of an active outbreak, should seek to enable outdoor visiting and 'screened' visits. Close-contact visits supported by testing are not currently enabled.

As always, visits in exceptional circumstances such as end of life should always be supported and enabled

Feryal Clark:[\[97055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of (a) the potential merits of issuing new guidance, (b) demand for personal protective equipment, and (c) the adequacy of access to regular covid-19 testing to allow visits to care homes by family members for residents living with dementia.

Helen Whately:

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

Prior to the national lockdown, we published updated guidance in December 2020 enabling visits to take place in all tiers. This was made possible by a nationwide rollout of testing and personal protective equipment for visitors.

■ Care Homes: Inspections**Chi Onwurah:**[\[150798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Care Quality Commission will resume routine inspections; and how many care homes have not had an inspection for two years or more.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: At the start of the pandemic, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) paused routine inspections and adopted a risk-based approach utilising a range of information to target inspections where concerns are identified, such as localised outbreak data, whistleblowing, and data shared through system partners. Over the last six months, the CQC has carried out 4,300 inspections in adult social care.

The CQC currently regulates 15,403 nursing and care homes. 6,056 of these have not had a cross-threshold inspection for two years or more. However, the CQC routinely interacts with care homes in a variety of ways outside of inspections, such as through regular engagement with registered managers, and through its Emergency Support Framework (ESF), developed during the pandemic to allow it to

have structured, supportive, monitoring calls with providers. Additionally, since 1 April 2020, 17,273 individual adult social care locations have received an ESF call. The CQC's future strategy will build on this experience and continue to involve more targeted and dynamic inspection visits.

■ Care Homes: Protective Clothing

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[149149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy for staff in care home settings to wear medical grade personal protective equipment of the standard required in the NHS.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: The United Kingdom-wide Infection, Prevention, Control guidance for the National Health Service and for care home settings recommends the same standard of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the NHS and in care homes. The Government provides free medical grade PPE to the health and social care sector for COVID-19 needs in line with this guidance.

The Government committed to the provision of free medical grade PPE for the COVID-19 needs of the adult social care sector until March 2021. The scheme has now been extended until June 2021.

■ Care Homes: Vaccination

Scott Mann:

[\[118545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of giving priority vaccines to adults who are cared for at home and their carers alongside adults resident in a care home and care workers.

Jo Churchill:

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

If a person is cared for at home and falls under the criteria for prioritisation in phase one of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, they will be vaccinated according to their priority group; this includes those considered clinically extremely vulnerable and those considered to be 'adults at risk'.

Those who are in receipt of a carer's allowance or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill should also be offered vaccination in priority group six.

■ Care Homes: Visits

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[114239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) clarity and (b) adequacy of implementation of the Government's guidance on visitation rights for care homes and supported living settings.

Helen Whately:

Updated visiting guidance, published 12 January, clearly outlines how visits to care homes can continue to take place during the national lockdown with arrangements such as substantial screens, visiting pods, outdoors or through windows. Close-contact indoor visits are not currently allowed. Visits in exceptional circumstances including end of life should always be supported and enabled.

We recognise that in supported living settings, the accommodation is the person's own home.

In this period of national lockdown, visits within support bubbles are still allowed for people in supported living settings. Supported living managers, care and support workers, individuals in supported living environments and their families and friends should follow national guidance on support bubbles and meeting others.

Jim Shannon:

[\[147850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Government's care home visitor key worker scheme, whether visitors are planned to receive the same (a) access to testing and (b) PPE as care home staff.

Justin Madders:

[\[147888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of assigning essential partners designation to family caregivers to enable care home visits to take place.

Helen Whately:

In December 2020, we rolled-out testing and personal protective equipment to care homes nationwide for use by visitors to enable more meaningful, indoor visits. Close-contact visits facilitated by testing are currently not advised during this period of national lockdown. We will review the guidance when the period of national lockdown ends and look to open up more opportunities for visiting when it is safe to do so.

Stephen Timms:

[\[150651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether, once care home residents have received both covid-19 vaccinations, normal visits will be permitted by family members.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: While the vaccines provide protection to a vaccinated person from serious disease, we do not yet know if they prevent someone from passing on the virus to others. This means it is still important to follow the visiting guidance. We will be looking to ensure that a wider range of visiting

arrangements are made available when it is safe to do so. We will publish updated guidance as this period of national restrictions ends.

Ed Davey: [\[150665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to allow the resumption of close contact care home visits; and if he will make a statement.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[150716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set out a timetable for the re-introduction of close contact care home visits in England.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[150769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set out a timetable for the re-introduction of close contact care home visits in England.

Ben Bradley: [\[150922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will announce a timetable for the re-introduction of close contact care home visits in England.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: In the face of a new variant of the virus we have acted to protect those most at risk in care homes and while advising how visits can go ahead safely in some form. As set out in updated visiting guidance, visits to care homes can continue to take place with arrangements such as substantial screens, visiting pods or behind windows. Close-contact indoor visits are not currently advised. As has been the case throughout the pandemic, visits in exceptional circumstances including end of life should always be supported and enabled.

We recognise how important it is to allow care home residents to meet their loved ones safely. We are looking to enable a wider range of visiting arrangements available when it is safe to do so. We will publish updated guidance as this period of national restrictions ends.

Dan Jarvis: [\[150805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all care homes follow the public health guidance on safe visiting during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: We have worked closely with a range of stakeholders who represent the sector to ensure that the guidance encourages and enables care providers to facilitate visiting while keeping residents, staff and visitors as safe as possible. The Care Quality Commission will include adherence to infection control measures for visitors as part of their infection prevention control inspections.

■ Care Homes: Wansbeck

Ian Lavery:

[86047]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether patients with covid-19 were discharged from hospitals into care homes in Wansbeck constituency.

Helen Whately:

Our priority is the prevention of infection in care homes and ensuring that everyone receives the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

Since the start of this pandemic, we have worked closely with the sector and public health experts to support safe and timely discharge. We have provided guidance to support safe admission to care homes and embed the Discharge to Assess model, backing this up with over £1.8 billion of funding.

We are working with the Care Quality Commission and the National Health Service to ensure anyone who is likely to be infectious with COVID-19 is discharged to a designated care setting to complete a period of isolation before moving to a care home. These settings will meet a set of agreed standards to provide safe care for COVID-19 positive residents. This is to further support safe and timely discharge and protect care home residents and staff from COVID-19.

■ Coronavirus: Casinos

Scott Benton:

[104196]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what scientific evidence the Government has received on the effect of casinos on the transmission of covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We do know that the virus spreads readily in any indoor environment where members of different households and/or support bubbles spend time together, so the transmission risk in indoor settings, such as casinos, remains high. The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies provided advice to the Department and considered the risks of transmission through different routes and environments in a paper which is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/933225/S0824_SARS-CoV-2_Transmission_routes_and_environments.pdf

■ Coronavirus: Cornwall

Daniel Kawczynski:

[124704]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the correlation between the high number of people from all tiers who visited Cornwall in summer 2020 and used its public venues and hospitality and that county's status as the area with the lowest cases of infection with and deaths from covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Throughout the pandemic, Cornwall has consistently been one of the areas with the lowest infection rates in England. During summer 2020, we observed lower COVID-19 prevalence in all regions. Throughout the summer, measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 were in place such as the national test and trace service, restrictions on large gatherings, guidance on COVID-19 secure workplaces, social distancing, mask wearing and hand hygiene. Furthermore, the summer allowed for more outdoor activities and socialisation which pose a lower risk of spread of COVID-19 compared to indoor activities.

■ Coronavirus: Death**Jon Trickett:**[\[146779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many social care workers have died from covid-19 (a) in total and (b) since 1 January 2021.

Helen Whately:

Mortality data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that 446 deaths involving COVID-19 among social care workers were registered in England and 23 in Wales, between 9 March 2020 and 28 December 2020. This data was recently published on 25 January 2021.

There is currently no data published beyond 28 December 2020 relating to care worker deaths from COVID-19. The next analysis by the ONS on this topic has not yet been scheduled.

Emma Hardy:[\[150914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support families and individuals who have lost a loved one to covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Since March 2020, the Government has given over £10.2 million to mental health charities, including bereavement support charities, to support adults and children struggling with their mental wellbeing due to the impact of COVID-19. This includes funding for bereavement support helplines, counselling and signposting services, ensuring that grieving families and individuals who have lost loved ones have access to the bereavement support they need, when they need it. We continue to take a cross-Government approach to assess what is needed to provide support to bereaved families and individuals during this difficult time.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Olivia Blake:**[\[103663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of covid-19 transmission rates by sectors of employment.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 19 October 2020]: Estimates of the numbers of COVID-19 cases linked directly to different sectors of employment is not yet available. The Joint Biosecurity Centre, working with the Health and Safety Executive and Public Health England, is currently assessing outbreaks of COVID-19 across employment sectors on an ongoing basis. This will be made publicly available on completion of that assessment.

Nickie Aiken:[\[119373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he publish a comparative estimate of the contribution of (a) personal care settings such as hair and beauty salons, barbershops and in mobile services and (b) hospitality and leisure sectors to the covid-19 R rate.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

It is not possible to systematically identify where infection occurs in individual positive cases definitive data on the different locations where transmissions occur is not available.

Taiwo Owatemi:[\[133223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the criteria is for an area to given a Tier 4 covid-19 lockdown designation.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

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

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

Dr Rupa Huq:[\[146969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what evidence there is that lockdowns reduce the transmission of covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: The success of restrictions rests on them reducing the number of contacts between infected and susceptible individuals within the population, thereby reducing the number of infections. Mobility and payment data in April 2020, November 2020 and in recent days show substantial declines in the number of contacts leading to lower numbers of COVID-19 infections in spring last year and in the second half of November 2020. The Office for National Statistics' COVID-19 Infection Survey shows that prevalence has recently fallen from its late-December peaks. The lagged fall in hospitalisations and deaths provides good

evidence of a causal link between lockdowns and reduction in transmission of the virus.

■ Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups

Ms Harriet Harman:

[\[146753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of people being treated in hospital for covid-19 identify as BAME in (a) Southwark, (b) London and (c) the UK.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England publishes ethnicity data for hospitalisations and those in critical care at a national level as part of the combined weekly flu and COVID-19 surveillance report. The latest data available to 4 February 2021, is attached. Data is not available at regional or local authority level.

Attachments:

1. Hospital Admissions by Ethnicity [TABLE FOR MINISTERIAL CLEARANCE PQ146753 hospital admissions by ethnicity_FINAL_2 - Copy.xlsx]

■ Coronavirus: Funerals

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[144932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps funeral directors need to take to remain compliant with the law on mourner limits when helping families organise funerals, in addition to complying with guidance published by the National Association of Funeral Directors.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: Those responsible for organising a funeral must take all reasonable steps to ensure the event takes place in a safe and secure way that complies with all relevant legislation, including around attendance. A funeral director should notify the police if they reasonably believe that the numbers attending are likely to breach the legal limits despite their best efforts to prevent this or the numbers in attendance have unexpectedly exceeded the legal limits.

■ Coronavirus: Gyms

Ian Byrne:

[\[103652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the scientific advice he received on closing gyms in tier 3 covid-19 areas.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We know that the virus spreads readily in any indoor environment where members of different households and/or support bubbles spend time together, so the transmission risk in indoor settings, such as gyms, remains high. The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies provided advice to the Department and considered the risks of transmission through different routes and environments in a paper which is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/933225/S0824_SARS-CoV-2_Transmission_routes_and_environments.pdf

A national impact assessment on the potential effect of COVID-19 restrictions on transmission across the country, including in tier 3 areas, is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925856/S0770_NPIs_table_pivot_.pdf

Derek Twigg:

[104048]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of covid-19 cases linked directly to gyms in the Liverpool City Region area.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 20 October 2020]: No such estimate has been made.

■ **Coronavirus: Health Services and Vaccination**

Bob Blackman:

[144996]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) support clinically vulnerable patients with underlying respiratory conditions suffering complications from long covid and b) maintain care and treatment for patients with new respiratory multi-morbidity through the vaccination phase of the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have allocated £10 million to establish post COVID-19 services across England to provide assessment, diagnosis and a treatment pathway for those experiencing ongoing symptoms. Where clinically appropriate patients can access the assessment services remotely. All services are being run in line with safe infection prevention and control environments to ensure they are safe for clinically vulnerable people. A referral to the clinic should not delay treatment of known conditions such as respiratory disease. If an individual is experiencing ongoing or worsening symptoms, they should seek advice from their general practitioner (GP) in the first instance or if an emergency through their local emergency pathways.

In addition, NHS England and NHS Improvement have also commissioned the development and of 'Your COVID Recovery' - a digital, interactive and tailored recovery programme to provide online rehabilitation for people experiencing ongoing COVID-19 symptoms to manage their recovery at home.

Video consultations are now available in GP practices covering 99% of the population in England. Meanwhile, online consultations, where a patient can contact their GP practice directly via the internet, are available in almost 6,000 practices, covering 90% of the population.

■ Coronavirus: Households**Sarah Olney:**[\[136585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the covid-19 lockdown rules that allow children to move between households in the UK in order to see their parents, whether parents who live abroad need to self-isolate to see their children.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: Parents who live abroad must self-isolate when they enter the United Kingdom from any country except Ireland, unless they have a valid exemption. If they need to self-isolate, they may be able to pay for a COVID-19 test which may reduce the self-isolation period.

■ Coronavirus: Ilford North and Redbridge**Wes Streeting:**[\[146953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many care homes have been (a) offered and (b) received the covid-19 vaccine in (i) Ilford North constituency and (ii) the London Borough of Redbridge.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: Information on vaccinations by local authority and parliamentary constituency is not available.

■ Coronavirus: Industrial Health and Safety**Hilary Benn:**[\[144934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the risks to tradespeople working in other people's homes of contracting covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment has been made.

■ Coronavirus: Learning Disability**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[149738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to protect people with learning disabilities from covid-19.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 February 2021]: We have extended the Infection Control Fund until March 2021 with an extra £546 million; provided free personal protective equipment for adult social care providers until March 2021; extended testing to all care homes and domiciliary care staff; added people with Down's syndrome to the shielded patient list; and launched of regular retesting for high risk supported living settings.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advise that clinically extremely vulnerable individuals including adults with Down's syndrome are in priority group four and people with a severe and profound learning disability are in group six for the COVID-19.

■ Coronavirus: Liverpool City Region

Ian Byrne:

[103650]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what impact assessment has been undertaken on the potential effect of the tier 3 covid-19 restrictions on the transmission of covid-19 in the Liverpool City Region; and what further support he will provide to health and social care services in that region.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 19 October 2020]: A national impact assessment on the potential effect of COVID-19 restrictions on transmission across the country, including in the Liverpool City region, is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925856/S0770_NPIs_table_pivot_.pdf

The Government is supporting councils, including the Liverpool City region, by allocating over £8 billion of funding for the pandemic within England.

Conor McGinn:

[106385]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the public health guidance underpinning the decision to close (a) leisure centres and gyms, (b) casinos and betting shops and (c) pubs and bars in the Liverpool City Region in response to the imposition of the tier 3 local covid alert level.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) provides advice to the Department and considered the risks of transmission through different routes and environments, including leisure centres, gyms, casinos and betting shops. SAGE's paper is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/933225/S0824_SARS-CoV-2_Transmission_routes_and_environments.pdf

A national impact assessment on the potential effect of COVID-19 restrictions on transmission across the country, including in the Liverpool City region, is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925856/S0770_NPIs_table_pivot_.pdf

The Government also published scientific evidence regarding transmission risk in the hospitality sector, particularly pubs and bars, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transmission-risk-in-the-hospitality-sector/transmission-risk-in-the-hospitality-sector>

■ **Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**

Florence Eshalomi:

[147105]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure access to medical-grade FFP3 facemasks in all occupational settings for frontline health and social care workers.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: For workers in the National Health Service, Infection Prevention and Control guidance published on GOV.UK sets out what personal protective equipment (PPE), including FFP3 masks, should be used and on what occasions. The equivalent guidance for workers in social care settings is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-social-care-guidance>

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

As a result of the FFP3 fit-testing project, a further eight types of mask were made available, and we now supply over 12 different models to the NHS, with over 41 million units of FFP3 face masks available for distribution.

The programme currently includes a team of up to 160 fit testers being mobilised for approximately five months and we are in the process of doubling the size of the team.

Peter Kyle:

[150874]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to February 2021 research into the risks of aerosolisation of SARS-CoV-2 from oxygen delivery systems and coughing, if he will review the NHS infection prevention and control guidance and expand the situations in which an FFP3 mask should be used by workers.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: The United Kingdom-wide Infection Prevention Control (IPC) Cell recently reviewed the evidence in relation to the transmission route for COVID-19 and the IPC precautions required and agreed that no changes to the current personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements were needed. PPE, including FFP3 masks should continue to be worn in line with the current IPC guidance.

Emerging evidence and data are continually monitored and reviewed, and the guidance will be amended accordingly if needed.

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine

Rachel Reeves:

[\[149745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of people successfully reached by the Isolation Assurance Service.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 10 February 2021]:

Between 9 June and 7 September 2020, the Isolation Assurance Service (IAS) made 149,579 total calls and texts resulting in 66,773 successful contacts to eligible arrivals. The IAS activity includes up to three calls and a text per eligible United Kingdom arrival sampled. This is the most recent data published in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Research

Alexander Stafford:

[\[144882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support long-term research studies on covid-19 immunity.

Edward Argar:

The Government, through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation are jointly funding the UK Coronavirus Immunology Consortium to address key questions around the immune system's response to COVID-19.

We are also supporting immunity studies in specific groups, including the SARS-CoV-2 Immunity and Reinfection Evaluation (SIREN) study in health care workers and the Vivaldi study in care home residents and workers. The NIHR's Health Protection Research Unit in Respiratory Infections is also looking at the size and longevity of the immune response.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Justin Madders:

[\[147891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of not requiring covid-19 testing for hospital discharges into the community where care is not required on rates of community covid-19 transmission.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies assessed the effect that discharging patients from hospital into the community without testing had on COVID-19 community infection rates. They found that while it had a high impact during the first wave of COVID-19 infections, it was less likely to do so during a second wave, due to the improved infection control measures implemented in hospitals.

Helen Hayes:

[148848]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure home care staff are able to access regular covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: On 23 November 2020, we began offering Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered domiciliary care organisations access to regular, weekly COVID-19 testing for their carers looking after people in their own homes.

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

Justin Madders:

[86684]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of using overseas testing capacity to meet (a) short, (b) medium and (c) long term demand; and how many covid-19 test have been sent overseas for processing in each month since March 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 September 2020]: In addition to the network of six Lighthouse laboratories and other United Kingdom based partner laboratories, we have also worked with a number of 'surge' laboratories, some of which were overseas, enabling the programme to respond to demand. The vast majority of tests have been processed in the UK. We do not publish data.

Dan Jarvis:

[93600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that care home staff are able to obtain a QR code to attend walk-in testing facilities.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 September 2020]: All social care staff are considered essential workers and prioritised for COVID-19 testing. Those who have booked an appointment at a testing site will receive a test. Sites can use other information to confirm an appointment if a QR code cannot be provided.

■ Coronavirus: Students

Andrea Jenkyns:

[96959]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will introduce mass-testing for covid-19 for students that wish to return home for Christmas.

Helen Whately:

To support the return home of students in December we provided universities with rapid lateral flow tests. Students were asked to get tested twice during the first week

of December using lateral flow devices. If they received two negative tests, they were advised to return home immediately. Should a student have tested positive they would have to self-isolate for 10 days, still with enough time to return home for Christmas.

■ **Coronavirus: Supported Housing**

Helen Hayes:

[\[78775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the capacity for effective covid-19 infection control in supported living settings while access to testing is limited to symptomatic staff and residents.

Helen Whately:

Our first priority continues to be to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission and prevent future outbreaks and to ensure the health and safety of staff and residents. Following the rollout of a single round of national testing to the most high-risk extra care and supported living settings, we launched regular retesting, weekly testing for staff and monthly for residents. If a supported living or extra care setting has a suspected outbreak, they should contact their local health protection team immediately, who will undertake an initial risk assessment, provide advice on outbreak management and decide what testing is needed.

Eligible settings must meet both of the following criteria:

- A closed community with substantial facilities shared between multiple people; and
- Where most residents receive the kind of personal care that is Care Quality Commission regulated.

These criteria were set based on the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies advice and in consultation with the sector to identify settings most similar to care homes and more likely to be at risk of an outbreak.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Jon Trickett:

[\[121147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has in place to prioritise frontline workers along with the elderly and health care workers in the roll-out of safe and effective covid-19 vaccines.

Jo Churchill:

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

For the first phase, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors.

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

Alex Cunningham:

[\[128673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to prioritise funeral directors and staff for the covid-19 vaccine alongside health and care home staff.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 16 December 2020]: The Green Book Immunisation Against Infections Disease chapter on COVID-19, states that hospital-based laboratory and mortuary staff who frequently handle COVID-19 or collect or handle potentially infected specimens, including respiratory, gastrointestinal and blood specimens should be eligible for COVID-19 vaccination as they may also have social contact with patients. This may also include cleaners, porters, secretaries and receptionists in laboratories. Frontline funeral operatives and mortuary technicians/embalmers are both at risk of exposure and likely to spend a considerable amount of time in care homes and hospital settings where they may also expose multiple patients, therefore they should also be eligible for vaccination.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[129106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the findings of YouGov's survey for Queen Mary University of London that 39 per cent of ethnic minority and 70 per cent of white people living in London said they were likely to have the covid-19 vaccination, how the Government's vaccination public information campaign plans to target Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities.

Afzal Khan:

[\[131468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure take-up of the covid-19 vaccine in Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

Apsana Begum:

[\[131494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to encourage take up of the covid-19 vaccine in BAME communities.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 17 December 2020]: The Department is working with Public Health England, NHS England and NHS Improvement and key stakeholders to encourage uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine among black, Asian and minority ethnic

communities. The Department is also working with community press, TV and radio stations to deliver information on vaccination in over a dozen languages.

Activity is also focusing on working with trusted voices such as healthcare personnel, faith leaders, community influencers and community organisations for priority multicultural audiences, with a particular focus on Muslim, Polish, black African and Caribbean and Jewish communities. The Department is building on pre-existing relationships and established channels as well as reaching out to more influencers through virtual sessions.

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[133614]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will designate counsellors and psychotherapists as front line workers for the purposes of covid-19 vaccination priority.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that for phase one of the COVID-19 vaccine programme, the vaccine first be given to care home residents and staff and those over 80 years old, followed by frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors.

Frontline healthcare workers include staff involved in direct patient care who have frequent face-to-face clinical contact with patients and who are directly involved in patient care in either secondary or primary care/community settings. This also includes those working in independent, voluntary and non-standard healthcare settings such as hospices, and community-based mental health or addiction services.

Christina Rees:

[134518]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Green Book COVID vaccine schedule in Chapter 14a, whether it is Government policy that frontline funeral operatives and mortuary technicians are frontline healthcare staff, as recommended in the recommendations by staff groups, and relevant to Priority Group 2 as advised by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 13 January 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) identified that the vaccination of frontline healthcare workers should be a priority for the COVID-19 vaccination programme. Frontline staff are at high risk of acquiring COVID-19 infection but also of transmitting that infection to multiple persons who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 as well as to other staff in a healthcare environment.

Funeral operatives have been prioritised for vaccination in cohort two and staff will be eligible for prioritisation if they carry out functions which require them to have contact with multiple vulnerable patients in a healthcare setting and at a high risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Sarah Owen:

[136069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to engage with BAME communities to tackle vaccine hesitancy.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: The Department is working with Public Health England, NHS England and NHS Improvement and key stakeholders to encourage take-up of the COVID-19 vaccine among black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and ensure that everyone, including those with questions about the vaccination process, has access to accurate advice and information. The Department is also working with community press and radio stations to deliver information on vaccination in over a dozen languages.

Our activity is also focusing on recruiting trusted voices, faith leaders, and community organisations for priority multicultural audiences, with a particular focus on Muslim, Polish, black African and Caribbean and Jewish communities. The Department is building on pre-existing relationships and established channels, as well as reaching out to more influencers through virtual sessions. Externally, the Department is also working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to help social media platforms identify/ take action on incorrect claims on the virus, including anti-vaccination narratives that could endanger people's health.

Jim McMahon:

[137996]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which private companies are involved with the logistics and transportation of covid-19 vaccines; and what role each such company has in that process.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 19 January 2021]: Public Health England (PHE) is responsible for the central storage and distribution of ultra-low temperature COVID-19 vaccines, from receipt of the vaccines in the United Kingdom through to distribution to initial National Health Service locations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. PHE uses an existing contract with a specialist medical logistics company to undertake COVID-19 vaccines logistics and transportation operations, in addition to operates for the national immunisation programme. We are unable to provide the name of the contractor for security reasons.

Additional distribution companies have been commissioned by NHS England for onward distribution to primary care. Information on private companies involved in the logistics and transportation of the COVID-19 vaccine by NHS England will be published shortly on the Contracts Finder Service which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>

Afzal Khan:

[138500]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) people over the age of 80 and (b) frontline health and social care staff in Greater Manchester have received the first dose of a covid-19 vaccine as at 15 January 2021.

Afzal Khan:

[138503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) people over the age of 80 and (b) frontline health and social care staff in Greater Manchester have received the second dose of a covid-19 vaccine as at 15 January 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have published weekly United Kingdom-wide vaccination data. In January 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement began to publish daily statistics broken down by age and region, with a more detail provided weekly. This includes the overall number of people who have been vaccinated by dose, those aged 80 years old and above and location. As more reliable data become available, it is expected to be published.

Further data is available at the following links:

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

coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/vaccinations

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

Julian Sturdy:

[138947]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle vaccine misinformation.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We are working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to help social media platforms identify and take action against incorrect claims about the virus in line with their terms and conditions. This includes anti-vaccination narratives that could endanger people's health.

The Government created the cross-Whitehall Counter Disinformation Unit in March 2020, bringing together cross-Government monitoring and analysis capabilities to tackle online misinformation and disinformation. The Counter Disinformation Unit looks for trends on social media platforms so that we can work with them and other partners to respond to misleading content rapidly. Given the importance of protecting freedom of expression, this can be a range of actions from labelling, to downranking, to removal where there is significant risk of harm, in line with a platform's terms and conditions.

Mr William Wragg:

[140840]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish percentage rates of covid-19 vaccination for the (a) first and (b) second dose, by priority group, at Clinical Commissioning Group level.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: NHS England is continually reviewing the data and information it publishes about COVID-19 and the related vaccine. The level of data published about the vaccination programme has increased since the original dataset was first published.

Further information on vaccination levels across the country is available at the following link:

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

The latest data on first and second dose vaccinations is available at the following link:

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/vaccinations>

Sir Charles Walker:**[141412]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether immunosuppressed people will receive the second dose of the covid-19 vaccine within the recommended three week period; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: The Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has recommended that as many people on the JCVI priority list as possible should be offered a first vaccine dose as the initial priority. The four United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers agree with the JCVI that at this stage of the pandemic prioritising the first doses of vaccine for as many people as possible on the priority list will protect the greatest number of at-risk people overall in the shortest possible time. This will have the greatest impact on reducing mortality, severe disease and hospitalisations and in protecting the National Health Service and equivalent health services.

For both vaccines, data provided to the Medicines and Healthcare products and Regulatory Agency demonstrates that whilst efficacy is optimised when a second dose is administered, both offer considerable protection after a single dose, in the short term. For both vaccines the second dose completes the course and is likely to be important for longer term protection.

Mr Clive Betts:**[R] [145735]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of prioritising for covid-19 vaccination people who live with those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and who are suffering from blood cancer.

Dr Rupa Huq:**[148853]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of vaccinating household members of people living with blood cancer in the second phase of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on

which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems. Therefore, in line with the recommendations of the JCVI, the vaccine will be initially rolled out to the priority groups.

This includes care home residents and staff, people over 80 years old and health and care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and those aged 16-64 years old with certain underlying health conditions. Individuals with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment are considered clinically extremely vulnerable and will be eligible for a vaccine. Anyone with a history of haematological malignancy should be offered a vaccination at priority group six.

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

Bob Blackman:

[145777]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recent example set by Singapore, what discussions his Department has had on when maritime key workers will be prioritised for covid-19 vaccinations.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department has had a number of discussions on the prioritisation of key workers. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI's advice has stated that phase one of the vaccine programme will have the prevention of mortality at the forefront of its objectives, as well as to support the National Health Service and social care system.

Maritime staff who are eligible for a vaccine, based on the JCVI's prioritisation, will be offered a vaccine in line with clinical advice. Prioritisation decisions for the next phase delivery of the vaccine are subject to information, surveillance and monitoring data from phase one, as well as further advice from independent scientific experts such as the JCVI. Phase two may include further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services.

Rosie Cooper:

[146825]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the vaccination of maritime workers by Singapore, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on prioritising maritime workers for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has had a number of discussions with Cabinet colleagues on prioritisation for COVID-19 vaccination.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on who should be offered the vaccination first. The key principles are to reduce mortality, to protect the health and care systems and save lives. For the first phase, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors.

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

Stephen Farry:

[147097]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the UK's (a) financial and (b) vaccine transfer commitments are to the World Health Organisation's COVAX programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The United Kingdom remains committed to ensuring equitable access to effective vaccines as demonstrated by our £548 million contribution to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. Through match funding, the commitment was leveraged to encourage other donors to commit \$1 billion in 2020. The COVAX facility will aim to begin delivery by the end of February 2021 and we are working with international partners to support its rollout.

It is too early to determine how many doses of the vaccines that the UK has ordered will not be needed for domestic use. We are working through multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations and G20, as well as the World Health Organization and other international partners like the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and Gavi the Vaccine Alliance to support vaccine development, manufacturing scale-up and distribution to meet domestic and international needs both now and in the future.

Justin Madders:

[147890]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reviewing the covid-19 care home visiting guidance once care home staff and residents have received their full dosage of the covid-19 vaccine.

Helen Whately:

This is an unprecedented global pandemic and we are constantly reviewing our guidance in line with policy changes, based at all times on the best scientific advice.

We have been consistently clear in our messaging that everyone must continue to follow the rules to protect the NHS and save lives, even after they have been vaccinated.

We recognise how important it is to allow care home residents to meet their loved ones safely. We will be looking to enable a wider range of visiting arrangements when it is safe to do so. We will publish updated guidance as this period of national lockdown ends.

Mick Whitley:

[148004]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on public health of giving priority vaccinations to the carers and households of clinically extremely vulnerable people.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. For the first phase, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors. Included in this are those with underlying health conditions, which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality.

All frontline social care workers directly working with people clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 who need care and support irrespective of where they work. Whether they care for clinically vulnerable adults or children or who they are employed by will be prioritised for a vaccine as the JCVI has advised. Other groups at higher risk, including those who are in receipt of a carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill, will be offered vaccination alongside people with underlying health conditions in priority group six. Consideration has been given to vaccination of household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals. However, at this time there is no data on the size of the effect of COVID-19 vaccines on transmission. Evidence is expected to accrue during the course of the vaccine programme and until that time the JCVI is not in a position to advise vaccination solely on the basis of indirect protection.

Sir John Hayes:

[148681]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of categorising crematorium and cemetery staff as frontline healthcare staff for the purposes of the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI identified that the vaccination of frontline healthcare workers should be a priority for the COVID-19 vaccination programme, as they are at high risk of acquiring COVID-19 infection and also transmitting that infection to those vulnerable to COVID-19 and other staff.

Crematorium operations may involve handling the deceased and therefore present a risk of exposure to COVID-19. However, these functions do not necessitate entering or accessing a healthcare setting and therefore presents a low risk of transmitting infection to vulnerable persons or other staff in a healthcare environment.

Dan Jarvis:

[148789]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to categorise police staff as a priority group for the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI in their advice has stated that phase one of the vaccine programme will have the prevention of mortality at the forefront of its objectives, as well as to support the National Health Service and social care system. For the first phase, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors. Included in this are those with underlying health conditions, which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality.

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

Luke Pollard:

[148904]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what advice his Department is providing to people who are extremely clinically vulnerable and have high intolerances to milk or dairy when accessing the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

There are no dairy or milk products in either the Pfizer or Astra Zeneca vaccines and as such patients with such intolerances can receive either vaccine. The only allergy

cautions are regarding individuals that have an allergy to an ingredient of a vaccine. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has advised that individuals with a history of anaphylaxis to food, an identified drug or vaccine, or an insect sting can receive any COVID-19 vaccine, as long as they are not known to be allergic to any component of the vaccine.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[148948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish all evidence, minutes and documents relating to the decision not to implement Pfizer's recommendation that the two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech covid-19 vaccine be administered within three weeks.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[148950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the scientific basis was to inform the decision that one dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine produces enough neutralising antibodies to protect against the covid-19 virus and reduce transmission.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[148951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the validity of the British Medical Association's reported concerns on the 12-week wait for the second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech covid-19 vaccine.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[148952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the data that indicates that two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech covid-19 vaccine are still effective when administered 12 weeks apart.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[148955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the efficacy of the Pfizer/BioNTech covid-19 vaccine when there is a three-week gap between the first and second dose.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[148956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the efficacy of the Pfizer/BioNTech covid-19 vaccine when there is a six-week gap between the first and second dose.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[148957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the efficacy of the Pfizer/BioNTech covid-19 vaccine when there is a 12-week gap between the first and second dose.

Claudia Webbe:

[148958]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report, Optimising the COVID-19 vaccination programme for maximum short-term impact , updated on 26 January 2021, if he will publish a specific timeframe for the short-term vaccine efficacy referred to in that report.

Nadhim Zahawi:

A phase three clinical trial study on the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine efficacy demonstrated a two-dose vaccine efficacy of 95% with a second dose delivered between 19 and 42 days.

Using data available from this study, Public Health England estimated that short term vaccine efficacy from the first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to be approximately 89%. This is the efficacy calculated 15 to 21 days after the first dose. The estimate for 15 to 28 days is 91% which includes the seven days after the second dose and is prior to the time protection may be expected from the second dose.

There is no estimate of efficacy for a single dose beyond 21 days. Given the data available, evidence on the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine and from the use of many other non-COVID-19 vaccines, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises a maximum interval between the first and second doses of 12 weeks. The use of 'short-term' in this report refers to the impact of the programme over the first months of the programme. Further information on the estimates of efficacy of one dose is available in the JCVI's statement on 31 December which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prioritising-the-first-covid-19-vaccine-dose-jcvi-statement/optimising-the-covid-19-vaccination-programme-for-maximum-short-term-impact>

The British Medical Association have questioned the decision to use an extended schedule for COVID-19 vaccines. Data on the AstraZeneca vaccine indicate better immune responses from the second dose with an extended schedule and that protection is maintained over a twelve-week period.

The JCVI is of the view that the first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is likely to provide protection for at least 12 weeks.

There is no evidence to indicate a correlation between the presence of neutralising antibodies and a vaccine effect on transmission.

The JCVI aims to publish background documents to its meetings. However many of these relating to vaccine efficacy were provided to the committee in confidence or under a non-disclosure agreement and cannot be published by the JCVI. Evidence on vaccine immunogenicity and efficacy will be published by the relevant industry groups, usually in peer reviewed journals.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[148962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the report of the British Society for Immunology for studies on the efficacy of the Pfizer/BioNTech covid-19 vaccine after altering the dosing interval of that vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The British Society for Immunology report provides an expert review of current research on immunity and COVID-19 and recommends research to add to our knowledge about the immune system's response. The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation are jointly funding the UK Coronavirus Immunology Consortium, which will address key research themes on immunity to COVID-19.

In addition, the NIHR has contracted the National Immunisation Schedule Evaluation Consortium to gather immunological evidence on 28 day and 12 week dosing intervals for the Oxford University/AstraZeneca and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines. Public Health England is also monitoring the effectiveness of vaccines on disease, infection and transmission including the impact of dosing intervals on effectiveness.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[148964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to extend access to covid-19 vaccinations to adults without indefinite right to remain status.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Vaccination against COVID-19 is a primary care service and is free to all overseas visitors to England, including anyone living in the United Kingdom without permission. It is not, therefore, within scope of the National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015. As no charges apply, immigration status checks are not required in order to assess eligibility. This message has been shared with the public through the NHS website and Public Health England's Migrant Health Guide.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[149182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to assess the effect of delaying the second Pfizer/Biontech vaccine dose on immunity levels in elderly people against the South African variant of covid-19.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[149183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of whether elderly people will potentially have an increased risk of contracting the South African variant of covid-19 due to delaying the second dose of the Pfizer/Biontech vaccine to 12 weeks.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: Industry led studies are ongoing to understand the level of protection the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines will provide against variant strains of COVID-19. This will include immunological studies to understand the potential for protection from COVID-19 vaccines against variants and follow up of

phase three trial participants in geographical areas where variants are circulating. Global surveillance systems, including systems within Public Health England, will be able to provide observational data on vaccine effectiveness against COVID-19 variants. These will be reviewed by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation as they become available.

Rosie Cooper:

[149184]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that vaccination teams attending care homes vaccinate both care home staff and residents by 15 February 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: Primary Care Networks are organising for vaccines to be delivered directly to care homes and given on site to residents by teams of general practitioners (GPs), practice nurses, community pharmacists and other trained vaccinators. They will also provide vaccination to care home staff on site where this is possible.

Where it is not possible or appropriate for care home workers to receive their vaccination in the care home, their employer should make arrangements for them to receive a vaccination at another appropriate and accessible vaccination service.

Anyone who has not yet received the vaccination will be visited, including those in care homes that had an outbreak. If a resident has 'missed' vaccination, or is new to the home, the registered manager should liaise with their GP to arrange vaccination.

Karl Turner:

[149216]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will clarify his Department's advice on people with a penicillin allergy receiving the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: People with a penicillin allergy should be able to receive the currently authorised Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines as the final vaccine products do not contain penicillin. The COVID-19 vaccines should not be given to those who have had a previous systemic allergic reaction, including immediate-onset anaphylaxis, to a previous dose of the same COVID-19 vaccine or to any component of the vaccine. If people have any specific concerns as to whether they can receive the vaccine, they should ask their general practitioner or consultant team.

Rosie Cooper:

[150728]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will publish information on the effectiveness of each type of covid-19 vaccine on (a) immuno-suppressed and (b) other clinically vulnerable people to encourage people in those groups to take up those vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: Public Health England is monitoring the effectiveness and impact of COVID-19 vaccines on a broad range of outcomes including symptomatic disease, infection and hospitalisations as set out in the COVID-19 vaccine surveillance strategy which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-surveillance-strategy>

Vaccine effectiveness assessments are reported regularly to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to inform vaccine policy recommendations. This will include assessment of vaccine effectiveness in immunocompromised individuals and the clinically vulnerable using general practice electronic health record data.

Vaccine effectiveness data will be published in due course.

Once sufficient evidence becomes available, the JCVI will consider options for a protection strategy for immunosuppressed individuals, including whether any specific vaccine is preferred in this population.

Bill Esterson:**[150783]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of the implications for safety of NHS trusts waiting (a) 12 and (b) three weeks to give the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine to frontline staff who are caring for covid-19 patients.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: There is insufficient data to undertake a formal comparative assessment of the implications for safety of different dose intervals with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[150943]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the (a) scientific evidence and (b) his rationale for his Department's policy to extend the gap between covid-19 vaccine doses to 12 weeks.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Estimates of efficacy of the first dose of COVID-19 vaccines and the rationale for the advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation is available in the statement published on 31 December which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prioritising-the-first-covid-19-vaccine-dose-jcvi-statement/optimising-the-covid-19-vaccination-programme-for-maximum-short-term-impact>

Further supporting data has since been published on the AstraZeneca vaccine, which indicate high vaccine efficacy from the first dose of vaccine and better immune responses from the second dose with an extended schedule of up to 12 weeks. Data indicates protection from the first dose is maintained over a twelve-week period. This information is available at the following link:

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3777268

The United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers wrote to the medical profession regarding the COVID-19 vaccination programmes, stating that setting out a model where vaccinating twice the number of people in the next two to three months provides greater public health protection. The letter is available at the following link:

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

Dr Matthew Offord: [151688]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to monitor the effectiveness of different covid-19 vaccines in different age groups.

Justin Madders: [151745]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to monitor the effectiveness of different covid-19 vaccines on different age groups.

Lee Anderson: [151855]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to monitor the effectiveness of different covid-19 vaccines on different age groups.

Alexander Stafford: [151889]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to monitor the effectiveness of different covid-19 vaccines on different age groups.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England is leading on the surveillance of the COVID-19 vaccine programme and has developed a surveillance strategy to monitor the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines against mortality, hospitalisations, confirmed infections, markers of infectiousness and the impact on transmission.

Whilst phase three clinical trials provided evidence of vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic disease, further evidence is needed on how effectiveness varies by subgroup, including by age. This will be done using advanced surveillance techniques once the earliest eligible cohorts have been offered a full course of vaccination.

Cat Smith: [151756]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to UK Covid-19 Vaccines Delivery Plan published on 11 January 2021, what the timetable is for the use of the mobile model to deliver the covid-19 vaccine to people experiencing homelessness.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government is following the independent advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which agrees priority groupings for vaccine. Anyone who is homeless and falls into these groups is eligible for the vaccine and we

are working closely with partners to ensure they can access it. NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with voluntary community and social enterprise partners, inclusion health providers and others to develop an accessible model for delivery of the vaccine to people from inclusion health populations. As a result of having two vaccines now deployable, we are considering a number of options and will co-design these with partners based on the different local and logistical considerations.

In the immediate period we are asking partners to support their clients and service users to register with a general practice, where they are not already and if they have health conditions that would make them clinically vulnerable/clinically extremely vulnerable that this is recorded to ensure they receive the vaccine in line with the JCVI's advice on prioritisation. Over the coming weeks we will consider a range of possible delivery models, including mobile models, to ensure all those prioritised in accordance with the JCVI's advice receive the vaccine at the appropriate time regardless of their circumstance.

■ Dementia: Drugs

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[150717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the increased prescription of anti-psychotics to people with dementia during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to monitor the monthly data published by NHS Digital on the prescribing of antipsychotic medication for people diagnosed with dementia. NHS England and NHS Improvement have regular conversations with regional clinical network leads and local services to understand the patterns in prescribing and potential reasons for any trends.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have also disseminated good practices and resources to support the management of COVID-19 for people with dementia through the NHS Futures Collaboration Platform, fortnightly forums and webinars with Dementia Clinical Networks across England. This includes resources to support non-pharmacological approaches to manage behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia including adhering to public health advice for social distancing.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[150770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the increased prescription of anti-psychotic drugs to people with dementia during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to monitor the monthly data published by NHS Digital on the prescribing of antipsychotic medication for people diagnosed with dementia. NHS England and NHS Improvement have regular conversations with

regional clinical network leads and local services to understand the patterns in prescribing and potential reasons for any trends.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have also disseminated good practices and resources to support the management of COVID-19 for people with dementia through the NHS Futures Collaboration Platform, fortnightly forums and webinars with Dementia Clinical Networks across England. This includes resources to support non-pharmacological approaches to manage behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia including adhering to public health advice for social distancing.

■ Dementia: Medical Treatments

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[149281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to support the global goal of developing a cure or major disease-modifying treatment for dementia by 2025.

Helen Whately:

United Kingdom researchers are at the forefront of global efforts to find a cure or a disease-modifying treatment by 2025. The 2020 Dementia Challenge commitment to spend £300 million on dementia research over five years was delivered a year early, with £344 million spent over four years. Significant elements in research are the £190 million UK Dementia Research Institute with a focus on basic science, the £43 million Dementias Platform UK supporting experimental medicine studies, and the National Institute for Health Research Translational Collaboration – Dementia, which brings together industry, academia and charities to deliver research from which patients will benefit.

■ Dental Services: Contracts

Fleur Anderson:

[\[140290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of NHS dental contract holders delivered 45 per cent or more of their historic activity levels in each of the last three months for which figures are available.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: This data is not currently available in the format requested.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Staff

Darren Jones:

[\[144813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, 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.

Edward Argar:

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

This information is not held centrally as work on the strategy is embedded in a number of roles across the Department.

■ Drugs: UK Trade with EU**Mr William Wragg:****[151750]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking as a result of new customs arrangements to ensure that (a) the sight-preserving eye drops atropine and (b) other medicines sourced inside the EU are able to reach patients and clinical trial participants in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

Our priority is to ensure that patients continue to have access to the medicines and clinical trial supplies they need, including eye medicines such as atropine. We continue to work closely with the pharmaceutical industry, sponsors of clinical trials, the National Health Service, and others in the supply chain to deliver the shared goal of continuity of safe patient care under all circumstances.

The Department wrote to all suppliers of medicines and medical products, including sponsors of clinical trials, coming to the United Kingdom from or via the European Union on 17 November 2020. The letter sets out how we are continuing to work with suppliers and sponsors to deliver our multi-layered approach to mitigate any potential disruption to supply of medicines into the UK, including supplies for clinical trials, now that the UK has left the EU Single Market and Customs Union.

The letter is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-medicines-and-medical-products-suppliers-17-november-2020>

■ Eating Disorders: Mental Health Services**Wera Hobhouse:****[144791]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 January 2021 to Question 137278, what plans he has to publish implementation learnings from the eight sites which have received additional funding to improve the adult eating disorders pathway in 2021-22.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently reviewing whether to publish learnings from the early implementer sites.

■ Electronic Cigarettes

Jim Shannon:

[149761]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure that people using vapes don't start using cigarettes.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is clear that e-cigarettes should only be used by smokers to support their route to quitting smoking.

In the current Tobacco Control Plan for England, the Government commissioned Public Health England to publish annual updates on the evidence on e-cigarettes, including on their patterns of use. Their latest report, published in March 2020, found no evidence that vaping among adults leads them to start smoking and little evidence that increases in vaping among young people leads to increases in smoking. The report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vaping-in-england-evidence-update-march-2020>

■ Gambling: Females

Paul Blomfield:

[149747]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effect of online treatment on removing barriers to treatment for women suffering from gambling disorder.

Jo Churchill:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ Gambling: Rehabilitation

Paul Blomfield:

[149226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the efficacy of standard treatments for problem gambling among women.

Paul Blomfield:

[149229]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the need for a prevalence survey on levels of problem gambling among women.

Jo Churchill:

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

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

Alongside this, the National Institute of Health Research commissioned a research unit in Sheffield University to undertake a mapping review of the effectiveness of national and international policies and interventions to reduce gambling-related harms.

Paul Blomfield:

[\[149227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the availability of specialist treatment services for gambling disorders.

Jo Churchill:

The National Health Service remains on track to deliver the expansion of specialist treatment services for those individuals addicted to gambling. The existing gambling clinics have remained open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, providing a combination of remote and face to face treatment, where safe to do so.

■ **General Practitioners: Yorkshire and the Humber**

Jon Trickett:

[\[146781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which GP surgeries were in operation in Yorkshire as of 2020.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not held in the format requested. Data is collected by National Health Service region only.

■ **Health Services: Children**

Derek Twigg:

[\[146788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children's medical procedures in England have been cancelled in each month since March 2019 by (a) NHS Trust and (b) Clinical Commissioning Group area.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: This data is not held in the format requested.

■ **Health Services: Yorkshire and the Humber**

Jon Trickett:

[\[151621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much the NHS spent on purchasing healthcare from non-NHS providers in Yorkshire and the Humber region in (a) 2010 and (b) 2020.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **Hormone Replacement Therapy: Shortages**

Ms Harriet Harman:

[146743]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients in (a) Camberwell and Peckham constituency, (b) the London Borough of Southwark, (c) London and (d) England have had their supply of Hormone Replacement Therapy medicines interrupted by ongoing shortages.

Ms Harriet Harman:

[146744]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequate provision for patients of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT).

Jo Churchill:

This information is not held centrally.

The Department is aware of supply issues that have affected some hormone replacement therapy (HRT) preparations for various reasons. While a very limited number of HRT products are currently affected, most, including alternatives to those experiencing supply issues are available. We continue to work closely with all suppliers to resolve these issues as quickly as possible and maintain overall supply to patients across the United Kingdom. We have shared regular updates about these issues and management advice to the National Health Service and the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists.

■ **Influenza: Vaccination**

Sir Charles Walker:

[150709]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the efficacy has been of the seasonal flu vaccine, in percentage terms, for people in receipt of it aged 65 and over, in terms of (a) preventing infection, (b) preventing hospitalisation of people infected after receiving the vaccine and (c) preventing influenza being listed as the cause of death for people infected after receiving the vaccination, in each of the last 10 years for which information is available; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: Data on the efficacy of the flu vaccine are not available in the format requested.

Public Health England monitors the effectiveness of influenza vaccines each year against all the influenza strains in circulation. Vaccine effectiveness varies from one season to the next. Overall effectiveness has been estimated at between 30-60%. Vaccine effectiveness for each flu season is published in the Annual Flu Report, available from winter 2012/13 is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-flu-reports>

■ Joint Biosecurity Centre

Andy Slaughter:

[\[130657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many consultants Deloitte has deployed to work at the new Joint Biosecurity Centre since 16 March 2020; what the day rate was for each of those consultants; and what the total cost to the public purse has been of employing those consultants.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: No consultants from Deloitte have been or are employed in the Joint Biosecurity Centre.

■ Medical Records: Immigrants

Claudia Webbe:

[\[148965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the personal data of those seeking access to NHS services is shared with immigration enforcement authorities.

Edward Argar:

National Health Service trusts may contact the Home Office in relation to overseas visitors who are presenting or have presented for NHS secondary care treatment for the following two purposes:

- To complete an immigration status check through the Home Office Evidence and Enquiry service, where the trust is unable to establish this by any other means and this information is relevant to establishing a person's entitlement to free secondary care; and
- To notify the Home Office of individuals subject to immigration control with debts of £500 or more that have been outstanding for two or more months. In doing so they must follow strict processes, set out in the Department of Health and Social Care's guidance.

■ Mental Health Services

Geraint Davies:

[\[151589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the prevalence of (a) speech, language and communication needs and (b) dysphagia among adults accessing (i) community mental health services and (ii) secure mental health services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment has been made.

■ Mental Health Services: Accident and Emergency Departments**Jonathan Ashworth:****[150813]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish statistics on the number of A&E attendances for mental health reasons in each month since March 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: From April 2020 publication of accident and emergency data was transferred to the Emergency Care Data Set which is currently provisional. The annual publication for 2020-21, including data on accident and emergency attendances from April 2020 to March 2021, is currently scheduled for September 2021.

■ Mental Health Services: Coronavirus**Andrea Jenkyns:****[149280]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the mental health support services available to NHS staff in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, we have increased health and wellbeing support for National Health Service staff including a mental health helpline, access to free wellbeing apps and specialist bereavement and psychological support. In addition, an extra £30 million is being invested to enhance occupational health services and to establish mental health hubs which will offer outreach and assessment services to help frontline staff receive rapid access to evidence based mental health services. We are also supporting the development of a national support service for critical care staff.

■ Mental Health: Coronavirus**Helen Hayes:****[149297]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he is having with (a) NHS England, (b) NHS Trusts and (c) NHS Foundation Trusts on the mental health effects of the covid-19 outbreak on staff; and what steps is he taking to provide additional mental health support to those staff, with particular reference to (i) the impacts of trauma and (ii) trauma counselling.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: We have worked closely with NHS England to put in place a comprehensive package of mental health and wellbeing services for staff, including counselling helplines, support for line managers to have health and wellbeing conversations with their staff and free access to mental health apps. Last autumn, we invested £30 million to strengthen mental health support and enhance occupational health in the National Health Service. This funding is being used to set

up mental health hubs that will provide outreach and assessment services to help staff receive rapid access to mental health services.

Staff referred will be treated by local mental health specialists and those with severe needs will be referred to a specialist centre of excellence. The investment will create a national support service for those deemed most at risk of severe trauma, such as critical care staff. Proactive engagement with staff is routinely undertaken to assess the mental health effects of the pandemic and understand what further support should be provided.

Helen Hayes:

[\[149298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he is having with social care providers regarding the mental health effects of the covid-19 pandemic on staff; and what steps he is taking to provide additional mental health support, with particular reference to (a) the impacts of trauma and (b) trauma counselling.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: We have worked alongside the National Health Service and other organisations to develop a package of emotional, psychological and practical resources for the workforce and we are continually engaging with social care stakeholders throughout the pandemic to ensure that the most effective and impactful support is available.

We have supported Hospice UK to extend its bereavement and trauma counselling helpline to social care staff. This service offers a safe space for care workers to talk to a professional if they have experienced bereavement, trauma or anxiety as a result of the pandemic.

We have also provided specific wellbeing guidance on GOV.UK that signposts to the support available.

■ **Mental Illness: Children**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[148794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children reported to English A&E departments with a mental health crisis in (a) 2019 and (b) 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

This information is not available in the format requested. The data is only available as number of attendances, as an individual may have more than one attendance in any given period.

■ **Midwives and Nurses: Students**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[148012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the emergency standards of the Nursing and Midwifery Council to reintroduce emergency education standards to enable final year nursing students to opt-in to support the response to the covid-19 pandemic through extended clinical placement, if he will ensure

the same health and safety provisions under those standards are applied to (a) student midwives and (b) student nurses.

Helen Whately:

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) is the independent regulator of nurses and midwives in the United Kingdom and nursing associates in England. On 14 January 2021, the NMC made emergency changes to its education standards. The standards give flexibility to Approved Education Institutions (AEIs) to decide how to structure and apportion academic learning and clinical placements for nursing and midwifery students.

AEIs retain responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of students in whatever capacity they are undertaking clinical placements. The NMC's emergency standards require training providers to ensure placement allocations take account of current, relevant public health guidelines with due regard to the health and wellbeing of individual students.

■ **National Cancer Screening Programmes in England Review**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[150726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish an implementation plan for Prof. Sir Mike Richards' review of NHS diagnostics capacity.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: Professor Sir Mike Richards' recommendations have been accepted by the NHS England and NHS Improvement Board. There is no intention to publish an implementation plan. However, a national Diagnostics Programme has been established to take forward the recommendations. This work will be overseen by the NHS England and NHS Improvement Diagnostics Programme Board.

The Government has ringfenced £325 million of capital spending for National Health Service diagnostics and equipment through the 2020 Spending Review to support implementation.

■ **NHS: Drugs**

Grahame Morris:

[\[149742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking support the (a) Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Authority and (b) other relevant regulatory authorities in the (i) EU and (ii) US to collaborate with those developing New Approach Methodologies in support of decisions on (A) the progression of drugs into clinical trials, (B) drug licensing and labelling and (c) providing evidence demonstrating the scientific validity and human clinical relevance of NAM data to regulatory scientists.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 10 February 2021]: The Government encourages the development of in vitro methods in place of animal testing and the development and use of new tests and alternative methods to the use of animal tests.

In accordance the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, the principle of the '3Rs' - Replacement, Refinement and Reduction - needs to be considered when selecting testing approaches to be used for regulatory testing of human and veterinary medicinal products. The challenge to academia, industry and regulatory scientists is to remain focused on designing nonclinical studies in relevant models, including New Approach Methodologies (NAM), to answer specific questions in time to support clinical decision making and communication of potential risks.

Maintaining effective dialogue among scientists in academia, industry and regulatory agencies during model development, qualification and validation will be essential to address this challenge. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency works closely with the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research and other regulatory agencies to identify opportunities for the '3Rs'.

■ NHS: Durham**Mr Richard Holden:****[150967]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what NHS facilities in the Durham county council area are under PFI contracts; and what the (a)(i) start and (ii) end date is and (b) other terms and conditions are of those contracts.

Edward Argar:

HM Treasury and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) publish a joint dataset listing all active Private Finance Initiative (PFI) projects, including those held by the National Health Service. This data includes the dates when each PFI contract was signed and began operations, the length of the contract and annual Unitary Charge payments.

NHS PFI contracts are held directly by individuals NHS trusts and foundation trusts, not the Department. The latest HM Treasury/IPA data on PFI contracts was published in May 2019 and is available on GOV.UK at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/private-finance-initiative-and-private-finance-2-projects-2018-summary-data>

■ NHS: Protective Clothing**Anne Marie Morris:****[150814]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the (a) potential merits and (b) feasibility of providing FFP3 face masks to all front line NHS staff.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: The recommendations on what personal protective equipment (PPE) is required in which settings, including the use of FFP3 masks, is set out in 'COVID-19: infection prevention and control (IPC)', which was last updated on 21 January 2021. These recommendations are agreed by an expert group of clinicians and scientists from across the United Kingdom and are consistent with World Health Organization guidance.

Due to the identification of new COVID-19 variants, the UK Infection Prevention Control Cell conducted a comprehensive review and assessed the available evidence in order to inform any necessary changes to the guidance for health workers in England including recommended levels of PPE. Based on the evidence, they concluded that current guidance and PPE recommendations remain appropriate. Emerging evidence and data on variant strains will be continually monitored and reviewed, and the guidance amended accordingly if needed.

Tulip Siddiq:[\[150880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the personal protective equipment currently provided to NHS staff provides effective protection against new variants of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

Following the identification of new COVID-19 variants, the United Kingdom Infection Prevention Control Cell conducted a comprehensive review of available evidence to inform any necessary changes to the guidance for health workers in England including recommended levels of personal protective equipment (PPE). Based on the evidence, they concluded that current guidance and PPE recommendations remain appropriate. Emerging evidence and data on variant strains will be continually monitored and reviewed, and the guidance amended accordingly if and when needed.

NHS: Staff**Rosie Cooper:**[\[150724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, following the publication of the NHS People Plan 2020-21, what discussions his Department has had with NHS England on developing a longer-term People Plan.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: The NHS People Plan is a shared programme of work to increase the workforce, support new ways of working and develop a compassionate and inclusive workplace culture in order to deliver the NHS Long Term Plan. We are working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement, Health Education England and with systems and employers to determine our workforce and people priorities beyond April 2021 to support the recovery of National Health Service staff and services. This will include building on many of the positive ways of working

that have emerged through the pandemic whilst continuing to support the wellbeing of NHS staff.

■ **NHS: Surgery**

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[\[147103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Spending Review 2020, what progress has he made on disbursing the additional £1 billion of funding to tackle the elective backlog in the NHS.

Edward Argar:

Arrangements for distributing the funding are still under consideration as the National Health Service continues to work through the current COVID-19 surge.

■ **Obesity: Surgery**

Jim Shannon:

[\[151713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have undergone gastric bypass surgery to treat type 2 diabetes.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not available in the format requested.

It is not possible to determine from collected data whether the gastric bypass surgical procedures were undertaken in order to treat type 2 diabetes.

■ **Ozanimod**

Angus Brendan MacNeil:

[\[149187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Scottish Medicine Consortium's approval of ozanimod for Scottish patients with relapsing remitting multiple sclerosis; and whether it is his policy to provide for the same access to innovative medicines for MS patients in England.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for providing evidence-based guidance for the National Health Service in England on whether medicines represent a clinical and cost-effective use of resources. NICE's appraisal of ozanimod for treating relapsing remitting multiple sclerosis is ongoing and a consultation on NICE's draft guidance closed on 12 February.

■ **Pancreatic Cancer**

Jim Shannon:

[\[149763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in each of the last three years.

Jo Churchill:

The number of people in England diagnosed with pancreatic cancer was 8,688 in 2016, 8,980 in 2017 and 8,885 in 2018, which is the most recent data available.

Primary Health Care: Prisons**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[150736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of publishing an evaluation of the benefits of wing-based primary care in prisons, including (a) an identification of examples of excellence, and (b) recommendations relating to the future model of healthcare after covid-19 restrictions are ended.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment has been made.

Protective Clothing: Standards**Taiwo Owatemi:**[\[149820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) availability and (b) suitability of personal protective equipment tested to FFP1, 2 and 3 standards.

Jo Churchill:

All personal protective equipment (PPE) must undergo vigorous checks to ensure they meet the safety and quality required, as per the published technical specification for PPE on GOV.UK. By December 2020, we had established a four-month stockpile of all COVID-19 critical PPE. We are confident that we have secured enough supply for this winter period and that we have the processes and logistics in place to distribute PPE to where it is needed.

The recommendations on what PPE is required in which settings, is set out in the 'COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control' (IPC) guidance, which was last updated on 21 January 2021. This guidance does not include the use of FFP1 masks and these are not distributed by the Department. These recommendations are agreed by an expert group of clinicians and scientists from across all four nations of the United Kingdom. They are consistent with World Health Organization guidance, are based on the latest clinical evidence and are kept under constant review.

Screening: Staff**Rosie Cooper:**[\[150725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on capacity in the imaging and diagnostics workforce.

Helen Whately:

Health Education England (HEE) welcomes Professor Sir Mike Richards' report 'Diagnostics Recovery and Renewal', which stated that major expansion and reform of the diagnostic services is needed over the next five years to facilitate recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and to meet rising demand across multiple aspects of diagnostics.

HEE is working with system partners on the longer-term strategy that looks at the workforce needs beyond 2021. This planning is fully aligned with the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS People Plan and associated ambitions for further development of cancer services. This will include exploring sustainable growth beyond 2021 in key professions through continued investment in training places, with a greater focus on attracting and retaining students and improving the numbers of qualified professionals who go on to work in the National Health Service.

■ Sewage and Waste Disposal**Sir Edward Leigh:**[\[150684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the effect on the (a) sewage and (b) non-recyclable waste systems of home abortions since March 2020.

Sir Edward Leigh:[\[151601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether domestic waste companies and sewage treatment services were consulted before the approval of home use of both abortion pills in March 2020.

Helen Whately:

No such assessment has been made.

Domestic waste companies and sewage treatment services were not consulted before the temporary approval in March 2020.

■ Social Services: Coronavirus**Ed Davey:**[\[150667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure care packages are re-implemented after the covid-19 outbreak without any requirement for further assessment.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: Assessments of social care packages under the Care Act 2014 have been continuing during the pandemic in the majority of areas. The Care Act easements were introduced by eight local authorities in total, but no local authorities are currently implementing these easements. It is for local authorities to decide whether a review or reassessment is required. Where care packages are reduced during the COVID-19 outbreak, local authorities may review the changes to ensure that all needs are being met.

The Care Act 2014 requires that where an adult or carer appears to have care and support needs the local authority must carry out a care needs assessment. Once an eligibility determination has been made the local authority should then carry out a financial assessment to determine whether or not the person should pay anything towards their care.

■ Social Services: Finance and Reform

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[145094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government will bring forward proposals for the (a) reform and (b) funding of adult social care.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: Reform of adult social care is a complex area and a range of options are being considered.

The Government is committed to sustainable improvement of the adult social care system and will bring forward proposals this year.

As announced in the 2020 Spending Review, the Government is providing local authorities with access to over £1 billion of additional funding for social care in 2021/22. This includes £300 million of new grant funding for social care, on top of the £1 billion social care grant introduced in 2020/21.

■ Social Services: Vacancies

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[144929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on filling vacancies in the social care sector.

Helen Whately:

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mims Davies MP) and I met last year to discuss social care recruitment and we are continuing to work closely with the Department for Work and Pensions on filling vacancies in the social care sector. For example, we are providing resources to jobcentre work coaches to help them promote adult social care careers to jobseekers, including those who may have lost their jobs during the pandemic from other sectors that have been hard hit, such as tourism, hospitality and retail

In addition, in order to attract more people to the sector we ran a national recruitment campaign across broadcast, digital and social media. The current phase of the campaign, which launched in February, highlights the vital role that the social care workforce has played during the pandemic, along with the longer-term opportunity of working in care.

■ Sodium Valproate

Caroline Nokes:

[149746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review report First Do No Harm, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing redress separately to the Patient Reference Group to support people harmed by Valproate.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government is currently making a thorough assessment of recommendation 4 of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review (IMMDS Review), which relates to individual redress schemes, for sodium valproate, primodos and vaginal mesh. We will be responding in full later in 2021.

The purpose of the Patient Reference Group, which was part of recommendation 9 of the Review, is to ensure that patient voices are heard as we move towards the full response. It will look at implementation of the IMMDS Review as a whole.

■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Justin Madders:

[147900]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 outbreaks there have been in special education schools since the start of 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Since 4 January 2021, there have been 89 confirmed COVID-19 clusters or outbreaks in schools serving children with special educational needs reported to Public Health England.

■ Supported Housing: Coronavirus

Nick Fletcher:

[126161]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department taking to ensure that lateral flow testing is rolled out to visitors to supported living settings.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 December 2020]: We recognise that in supported living environments, the accommodation is the person's own home and that for many people in supported living, there are important reasons for having in-person visits. Our guidance for supported living settings includes guidance on visiting safely, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-living-services-during-coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-for-supported-living>

We currently do not offer any lateral flow testing for visitors in supported living settings. However, this is under review. Our testing strategy is based on clinical advice about relative priorities and developed in consultation with the sector to

ensure any testing programmes are practical, deliverable and meet the needs of both carers and people receiving care.

■ Surgery: Coronavirus

Jonathan Ashworth:

[150810]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the number of non-urgent operations cancelled during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: The collection of data on cancelled elective operations has been paused to support the COVID-19 response, therefore no assessment has been made.

■ Surgical Mesh Implants

Dr Julian Lewis:

[146740]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2020 to Question 73681 on specialist treatment centres for victims of the vaginal mesh scandal, if he will make it his policy to (a) reimburse and (b) otherwise defray the reasonable relevant (i) travel, (ii) accommodation, (iii) prescription and (iv) medical appliance costs incurred by NHS patients having to travel substantially out of area to obtain specialist treatment; and if he will list those treatment centres (A) already and (B) scheduled to be established, together with the operational dates in each case.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]:

From 1 April 2021, the following trusts will provide specialised services for women with complications of mesh inserted for urinary incontinence and vaginal prolapse:

- Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust
- Cambridge University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust
- Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust

NHS England will establish services in South East and South West regions as soon as possible.

All health care costs associated with treatment are met by the National Health Service. This includes in-patient services, medical assessment, treatment, surgery if appropriate, outpatient services and follow-up. There are no current plans to provide for repayments of travel expenses or accommodation outside the scope of the

existing Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme which is provided for in the NHS (Travel Expenses and Remission of Charges) Regulations 2003. The Government also has no plans to review or amend the list of medical conditions that provide entitlement to exemption from prescription charges.

■ Telecommunications Systems: Alarms

Martyn Day:

[\[150862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an estimate of the number of personal alarm pendants used by elderly and vulnerable people that will be affected by the switch off of the Public Switched Telephone Network.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are working closely with affected industries to support preparations for the switch off of the Public Switched Telephone Network. Through NHSX, this includes collaboration with sector representative bodies including the Technology Enabled Care Services Association (TSA). The TSA's work in this area indicates there are approximately 1.7 million users of telecare who may be impacted.

■ TRIPS Agreement

Clive Lewis:

[\[149799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has undertaken an impact assessment on public health implications for the UK in the event that the proposed World Trade Organisation TRIPS Waiver is not approved.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has made no such assessment and does not consider waiving intellectual property rights to be an appropriate course of action to boost the manufacturing of safe, effective and quality vaccines. The existing intellectual property framework has mobilised research and development to deliver a host of new medicines and technologies, to detect, treat and defend against COVID-19.

■ Vaccination: Expenditure

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[123601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February 2018 to Question 129353, how much was spent in total on vaccination programmes in each of the last five years; and what the total expenditure on each individual vaccine programme was during that time period.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: The following table shows expenditure on adult and childhood vaccines in each of the last five years.

	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000	2018/19 £'000
Annual vaccine expenditure	364,831	391,470	393,754	396,938

Source: Department of Health and Social Care Annual Report and Accounts – Notes to the Accounts 12. Inventories and work in progress

Data on annual expenditure for each vaccine programme is not held centrally.

Jonathan Ashworth: [123602]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Green Book routine immunisation schedule, how many of each vaccine has been administered in each of the last five years; and what the annual expenditure has been on each vaccine.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: This information is not held in the format requested.

■ Vaccination: Standards

Dr James Davies: [149273]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to communicate changes to the Green Book on vaccination to clinicians to ensure that patients are offered the same standards of care across the UK.

Jo Churchill:

Each revision of the Green Book is promoted in the Vaccine Update (VU), a Public Health England (PHE) immunisation newsletter for health professionals and immunisation practitioners which is sent to health care professional subscribers at least once a month. Any updates are also shared with the National Immunisation Network of Screening and Immunisation professionals at their weekly meeting.

A function is available through the Green Book page on the website to send an email alert when the Green Book collection or chapter is updated.

The PHE immunisation guidance collection is published on gov.uk to provide information regarding the national immunisation programme and ensure patients are offered the same standards of care across the United Kingdom. This is available to read here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation>.

■ Vitamin D

Justin Madders: [147895]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many vitamin D supplements have been issued as part of the Government's online offering; and whether he plans to extend that scheme into winter 2021-22.

Jo Churchill:

The free vitamin D supplement scheme was introduced to benefit those asked to stay indoors more than usual over the spring and summer 2020 due to national restrictions. As of 3 February, supplements had been sent to over 300,000 adults on the clinically extremely vulnerable list that have opted in to receive the supplements, and over 150,000 residents in residential and nursing care homes in England. There are no current plans to extend the scheme into winter 2021-22.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Coronavirus****Jessica Morden:**[\[151645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to allow people in receipt of Aspen cards under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 to be able to obtain cash with those cards so that they can self-isolate when required during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

For asylum seekers supported under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and who are accommodated in full board accommodation (such as hotels) a small weekly cash allowance is provided to allow for the purchase of essential items.

For those supported under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 in Dispersed Accommodation they continue to have cash loaded onto their card which can be used on a chip and pin basis in stores across the UK. However, for those asylum seekers who are shielding or self-isolating our service providers have extended their wraparound services and will assist with the provision of food and other items where required.

■ Asylum: Homelessness**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[151819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to prevent homelessness among asylum-seeking and refugee women during the covid-19 pandemic.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[151820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support (a) homeless and (b) other asylum-seeking and refugee women during the covid-19 pandemic.

Chris Philp:

Asylum seekers who are destitute and do not have adequate housing or the means of obtaining it are provided with accommodation from the Home Office, as well as other support to cover their essential living needs. This is in line with our statutory duties.

Individuals granted refugee status become eligible to the same local authority assistance with housing that is available to British Citizens and other permanent residents of the UK.

■ **Batteries: Safety**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[149749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of current fire safety regulations when addressing community safety aspects of lithium batteries.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office is responsible for the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which covers non-domestic premises and puts an onus on responsible persons to ensure they have appropriate fire safety measures in place to protect the lives of those who have access to or use of the premises.

Products using lithium batteries are covered by product safety regulations, for which the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is responsible. The Government is committed to ensuring there is an effective product safety system so that only safe products can be sold in the UK. We have some of the most robust product safety requirements in the world. Manufacturers and importers must ensure that products are safe before they are placed on the market. They must monitor the safety of their products in use and take action if a safety issue is identified.

Enforcement authorities have powers to take action against manufacturers, importers and distributors of unsafe goods.

The Home Office will continue to work in collaboration with the National Fire Chiefs Council and local fire and rescue services to consider the impact of increased use of lithium-ion batteries in domestic settings.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[149750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of fire safety personnel that are (a) trained in managing safety threats from lithium batteries and (b) undergoing training to manage threats from emerging technologies.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not collect this information.

It is for individual fire and rescue services to determine the skills and capabilities required to deliver its core functions. Where emerging technologies introduce new or alternative threats, fire and rescue services will factor these into their locally produced integrated risk management plans.

The National Fire Chiefs Council has established its 'National Operational Learning' to capture operational learning and creating a clear platform for information and intelligence to be shared and to inform the development and evolution of National Operational Guidance.

■ Biometric Residence Permits

Emily Thornberry:

[\[147775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Service Level Agreement for the delivery of Biometric Residence Permits with TNT/FedEx, in what proportion of cases did TNT/FedEx not meet their first attempt delivery time targets, 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.

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 Nationality: Applications

Meg Hillier:

[150715]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what fee changes she plans to propose for British Citizenship applications in the 2021-22 financial year.

Kevin Foster:

We keep our fees for immigration and nationality applications under review and ensure they are within the parameters agreed with HM Treasury and Parliament, as set out in Section 68 (9) of the Immigration Act 2014.

Child citizenship registration fees are the subject of current litigation. While the court case is ongoing it would not be appropriate to comment on next steps.

■ Burglary

Dr Matthew Offord:

[151683]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the level of reported burglaries in (a) the London borough of Barnet and (b) England.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[151684]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent comparative assessment she has made of the level of crime in the Hendon constituency and other London constituencies.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government recognises the particularly invasive nature of domestic burglary and the impact crimes can have on victims. That is why we are committed to cutting crime, keeping our streets safe and restoring public confidence in the criminal justice system.

The Home Office collects data from police forces on police recorded crime, broken down by Police Force Area and Community Safety Partnership Area, including the London borough of Barnet. Data is not collected at parliamentary constituency level.

The latest data, including the number of recorded offences of Burglary can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>.

Alongside ongoing work with the police, industry leads and partners to examine what more can be done to prevent crime; on the 28 January the Government launched the second round of the Safer Streets Fund. The Fund now totalling £45 million, supports communities in England and Wales that are disproportionately affected by crimes such as domestic burglary to implement well evidenced crime prevention initiatives, such as improved street lighting and home security.

In order to tackle levels of crime, both in London Constituencies and across the rest of England and Wales, and to help ensure the police have the resources they need, the Government has funded an additional 20,000 police officers to support the efforts of existing forces and organisations in England and Wales. Specifically, the Metropolitan Police Service has been allocated an additional 1,369 officers in the first year of the police uplift, covering the period to the end of March 2021, however the deployment of these officers is an operational decision for the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.

■ Dogs: Theft

Damian Hinds:

[151665]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle dog theft.

Kit Malthouse:

I refer my Rt Hon Friend to the answer I gave to a question from the Hon Member for Newport East (UIN 142846).

■ **Domestic Abuse****Sarah Champion:**[\[150822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will extend the Ask for ANI Scheme to people who are housebound due to the covid-19 pandemic so that (a) people at risk can speak to pharmacy delivery workers to access domestic abuse support and (b) the necessary training can be provided to those delivering from pharmacies to people's homes.

Victoria Atkins:

Home should be a safe place but for those confined with an abuser it is clearly not, that is why the 'Ask for ANI' codeword scheme is so important.

There are currently more than 2,600 pharmacies participating in the codeword scheme nationwide. Since its launch a few weeks ago, we have seen the scheme been used by a range of victims. We maintain an ongoing sign-up process, and are seeing more pharmacies sign-up each week.

Evaluation of the codeword scheme has begun, and we expect early findings in the Spring. Using the evidence collected we will explore options for further expansion of the scheme into other settings.

■ **Gambling: Crime****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[151878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the correlation between rates of problem gambling and levels of (a) acquisitive and (b) violent crime.

Kit Malthouse:

Rates of problem gambling have remained stable at around or below 1% of the adult population since 1999. The Government launched its Review of the Gambling Act 2005 on 8 December 2020 with the publication of a Call for Evidence. The Review will be wide-ranging and evidence-led, aiming to ensure that the regulation of gambling is fit for the digital age and will consider how effective the regulatory framework is in preventing gambling-related crime, alongside other outcome measures.

Mr Richard Holden:[\[151879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing (a) per play limits, (b) daily deposit limits and (c) other affordability measures to reduce levels of offending among the problem gambling community.

Kit Malthouse:

I have not undertaken an assessment. Rates of problem gambling have remained stable at around or below 1% of the adult population since 1999. The Government launched its Review of the Gambling Act 2005 on 8 December 2020 with the publication of a Call for Evidence. The Review will be wide-ranging and evidence-led, aiming to ensure that the regulation of gambling is fit for the digital age and will consider how effective the regulatory framework is in preventing gambling-related crime, alongside other outcome measures.

Mr Richard Holden:[\[151881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people suffering from a gambling disorder who have come into contact with the criminal justice system.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not hold information on individuals who come into contact with the police to ascertain whether a gambling disorder has been identified as a motivational factor in any alleged offences committed.

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the court system and their centrally-held data does not identify where gambling has been identified as a relevant motivational factor in offending. The information may be held on court records, however to identify such cases would require accessing individual court records which would be of disproportionate cost.

■ Home Office: Amazon Web Services**Chi Onwurah:**[\[149751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what level of discount has been realised by her Department as part of the G-Cloud 12 Call-Off contract with Amazon Web Services in December 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

This information is confidential and, in order to protect the commercial interests of the supplier, cannot be disclosed due to the commercially sensitive nature of the agreed discount structure.

Chi Onwurah:[\[149753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what competitive procurement process was followed in the awarding of the G-Cloud 12 Call-Off contract to Amazon Web Services in December 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

The Crown Commercial Service (CSS) G-Cloud 12 framework procurement process was followed.

Chi Onwurah: [\[149754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what level of liability was agreed with Amazon Web Services for the loss, destruction, corruption or degradation of data under the G-Cloud 12 Call-Off contract awarded in December 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

This information is confidential and, in order to protect the commercial interests of the supplier, cannot be disclosed due to the commercially sensitive nature of the agreed levels of liability limits.

Chi Onwurah: [\[149755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the support services agreed upon as part of the G-Cloud 12 Call-Off contract awarded to Amazon Web Services in December 2020 will be provided solely from the UK.

Kit Malthouse:

Amazon Web Services provide support from a number of UK based, security cleared resources that are based within the UK. These UK based security cleared staff work with our inhouse teams to develop, design and review AWS hosted services. For enterprise support during incidents or issues, AWS support is provided under a follow the sun approach from several geographical locations.

AWS Support staff do not have direct access to any of our services and cannot access and data or systems.

■ Housing: Insulation

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[151809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that disabled people living in buildings with dangerous cladding have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[151810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate the Government has made of the number of people with disabilities living in buildings with ACM cladding without a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[151811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to ensure that residents with accessibility needs and disabilities living in properties with dangerous cladding have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[151812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to support people with (a) visible and (b) hidden disabilities to obtain a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan, particularly in buildings with fire safety problems.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government has taken major steps to ensure all residents in high-rise blocks are safe since Grenfell. Data on the number of vulnerable persons living in residential blocks with ACM cladding is not collected. However, the Government has announced an unprecedented level of investment of £3.5bn to protect leaseholders from the cost of replacing unsafe cladding in residential buildings 18 metres and over in England. Those in lower-rise buildings, between 11 and 18 metres, will also be protected from the costs of cladding removal with a generous new finance scheme which will mean they will not have to pay more than £50 per month towards this remediation.

This Government's commitment to implementing the Grenfell Inquiry's recommendations remains undimmed and we are doing everything in our power to implement them in the most practical and effective way. It is important that we get this right and ensure the voice of residents and those likely to be affected by the proposals such as those with accessibility needs and disabilities, are heard. That is why we have decided to undertake a further consultation this spring on the complex issue of personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs).

This new PEEPs consultation will build on the responses provided to the earlier consultation and will inform the Government's final decisions on how to implement the PEEPs recommendations so that they are driven by effectiveness and ultimately, ensure that all people are safe from fire in high-rise multi-occupied buildings.

Human Trafficking**Mohammad Yasin:**[\[149809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the findings of the report by Women for Refugee Women After Exploitation entitled *Survivors Behind Bars*, published on 4 February 2021, that the detention of trafficking victims has increased since the introduction of the Adults at Risk policy in 2016; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The Government does not have an absolute exclusion from detention for any particular group. However, we fully accept that some groups of individuals can be at particular risk of harm in immigration detention. This is the basis of the Adults at Risk in immigration detention (AAR) policy, which strengthens the presumption against detention for vulnerable individuals.

The policy covers a wider range of vulnerabilities and its introduction has enabled Home Office staff to promptly identify whether a person is vulnerable and consequently whether they should be detained. This allows for a more rounded assessment of such vulnerabilities in a detention setting, along with a balanced assessment of any immigration compliance, criminality factors and expected date of removal. The greater the evidence of vulnerability, the less likely it is that the individual will be detained.

Additional safeguards are also in place which underpin detention decisions, including regular reviews to ensure detention remains lawful, appropriate and proportionate.

All Home Office staff working in the detention system are also given training and support to identify and act upon indicators of vulnerability, including recognising victims of trafficking and modern slavery, at the earliest opportunity. If an individual is suspected to be a victim of trafficking, they will be referred into the National Referral Mechanism.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Holly Lynch: [150854]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications to the EU Settlement Scheme are being processed each week on average; and what the average waiting time is for applicants submitting an application to that scheme.

Kevin Foster:

The latest published information shows the total number of concluded applications to the EU Settlement scheme was 4.68 million up to 31 January 2021.

The latest figures can be found on the Home Office's 'EU Settlement Scheme statistics' web page available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/eu-settlement-scheme-statistics>.

Applications concluded by month and decision type are published in the detailed quarterly release – '[EU Settlement Scheme quarterly statistics, September 2020](#)'. The statistics for October to December 2020 will be released on 25 February 2021.

Our aim is to process all applications to the EU Settlement Scheme as expeditiously as possible. Complete applications are usually processed in around five working days.

More information about processing times for applications under the scheme is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-application-processing-times/eu-settlement-scheme-pilot-current-expected-processing-times-for-applications>

Alan Brown: [151763]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of EU citizens still to apply for settled status; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The latest published information on EU Settlement Scheme applications received can be found on the Home Office's 'EU Settlement Scheme statistics' web page available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/eu-settlement-scheme-statistics>

The total number of applications received up to 31 January 2021 was 5.06 million (5,060,600).

The published figures refer specifically to applications made to the EU Settlement Scheme and cannot be directly compared with estimates of the resident population of EU/EEA nationals in the UK.

The published figures include non-EEA family members, Irish nationals, and eligible EEA citizens not resident in the UK, none of whom are usually included in estimates of the resident EU population.

Furthermore, the population estimates do not take account of people's migration intentions and will include people who have come to the UK for a range of purposes, including some who have no intention to settle permanently in the UK

■ Offences against Children

Dr Matthew Offord:

[151681]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many sexual offences were committed against minors in each of the last five years.

Victoria Atkins:

The latest published crime stats can be found here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingseptember2020/relateddata> (Crime in England and Wales: Appendix tables, Table A4) and please see below for a table of recorded CSA offences for the last five financial years, up to March 2020.

OFFENCE CODE	OFFENCE	APR APR APR APR'				
		APR '15 TO MAR '16	'16 TO MAR '17	'17 TO MAR '18	'18 TO MAR '19*	19 TO MAR '20*
19D Rape of a female child under 16	5,321 5,989	7,622	7,387	6,779		
19E Rape of a female child under 13	4,327 4,539	5,483	5,386	4,771		
19G Rape of a male child under 16	692 839	889	907	923		
19H Rape of a male child under 13	1,853 2,165	2,571	2,442	2,143		
17B Sexual assault on a male child under 13	2,656 3,368	3,802	3,545	3,519		
20B Sexual assault on a female child under 13	7,501 8,134	9,713	9,485	9,164		
21 Sexual activity involving a child	5,945 7,906	8,633	9,123	9,260		

				APR '15 TO MAR '16		APR '16 TO MAR '17	APR '17 TO MAR '18	APR '18 TO MAR '19*	APR '19 TO MAR '20*
OFFENCE CODE	OFFENCE								
	under 13								
22B	Sexual activity involving a child under 16	11,515	13,335	14,763	14,752	14,217			
71	Abuse of children through sexual exploitation (formerly prostitution or pornography)	571	629	1,192	956	894			
73	Abuse of position of trust of a sexual nature	239	273	285	268	340			
88A	Sexual grooming	963	1,158	4,449	5,334	5,878			
86	Obscene publications, etc and protected sexual material**	13,037	18,826	23,136	23,859	25,311			
Total CSA offences		54,620	67,161	82,538	83,444	83,199			

* Figures for Greater Manchester are not included for the years ending March 2019 and 2020 due to data supply issues.

** Obscene publications is used as a proxy for indecent images of children offences.

■ Offences against Children: Convictions

Sir John Hayes:

[151615]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign nationals convicted as a result of investigations into grooming gangs have (a) been deported from and (b) remain in the UK.

Chris Philp:

The information is not available to the level of detail requested. The Home Office publishes data on Returns of foreign nationals in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of Returns of FNOS from the UK are published in table Ret_02 of the Returns '[summary tables](#)'.

Child Sexual Exploitation is an abhorrent crime and has no place in our society. This Government is absolutely determined to do all it can to tackle it.

The new national Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy sets out our response to all forms of child sexual abuse, including how we will work across government, law

enforcement, safeguarding partners and industry to root out offending, and protect and help victims and survivors to recover and rebuild their lives.

This Government's priority is keeping the people of this country safe and we are clear that foreign criminals should be deported from the UK wherever it is legal and practical to do so.

Any foreign national who is convicted of a crime and given a prison sentence is considered for deportation at the earliest opportunity. Since January 2019 we have removed 6,450 foreign national offenders.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[151682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the increase in the number of convictions for sexual offences against minors in the last five years.

Victoria Atkins:

The total number of convictions for contact child sexual abuse offences and indecent images of children offences have fallen from a high of around 7,300 in 2016 to 5,200 in 2019, despite increases in recorded crime. We have a better understanding of child sexual abuse than ever before and, as a result, we have seen steep increases in reporting of child sexual abuse to the police. We want reporting of child sexual abuse to keep rising to continue to bring this heinous crime out of the shadows.

We know that child sexual abuse is evolving and that perpetrators are increasing utilising technology and the internet to offend. The NCA report that, in the year ending March 2020, arrests relating to online child sexual abuse increased by 50% compared to the previous year, reaching 7,212 arrests, and 8,329 children safeguarded.

In January 2021, we published the Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy. The Strategy sets out our long-term ambition alongside the immediate steps we will take to drive collective action across government, frontline responders and society as a whole to tackle all forms of child sexual abuse and bring offenders to justice, whether it takes place online or in families, institutions or communities, here in this country or overseas.

■ Official Secrets

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[150704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Queen's Speech background briefing, published 19 December 2019, when the Government plans to publish its response to the Law Commission's report on Protection of Official Data.

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[150705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for her policies of recommendation 33 of the Law Commission's September 2020 report, Protection of Official Data.

Kit Malthouse:

As set out in the Queen's Speech, the Government will be introducing new legislation to tackle the evolving threat of hostile activity by states. As part of this work, we are considering a range of powers, including reviewing the Official Secrets Acts.

We welcome the work of the Law Commission in their review on the Protection of Official Data, and are carefully considering their recommendations. This work is ongoing and has not yet reached a conclusion.

Palace of Westminster: Police**Ms Diane Abbott:****[150656]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many officers are in the Parliamentary Liaison and Investigation Team; and who the head of that team is.

Kit Malthouse:

The Metropolitan Police Service Parliamentary Liaison and Investigation Team (PLaIT) is made up of seven members of staff in total, including the Head of PLaIT. We are unable to give further details on the Head of the team, at this time; however, all Members' of Parliament are able to make direct contact with PLaIT and the Head of PLaIT through dedicated, known communication channels.

Police: Harlow**Robert Halfon:****[151668]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers have been employed in Harlow in each year since the financial year 2018-19.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the size of the police workforce by Police Force Area in England and Wales on a biannual basis in the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin.

Data are collected at Police Force Area level only, and lower levels of geography such as Harlow are not held by the Home Office.

The latest available data for the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) officers employed in each Police Force Area, covering the situation as at 30 September 2020, are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales>

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Buildings: Insulation****Dr Matthew Offord:****[150774]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Housing of 1 February 2021, Official report column 691, when the Department plans to make the further announcement on the removal of cladding.

Eddie Hughes:

The Secretary of State made an announcement in Parliament on 10 February of a decisive five-point plan to end the cladding scandal once and for all.

To protect leaseholders, we are providing direct funding for the remediation of unsafe cladding from buildings over 18m in height. This is in line with longstanding expert advice on which buildings are at the highest risk.

Buildings below 18m will not carry the same inherent risk as a building above 18m, however some will need remediation, so to give residents in lower-rise buildings peace of mind, we are also establishing a generous scheme to ensure, where required, cladding removal can take place on buildings between 11 and 18 metres.

We are also committed to making sure no leaseholder in these buildings will have to pay more than £50 per month towards this remediation.

This builds on steps already taken to support leaseholders, including £1.6 billion of funding to remediate unsafe cladding, the £30 million waking watch fund to help end excessive costs and new legislation in the Building Safety Bill which will ensure homes are made and kept safer in future.

■ Community Infrastructure Levy: Coronavirus**Simon Jupp:****[150975]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to amend the Planning Act 2008 to allow Town and Parish Councils to support emergency covid-19 community groups with funding that has been received through the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Eddie Hughes:

The Neighbourhood Share of the Community Infrastructure Levy ensures that up to 25 per cent of levy revenue is passed to a parish council in the area that development occurred, and provides considerable flexibility over the use of the funding. Parish councils can use the levy to fund anything concerned with addressing the potential demands that development places on their area. This includes provision which may respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as medical infrastructure.

More generally, the Secretary of State has written to principal authorities asking them to work closely with parish councils in order to ensure that the funding support provided to principal authorities has the maximum effect where it is most needed. We

continue to encourage parish and town councils to work with their principal authority where they are delivering vital services that have been affected by COVID-19.

■ **Construction: Coronavirus**

Daisy Cooper: [\[151859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the effect on the (a) health and (b) well-being of residents of the continued relaxation of permitted hours of construction under the Business and Planning Act 2020 during national lockdowns.

Christopher Pincher:

As part of the measures to enable the safe reopening of construction sites, temporary flexibilities were introduced through the Business and Planning Act 2020 for a new fast track application route to amend planning restrictions on construction working hours, complemented by a Written Ministerial Statement in May 2020. These measures balance the need to facilitate safe reopening with considerations about the health and amenity effects on those living nearby.

■ **Evictions and Repossession Orders: Coronavirus**

Afzal Khan: [\[150932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent representations he has received on (a) extending the ban on (a) evictions and (b) repossessions while the national lockdown remains in place.

Eddie Hughes:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is in regular contact with landlord and tenant stakeholder groups and is working closely with the Ministry of Justice to consider the effects of the current measures relating to evictions and bailiff enforcement.

■ **Evictions: Coronavirus**

Chi Onwurah: [\[149757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to extend the ban on evictions for the duration of the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has announced that existing legislation will be extended to ensure that bailiffs do not serve eviction notices or carry out evictions except in the most serious circumstances, such as anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse in the social sector. This legislation will be in place up to the end of 31 March and will be kept under review.

■ Harlow Council: Local Government Finance

Robert Halfon:

[\[151674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the uplift in core funding is for Harlow Council in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

Luke Hall:

Under the annual local government finance settlement, Harlow Council saw their Core Spending Power rise from £11.3 million in 2019/20 to £11.9 million in 2020/21, an increase of £0.6 million. Depending on local decisions, Harlow Council may see their Core Spending Power rise from £11.9 million in 2020/21 to £12.5 million in 2021/22, an increase of £0.5 million.

■ Home Ownership

Sir John Hayes:

[\[151607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to promote home ownership.

Christopher Pincher:

First Homes, our new home ownership scheme, will be prioritised for first-time buyers and will allow them to buy a new home with a discount, at least 30 per cent under market value. In some areas, the discounts could be as high as 50 per cent. This will significantly reduce both deposit and mortgage requirements and open up the dream of home ownership to even more people. Our new Help to Buy Equity Loan scheme from April 2021 to March 2023 will be targeted at helping first-time buyers to get a foot on the property ladder. As set out in the Conservative manifesto of December 2019, the Government will encourage a market in long-term fixed rate mortgages with low deposits to promote home ownership. We stand ready to work with the sector to explore the possible options to bring these products to market.

The Government is committed to supporting the supply of new homes, delivering around 244,000 last year, the highest in over 30 years.

We are bringing forward an ambitious near £20 billion investment, including over £12 billion in Affordable Housing over 5 years, and over £7 billion to both unlock new land through the provision of infrastructure and diversify the market through our National Home Building Fund. Alongside our reforms to the planning system, this will deliver the new homes the country needs.

■ Local Government: Private Finance Initiative

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[151898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the (a) start date and (b) expiry date is of PFI contract for each local authority.

Eddie Hughes:

This data is published, and the most recent publication is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/private-finance-initiative-and-private-finance-2-projects-2018-summary-data>.

■ **Planning****Sir John Hayes:****[151608]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to implement his policy of placing beauty at the heart of the built environment.

Sir John Hayes:**[151609]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that placemaking is at the heart of the Government's strategic thinking about development.

Christopher Pincher:

Following our response to the report of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission, we are taking action to put beauty and placemaking at the heart of the planning and development process. We have outlined proposals for securing design quality in our White Paper, Planning for the Future and on 30 January, we published for consultation a revised National Planning Policy Framework to make beauty and placemaking strategic policies. The National Model Design Code provides guidance on creating local design codes and we are seeking views on this advice alongside the National Planning Policy Framework consultation. We also intend to create an Office for Place within the next year to champion design and beauty in the planning system and we have made a commitment to strengthen Homes England's objectives to give greater weight to design quality.

■ **Planning: Urban Areas****Sir John Hayes:****[151610]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to rejuvenate town centres.

Luke Hall:

This Government is fully committed to supporting the businesses and communities that make our high streets and town centres successful as the nation responds to the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Government is working to deliver a package of long-term measures that support town centre regeneration. This includes the £3.6 billion Towns Fund, which will support an initial 101 places across England to secure Town Deals. It will support local areas to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability. In September 2020, we brought forward over £80 million funding in to support immediate improvements in 101 towns selected for deals to "build back better" in the wake of COVID-19.

On the 26 December 2020, the Secretary of State confirmed £255 million for fifteen areas from the Future High Streets Fund, with a further 57 areas receiving provisional funding offers totalling up to £576 million.

Further, the Government is launching a new Levelling Up Fund. This Fund will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities and will support economic recovery. We will publish a prospectus for the Fund soon.

We are providing support to local leadership in England with a High Streets Task Force, giving them expert advice to support their high streets and town centres to adapt and thrive. This is providing hands-on support to local areas to develop data-driven innovative strategies and connect local areas to relevant experts, and will operate up to 2024.

Sir John Hayes:

[151611]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to discourage or prohibit edge of town or out of town development.

Christopher Pincher:

In order to support the vitality of town centres, the Government has made clear in the National Planning Policy Framework that in the first instance, main town centre uses such as retail should be located in town centres. In some circumstances it may not be possible to accommodate all forecast needs in a town centre, for example if there are physical or other constraints which make it inappropriate to do so. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to prohibit all development of this type outside of existing centres.

However, when assessing applications for town centre uses, such as retail, which are proposed in an edge of or out of town location, and those sites have not been identified in a local plan, the Framework sets out that a sequential test should be applied in order to help ensure that development that would have unacceptable implications on existing centres is not permitted.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Fossil Fuels

Matthew Pennycook:

[150891]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Government's policy on aligning UK international support for the clean energy transition, as announced by the Prime Minister on 12 December 2020, whether (a) ports, (b) airports and (c) other fossil fuel associated infrastructure which are built to facilitate the development of fossil fuel projects and petrochemical facilities which make use of oil and gas will be precluded from overseas UK assistance.

Graham Stuart:

The Government will provide further details underpinning the policy shift, alongside the government's response to the consultation that closed on 8th February.

■ Fossil Fuels: Finance

Matthew Pennycook: [\[150888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether UK Export Finance will continue to consider requests for support for fossil fuel projects during the consultation process on aligning UK international support for the clean energy transition.

Graham Stuart:

As the Prime Minister stated in his announcement on 12 December 2020, the government will continue to apply current policy for all in-scope activities, until the new policy is implemented following the consultation.

Matthew Pennycook: [\[150890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what proportion of (a) UK Export Finance and (b) official development assistance investments in fossil fuel projects in the last five years have been made in gas projects which would fall under the exclusions identified in the Government consultation on aligning UK international support for the clean energy transition.

Graham Stuart:

Until the Government has completed its assessment of the responses to the consultation and finalised the policy in this area, details of the final parameters of the exemptions remain subject to change. Additionally, as this policy was neither in place nor under consideration during the period in question, UK Export Finance (UKEF) does not hold sufficient data to assess whether an exemption could have been applied to certain projects which otherwise could not be supported under the new policy. Similarly, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office does not hold sufficient data about official development assistance in the form required. Consequently we are unable to provide this information other than at disproportionate cost.

■ International Trade: Trade Promotion

Gareth Thomas: [\[150659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 1 February 2021 to Question 142762 on Department for International Trade: Trade Promotion, which companies are delivering those contracts; how those companies were chosen to deliver those contracts; and how the performance of those companies is monitored by her Department.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for International Trade has contracts for trade advisor services with the following companies:

SOUTH EAST	NEWABLE LTD
London	Newable Ltd

SOUTH EAST	NEWABLE LTD
South West	GWE Business West Ltd
East Midlands	East Midlands Business Ltd
West Midlands	West Midlands International Trade LLP
East of England	Exemplas Trade Services Ltd
North East	North East Worldwide Ltd
North West	Chamberlink Ltd
Yorkshire & Humber	Enterprise Growth Solutions Ltd

The companies were selected via a competitive open procurement procedure in April 2015 that was advertised on OJEU (Official Journal for the European Union) and Contracts Finder, the government's procurement portal.

Performance is monitored through monthly contract review meetings to track delivery against targets and key performance indicators, as well as via qualitative survey feedback. Targets/Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are reviewed annually to ensure they align with government priorities.

■ Overseas Trade: Israel

Craig Tracey:

[\[151774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 8 February 2021 to Question 146961 on Question for Department for International Trade, what sectors have been identified for further cooperation with Israel beyond the continuity trade agreement.

Graham Stuart:

The United Kingdom-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement entered into force on the 1 January 2021. The agreement provides an ambitious framework to continue to grow our future trading relationship, which totalled £4.9 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q3 2020. We have identified opportunities to deepen our bilateral trade relationship in sectors such as financial services, infrastructure, and technology. We will work with our Israeli counterparts to realise these including through reinstating plans to host a UK-Israel Trade and Investment conference in London.

■ Trade Agreements: Japan

Gareth Thomas:

[\[149721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate she has made of the benefit of the data chapter in the UK-Japan free trade agreement to UK GDP; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

The UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) does not contain a bespoke data chapter; data provisions sit within the E-Commerce section under Chapter 8 of the Agreement. The CEPA E-Commerce provisions go further than the existing EU-Japan agreement on many aspects of digital trade with a number of cutting-edge rules that reflect the status of the UK and Japan as digital leaders. Examples of CEPA provisions that were not included in the EU-Japan agreement include an agreement to avoid unjustified restrictions on the flow of data between the UK and Japan, a commitment to uphold world-leading standards of protection for individuals' personal data, a commitment to uphold the principles of net neutrality, and a ban on unjustified data localisation.

Many of the new E-Commerce provisions in CEPA on digital and data are likely to have a positive economic impact. Digitally delivered trade accounted for around one third of trade between the UK and Japan in 2019. Digital and data provisions are cross cutting, thereby supporting the whole of UK trade with Japan.

■ TRIPS Agreement**Clive Lewis:**[\[149802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish statements made by the Government related to the proposed TRIPS Waiver at the World Trade Organisation TRIPS Council Meeting on 4 February 2021.

Greg Hands:

The UK has engaged regularly in debates at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) TRIPS Council and other international institutions to promote affordable and equitable global access to COVID-19 vaccines, including in developing countries. We respect the informal format of WTO discussions and do not publish proceedings from those meetings. However, at the informal TRIPS Council on 4 February 2021, the UK sought to further understand the parameters of the proposed waiver and asked for clarifications from the waiver's proponents. This remains consistent with the Government's approach to encourage evidence-based discussions between WTO Members to find solutions to present issues within the multilateral intellectual property framework.

JUSTICE**■ Juries: Key Workers****Darren Jones:**[\[150908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether people categorised as key workers during the covid-19 outbreak remain exempt from being called for jury service.

Chris Philp:

In line with the Juries Act 1974, jurors are summoned randomly by the Jury Central Summoning Bureau (JCSB) using the Electoral Voting Registers. The registers are a

list of everyone who has registered themselves as eligible to vote which are supplied to HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) by every Local Authority each year. At the point of being called for jury service a person's occupation is not known.

At this time, the Government does not expect frontline emergency services staff, including those in the NHS, Police and Fire Service, to be serving on juries. Anyone in these groups, or any Key Worker working in any other frontline role, who is summoned for jury service should contact the 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. Each application for deferral/excusal is considered on its own merit, in a way that is both fair to the individual and consistent with the needs of the court in providing a representative jury. We are keeping the situation under constant review.

We have published further details here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-courts-and-tribunals-planning-and-preparation#jury-trials-and-jury-service>

■ **Magistrates' Courts: Urban Areas**

Sir John Hayes:

[151603]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure that magistrates' courts are based in town centres.

Chris Philp:

Our current magistrates' court buildings across England and Wales are located in town and city centres, making sure that they are accessible to court users, including by public transport.

Access to justice is our top priority when we consider the future location of any court or tribunal building. There are currently no plans to relocate or acquire new magistrates' court buildings.

The HMCTS Court and Tribunal Design Guide published in 2019 is clear that when choosing any potential future court sites that they offer a suitable location, accessibility, amenity, security, urban context and planning potential.

■ **Offenders and Prisoners: Gambling**

Mr Richard Holden:

[151880]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment has been made of the adequacy of support for problem gamblers serving (a) custodial and (b) suspended sentences.

Lucy Frazer:

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) delivers a broad range of interventions to address individual's criminogenic risks and needs, including an accredited offending behaviour programme to improve thinking skills. While it was not specifically formulated with problem gambling including addiction in mind, the

programme aims to enable participants to be less impulsive, more flexible and less rigid in their thinking. It also tackles a number of the cognitive deficits common to gamblers.

A number of prisons provide access and signposting to external, specialist organisations such as Gamblers Anonymous and “Gamcare” or using debt counselling services and services provided through the chaplaincy and education services. In addition, all prisoners are seen by NHS healthcare services on reception and can be referred to addiction services to help address problem gambling.

Probation staff also assess individual needs and can assist with referrals to local or national services to address gambling or to access debt counselling services where suitable, including those on suspended sentences. A support guide for staff supervising those with gambling issues has been produced.

■ Offenders: Rehabilitation

Ms Lyn Brown:

[151649]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to statistics on alcohol and drug treatment in secure settings 2019 to 2020, published on 28 January 2021, if he will make an assessment of the effect on reoffending levels of the finding that 65.5% of adults with a substance misuse treatment need do not successfully engage in community-based structured treatment following release from prison.

Lucy Frazer:

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) are committed to meeting the health needs of offenders in custody and the community, including those with substance misuse issues. NHS England and NHSE Improvement (NHSE/I) are responsible for commissioning healthcare services in all prisons in England, this includes integrated substance misuse services. Local authorities are responsible for commissioning treatment services in the community.

Although there is not a simple linear relationship between the 12-month rate of reoffending among prison leavers in England & Wales, and the proportion of adults with a drug or alcohol dependency who do not engage with treatment programmes following their release from prison, we do recognise that engagement in substance misuse treatment can reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

In 2017, a joint MoJ and PHE study[1] found that, over a two-year period following the start of treatment, only 34% of all offenders misusing alcohol, opiates and/or non-opiates who *dropped out* of treatment did not reoffend, whereas 53% of substance misusing offenders who *successfully completed* treatment did not reoffend.

That is why the government has awarded an additional £80 million to the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to fund drug treatment in 2021/22, as part of a £148 million overall funding package for reducing crime. This is the biggest increase in drug treatment funding for 15 years. The £80 million will be used to enhance drug treatment and the numbers of treatment places available, reduce reoffending and tackle the rise in drug-related deaths. Importantly, most of this funding will support

delivery of additional services to reduce drug-related crime including treatment places for delivering Community Sentence Treatment Requirements (CSTRs), continuity of care for prison leavers and interventions to reduce drug related deaths. The funding will also include extending the NHS England RECONNECT service, a care after custody service for prison leavers with vulnerabilities, who would otherwise struggle to engage with community health services.

Officials across MoJ and HMPPS will continue to work with DHSC and health partners, including on the development of the additional £80m allocation, to ensure substance misuse services meet the needs of the offender cohort, address significant health inequalities in this patient cohort and reduce crime across communities.

[1] Ministry of Justice, Public health England (2017). Table 4, page 18, "The Effect of Drug and Alcohol Treatment on re-offending":

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-effect-of-drug-and-alcohol-treatment-on-re-offending>

■ Prisoners: Radicalism

Sir John Hayes:

[151606]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to reduce and prevent (a) radicalisation and (b) extremism in prisons.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government takes the threat posed by terrorist offenders very seriously and is committed to tackling radicalisation and terrorism in our prisons.

We have a range of capabilities and controls to manage the unique risk posed by terrorist offenders and to prevent them from radicalising others. All risk management is underpinned through specialist counter terrorism case management. This includes rehabilitative tools, which tackle the drivers of radicalisation and seek to draw prisoners away from extremist ideologies.

The Joint Extremism Unit (JEXU) is the strategic centre for counter-terrorism work in prisons; since 2017, it has led important investment and improvement in the sector. Over 30,000 prison staff have been trained to identify, report and deal with extremist behaviour in prison. The Government introduced separation centres to manage the risk of a small number of prisoners who may pose a particular risk of radicalising other offenders in the mainstream prison estate.

The CT Step Up programme will transform this response in prisons by addressing gaps in our current capabilities. The programme will increase counter-terrorism capability in the system by focusing resource into a number of centres of excellence and specialist functions that can deliver a strengthened set of controls and interventions to terrorist offenders at a pace and scale commensurate to the threat.

■ Prisons: Sexual Offences

Sir John Hayes:

[151605]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of sexual assault incidents taking place in prisons.

Lucy Frazer:

We take any allegation of sexual assault in prisons extremely seriously and have robust processes in place to ensure such incidents are immediately referred to the police and victims are given the support they need.

Our approach to reducing all types of violence in prisons, including sexual assaults, is threefold. First, we know that there is a link between staffing numbers and violence in prison, which is why we continue to take actions to strengthen the frontline and ensure we have the staff they need to ensure the safety of everyone who lives and works in our prisons. Our short term target was to recruit 2,500 extra prison officers and as of 30 September 2020, 3,844 new staff are now in post. This has placed our prisons on a stronger footing and enabled us to begin the rollout of new reforms such as the key worker role, which focuses on supporting individual prisoners.

Secondly, it is vital that we ensure our staff have the right support, training and tools to empower them to do their jobs. We are rolling out Trauma Risk Management, a trauma-focused peer support system designed to help people who have experienced a traumatic or potentially traumatic event, and we are currently considering other ways in which we can better support victims of violence in our prisons, including staff. We provide post-incident care teams, occupational health support and counselling for members of staff who are assaulted while doing their jobs.

Thirdly, we are investing £100 million to bolster prison security, clamping down on the weapons, drugs and mobile phones that fuel violence, including sexual assaults, and crime behind bars. This is funding tough measures including x-ray body scanners and phone-blocking technology.

■ Reoffenders

Philip Davies:

[151647]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when his Department plans to publish the delayed Proven reoffending statistics: January to March 2019.

Lucy Frazer:

A delay to the proven reoffending statistics publication for the January to March 2019 offender cohort, originally scheduled for release on Thursday 28 January 2021, was announced in December 2020. This was due to the late delivery of data which had a subsequent effect on the production of the Police National Computer (PNC) data extract required for producing the proven reoffending statistics. Since this announcement, a new lockdown has been introduced and access to the PNC, a system which can only be accessed via a fixed location in our offices, has been

further limited. This has delayed the process of producing the proven reoffending statistics further. A revised publication date will be announced in due course.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Prescriptions: ICT

Jim Shannon:

[\[151711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many GP practices have adopted electronic repeat dispensing; and what steps he is taking to increase uptake of electronic repeat dispensing.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Health Minister, Robin Swann, is leading the response for health matters in Northern Ireland as health is a devolved matter, within the competence of the Northern Ireland Executive. This includes addressing how many general practitioners' (GP) practices have adopted electronic repeat dispensing (eRD).

The UK Government encourages GP practices across the UK to use electronic repeat dispensing (eRD) where clinically appropriate and Academic Health Science Networks have been supporting this. It is vital we reduce GP workloads where possible, while ensuring patients' are as protected as possible.

For more detailed information, I would recommend you engage with the Department of Health on this matter.

TRANSPORT

■ Assignment Statement (Prescribed Information) (Scotland) Regulations 1991

Ian Blackford:

[\[150828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the effect has been of the Assignment Statement (Prescribed Information) (Scotland) Regulations S.I 2152/1991 (S.177).

Rachel Maclean:

Roads and bridges in Scotland, including road user charges and tolls on them, are the responsibility of the Scottish Government.

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Henry Smith:

[\[150760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will remodel the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme to allow ground handlers to use the grant for other fixed costs as well as business rates relief so that the package equally supports all parts of the aviation supply chain.

Robert Courts:

Payments are not limited to use on business rates cost only.

The Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS) opened for applications on 29 January to provide support for eligible commercial airports and ground handlers in England. It will provide support up to the equivalent of their business rates liabilities in the 2020/21 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £8m.

Grant payments made to successful applicants can be applied toward costs which are essential to enable the operation of a commercial airport or ground handling operations and falls within the list of eligible expenditure.

■ Driving Licences: France

Ian Mearns:

[\[150767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department plans to update the guidance for UK driving licence holders resident in France.

Rachel Maclean:

UK licence holders resident in France can continue to use their UK licence until 1 January 2022, provided that it remains valid in the UK. My officials are making every effort to reach an understanding with France regarding long-term licence exchange arrangements for UK nationals resident in France. Guidance on gov.uk is regularly reviewed and I will ensure that pages are updated as soon as future arrangements are finalised

■ Driving Tests: Urban Areas

Sir John Hayes:

[\[151602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that driving test centres are based in town centres.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency keeps its estate under review to ensure site locations are fit for purpose and provide customers with a value for money service.

Practical test centres are, ideally, located away from congested city centres in suburban and business estates, with access to a meaningful network of roads used for test routes, and are not reliant on accessibility of public transport.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Facilities

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[\[150980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will ensure that haulage workers making long journeys are able to access (a) drive-throughs, (b) take-away restaurants and (c) toilet facilities.

Rachel Maclean:

In seeking to support hauliers at this difficult time, the Secretary of State has written to and continues to remind all Motorway Service Area (MSA) operators of the

importance of staying open and providing as many facilities as possible to Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) drivers while adhering to public health guidelines.

All motorway service stations in England can remain open to HGV drivers and essential workers, providing takeaway food only, toilet facilities and fuel. MSAs have also been given an exemption, along with other transport hubs, to have their seating within the concourse still available throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, because they offer a safe place for HGV drivers and other key workers to stop and rest.

The Department for Transport has published a joint letter with the Health and Safety Executive on gov.uk, reminding businesses of their legal obligation to provide toilet and handwashing facilities to drivers visiting their premises as part of their work.

■ **M11: Construction**

Robert Halfon:

[\[151672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding from the public purse has been allocated to the construction of the new Junction 7a on the M11.

Rachel Maclean:

Total project costs for the Junction 7a M11 scheme, including construction and widening of local link roads, is estimated to be around £81 million with an agreed funding contribution from Highways England of £41.7 million, which was provided to Essex County Council. Additionally, through the Department's Large Local Majors programme, the scheme received £1.5 million of early development funding in 2017. The remainder of the project costs are being funded by Essex County Council and partners.

■ **Taxis: Slough**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[151801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps has he taken to support taxi drivers in Slough affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The majority of taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) drivers are self-employed and can therefore apply for grants through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). Over the first three rounds of the scheme a total of up to £21,570 has been made available. HMRC will announce details of the fourth grant on 3 March 2021. Owners, operators and drivers of taxis and PHVs may also be eligible for locally administered grant schemes aimed at supporting businesses which have been forced to close, or which have been badly affected, by the pandemic, and should contact the relevant local authority for more information. The Government has launched a 'support finder' tool to help businesses and self-employed workers quickly and easily determine what financial support is available to them.

In addition, the government has published guidance regarding actions that drivers, operators and owners of taxis or PHVs can take to protect against coronavirus. The

government will shortly be publishing additional guidance on the use of screens to further improve safety for passengers and drivers.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[151802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made on the effect of the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021 on the private hire taxi sector in Slough.

Rachel Maclean:

The lockdown restrictions announced in January 2021 are necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19. The Government is working with the taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) sector, including the Licensed Private Hire Car Association (LPHCA), to understand the issues it is facing and explore how these can be addressed.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[151803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what financial support the Government is providing for the taxi and private hire sector in Slough during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has announced several measures available to UK businesses, including the taxi and private hire sector, to support them through this challenging time. The majority of taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) drivers are self-employed and can therefore apply for grants through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). Over the first three rounds of the scheme, a total of up to £21,570 has been made available. HMRC will announce details of the fourth grant on 3 March 2021.

Owners, operators and drivers of taxis and PHVs may also be eligible for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) or the coronavirus Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs).

In addition, some local authorities are using discretionary grants to support local businesses, including taxi and PHV businesses. Owners, operators and drivers of taxis and PHVs should contact the relevant local authority regarding these schemes.

The Government has launched a 'support finder' tool to help businesses and self-employed workers quickly and easily determine what financial support is available to them.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Mr Ben Bradshaw: [\[150671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason pre-arrival covid-19 tests for people arriving in the UK are only accepted in English, French or Spanish.

Mr Ben Bradshaw: [\[150672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans the Government has to expand the number of languages accepted for pre-arrival covid-19 tests.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[150673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate the Government has made of the number of British nationals that are unable to return to the UK due to the unavailability of English language test certificates in their country of origin.

Robert Courts:

Travellers must present proof of a negative coronavirus test result taken within the 3 days before their departure to the UK. The Government considered carefully which languages to permit the result notification to be provided in. English, French and Spanish were deemed to be appropriate as the majority of countries' testing providers could meet this requirement.

The result notification must be understandable to Border Force personnel upon arrival in the UK for enforcement purposes. This is possible with French and Spanish, given the similarity of key wording in the notification to English. Widening the number of languages permitted for the notification would reduce the ability of Border Force to assess adequately the veracity of the result.

There is no requirement for British travellers or residents to register with the FCDO when they travel or live abroad, so the Government does not hold data on the number of British nationals overseas, or those unable to return to the UK for any reason.

■ **Travel: Quarantine**

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[150675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions the Government has had with representatives of the (a) airline and (b) travel sectors on exiting the Government's covid-19 quarantine strategy.

Robert Courts:

Ministers and officials have engaged extensively with the aviation and travel industries throughout the pandemic. We remain committed to an open engagement with the sector and continue to work with industry to share information and provide industry the opportunity to contribute as policy develops, with the aim of helping retain jobs and return the sector to growth as soon as possible.

TREASURY

■ **Advertising: Tax Allowances**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[151806\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing tax credits to encourage advertisers to use UK media.

Jesse Norman:

The Government keeps all tax policy under review and regularly receives proposals for sector-specific tax reliefs. When considering any new tax reliefs, HM Treasury

must ensure they provide support to businesses across the economy in a fair way and represent good value for money for the taxpayer.

■ **Aviation: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Henry Smith: [\[150761\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until end of July 2021 for aviation sector employees.

Jesse Norman:

The Government will set out the next phase of the plan to tackle the virus and protect jobs at Budget 2021.

■ **Business: Insurance**

Royston Smith: [\[151771\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the insurance industry promptly settles claims for business interruption caused by the covid-19 pandemic.

John Glen:

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rules require insurers to handle claims fairly and promptly and settle claims quickly once settlement terms are agreed. The FCA has said that, in light of COVID-19, insurers must consider very carefully the needs of their customers and show flexibility in their treatment of them.

The Government is pleased that a final judgment has been reached by the Supreme Court in the FCA Business Interruption test case and trust that this will provide the legal clarity urgently sought by policyholders. The FCA has set out its expectation that insurers should move quickly to resolve claims as determined by the judgment, making interim payments wherever possible.

■ **Child Benefit: Coronavirus**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[151818\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on increasing child benefit by £10 a week to ensure that families have enough money to meet the additional financial pressures of children and young people having to learn from home.

Steve Barclay:

The Government is committed to managing the public finances in a disciplined and responsible way by targeting support where it is most needed.

We will ensure benefits retain their value by guaranteeing that for the second consecutive year, Child Benefit will increase from April in line with CPI (0.5 per cent). The Government will continue to review levels of Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits alongside other benefits annually. As individuals anywhere on the income distribution

are entitled to Child Benefit, increasing Child Benefit to support families who are struggling with additional financial pressures would be poorly targeted.

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

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Mohammad Yasin:

[150898]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether furlough payments under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme from March 2021 will be calculated using employees pre-covid-19 outbreak earnings.

Jesse Norman:

For those on their employer's payroll on 19 March 2020, the usual salary under the CJRS will be calculated based on their earnings prior to that date. An alternative calculation is used for newer employees who were first reported by their employer after 19 March 2020.

Guidance on calculating how much can be claimed under the CJRS can be found on GOV.UK.

■ **Coronavirus: Government Assistance**

Philip Davies:

[151648]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people with trading profits of over £50,000 per annum and therefore ineligible for support from the Government during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

By 31 December 2020, 186,000 individuals have been assessed as ineligible for the third SEISS grant as their trading profits are over £50,000 per annum.

This figure was taken from the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme statistics published on 28 January 2021: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/self-employment-income-support-scheme-statistics-january-2021>.

■ **Cost of Living**

Robert Halfon:

[151675]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent steps he has taken to reduce the cost of living for people experiencing economic hardship.

Steve Barclay:

The Government has announced wide-ranging support for people at risk of experiencing economic hardship, including: income support schemes, mortgage holidays, extra support for renters, additional support through the welfare system worth £7.4 billion in 2020-21, a £500 million local authority hardship fund to help

people with their council tax bills, a £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme to support families with the cost of food and bills, help with utility bills, and £500 payments to support low income individuals to self-isolate under NHS Test and Trace.

As the Government has done throughout this crisis, we will continue to consider how best to support people as the public health and economic contexts develop.

■ **Credit Unions: Corporation Tax**

Gareth Thomas: [150657]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of amount raised in corporation tax from credit unions in the most recent year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer that I gave on 9 February (UIN 146759).

■ **Customs: Northern Ireland**

Jim Shannon: [151710]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to extend the customs exemption period beyond the deadline of 31 March 2021 for goods entering into Northern Ireland via Great Britain.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has written to the European Commission in relation to the implementation of aspects of the Northern Ireland Protocol. The letter has been published on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-from-the-chancellor-of-the-duchy-of-lancaster-to-the-vice-president-of-the-european-commission-2-february-2021>.

■ **Devolution: Finance**

Alan Brown: [149785]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish an eighth edition of the Statement of funding policy: funding the Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and Northern Ireland Assembly.

Steve Barclay:

The eighth edition of the Statement of Funding Policy was published alongside Spending Review 2020 and can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/943689/Statement_of_Funding_Policy_2020.pdf

■ Directors: Coronavirus

Stuart Anderson:

[\[151853\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will introduce additional specific measures to compensate for directors' of limited companies loss of earnings during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided substantial levels of support throughout this crisis to support people's jobs and livelihoods, and to support businesses and public services across the UK, spending over £280 billion over the last year.

Directors who pay themselves a salary through a PAYE scheme are eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). However, some directors pay themselves in large part through dividends, while taking a small salary. Dividends are not covered by this scheme nor by the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). This is because income from dividends is a return on investment in the company, rather than wages. Under HMRC's current reporting mechanisms it is not possible to distinguish between dividends derived from an individual's own company and dividends from other sources.

The Government continues to work closely with stakeholders to explore how it can support different groups. The Government has engaged with various proposals put forward by stakeholder groups to assess if any are viable, and it continues to review these proposals to ensure they overcome the fundamental issues of protecting taxpayer money and safeguarding against fraud and abuse from organised criminals and others who would seek to exploit these schemes.

Individuals who are not eligible for the CJRS or SEISS may be eligible for other Government support. The Government has boosted the generosity of the welfare system through a temporary £20 a week increase in the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element. The Government has also increased the Local Housing Allowance rates for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit. Other support measures include rental support, mortgage holidays, enhanced Statutory Sick Pay and council tax support through local authorities.

■ Financial Services Compensation Scheme: Credit

Paul Blomfield:

[\[151700\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Financial Conduct Authority on extending the Financial Services Compensation Scheme to payday lending companies.

John Glen:

The Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) is the compensation scheme of last resort for customers of failed UK-authorized financial services firms and is funded by a levy on the financial services industry. The FSCS is an independent non-governmental body and carries out its compensation function within rules set by the

Prudential Regulation Authority and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), they have the power to decide which activities are given FSCS protection. In 2016, the FCA decided not to extend FSCS protection to most consumer credit activities because it believed other regulatory requirements were sufficient.

The FCA's reasoning for not extending FSCS protection was set out in a letter on 15 February 2019 from its Chief Executive to the Chair of the Treasury Select Committee. This reasoning was that consumer credit firms did not generally hold client assets; losses to consumers had reduced since the FCA had taken over regulation of consumer credit; and, because the cost of providing FSCS cover for high-cost short-term credit would likely need to be subsidised by levies on other regulated firms. A copy of that letter can be found here: <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/commons-committees/treasury/correspondence/2017-19/fca-chief-executive-to-chair-re-wonga-150219.pdf>.

Treasury ministers and officials meet regularly with the FCA, and the Government will continue to work closely with the FCA to ensure consumers of financial services are treated fairly.

■ Job Retention Bonus

Henry Smith: [150759]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will reintroduce the Job Retention Bonus at an increased rate of £6,000 per employee retained in the business who have either been fully or part-time furloughed.

Jesse Norman:

The objective of the Job Retention Bonus (JRB) was to incentivise employers to retain employees between November, when the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was due to end, and the end of January through a £1,000 bonus paid to the employer. However, the subsequent extension of the CJRS allowed employers to retain their staff during that period by covering 80% of furloughed employees' wages. Given this extension to the end of April, the policy intent of the JRB falls away.

The Government remains committed to deploying a retention incentive set at a suitable level, at the appropriate time.

■ Local Press: Non-domestic Rates

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [151807]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to extend Business Rates Relief to local news publishers.

Jesse Norman:

The Government recognises that local newspapers are at the heart of civic life for communities. In order to support them, at Budget 2020 the Government extended the duration of the £1,500 local newspaper office space discount for a further five years.

This year the Government has provided an unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties due to the direct adverse effects of COVID-19, worth over £10 billion, and has frozen the business rates multiplier for all businesses for 2021-22.

The Government has provided various schemes to support firms, including wholesalers, including Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans, Bounce Back Loans, grants and VAT deferrals. The Budget will set out the next phase of the Government's plans to tackle the virus, protect jobs and support business.

■ **Museums and Galleries: Tax Allowances**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[150919\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recommendations made by the UK alliance of visual art networks in their letter and written evidence submitted to his Department on 20 January 2021 on the extension of Museums and Galleries Exhibition Tax Relief; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The Government keeps all tax reliefs under review, and regularly receives proposals for changes to tax reliefs. The Government has committed to reviewing MGETR before its expiry in 2022.

When considering potential changes, HM Treasury must ensure they provide support to businesses across the economy in a fair way and represent good value for money for the taxpayer.

■ **National Insurance: Cost of Living**

Robert Halfon:

[\[151676\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the increased national insurance threshold on the cost of living for residents of (a) Harlow constituency and (b) the UK.

Jesse Norman:

In April 2020 the Government increased the Primary Threshold (PT) and the Lower Profits Limit (LPL), the point at which employees and the self-employed start paying the main rate of National Insurance contributions, by over £850 to £9,500. While HM Treasury does not publish tax information at constituency level, at the national level this was a tax cut for 31 million working people, saving the typical employee about £104 and a typical self-employed person about £78 in 2020/21. From April 2021, the PT/LPL will increase to £9,568.

■ Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus**Rachael Maskell:** [\[150845\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to extend the 100 per cent Business Rates Relief discount for a further year to mitigate the ongoing effect of the covid-19 pandemic on businesses and retailers.

Jesse Norman:

This year the Government has provided an unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties due to the direct adverse effects of COVID-19, worth over £10 billion, and has frozen the business rates multiplier for all businesses for 2021-22.

The Government has provided various schemes to support firms, including wholesalers, including Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans, Bounce Back Loans, grants and VAT deferrals.

The Budget will set out the next phase of the Government's plans to tackle the virus, protect jobs and support business.

■ Personal Care Services: VAT**Sir Alan Campbell:** [\[150691\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will introduce a 5 per cent reduction in VAT for the hair and beauty industry in the forthcoming spending review.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors, and will run until 31 March 2021.

This policy will cost over £2 billion. The Government keeps all taxes under review, and any future decisions on tax policy will be made at Budget.

The Government has announced a significant support package to help businesses from a whole range of sectors through the winter months, which includes an extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, an extension of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant, and an extension of the application window for the Government-backed loan schemes.

■ Protective Clothing: VAT**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[150706\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to Answer of 29 January to Question 142820, whether the Government is applying VAT to face coverings that do not meet the standards set out by Public Health England.

Jesse Norman:

The standard rate of VAT applies to most goods and services, including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and face coverings. Face coverings were not included in

the temporary zero-rate on PPE, which came into effect on 1 May 2020 and ended, as legislated, on 31 October 2020.

■ Revenue and Customs: Offices

Sir John Hayes:

[151604]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that local tax offices are based in town centres.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC are committed to their strategy, announced in 2015, of moving to 13 regional centres, all within Government hubs, in city centre locations where the majority of their staff are already based. This is key to HMRC's and wider Government's transformation and is aligned with the Places for Growth Programme.

Customer services will not be reduced by the closure of offices. HMRC had already closed their enquiry centres in 2014. Currently almost all business customers deal with the department online and, in 2020, 94 per cent of Self-Assessment returns were filed digitally. In addition to dealing with enquiries by telephone, HMRC have set up an Extra Support Team, providing assistance to taxpayers who need extra help. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, HMRC are unable to offer face to face appointments at this time, but they continue to serve taxpayers through other communication channels. Evidence from customer satisfaction survey results confirms that taxpayers, particularly those who would have satisfied the criteria for a face to face appointment, are happy with these alternative services.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[149813]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he provide ongoing financial support to the self-employed through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme in the period between the end of the third grant in January 2021 and his budget statement on the fourth grant on 3 March 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is committed to supporting the self-employed population during the COVID-19 pandemic through a substantial package of support.

The three Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grants combined provided up to £21,570 of support for each individual, placing the SEISS among the most generous schemes for the self-employed in the world. As of 31 December, about 2.7 million individuals have made claims totalling over £18.9 billion so far across all three grants.

The claims window for the third grant closed on 29 January 2021. Further details of the fourth grant, which will cover February to the end of April, will be announced alongside other economic updates at Budget in March.

The SEISS continues to be just one element of a substantial package of support for the self-employed which includes Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

■ State Retirement Pensions

Luke Pollard:

[\[151833\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans amend his policies on the triple lock on state pensions.

Steve Barclay:

Due to the unprecedented economic circumstances, average earnings fell last year. Under current legislation, this would mean a freeze to State Pensions. However, the Government took action by legislating to give the Government the ability to increase State Pension and Pension Credit rates for 2021/22. This enabled the Government to honour its manifesto commitment to the Triple Lock which uprates the State Pension each year by the highest of average earnings growth, price inflation and 2.5%. As announced by the Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions on 25 November, the new State Pension and the basic State Pension will both be increased by 2.5% this April.

As with all aspects of Government policy with major spending implications, any decisions on future changes to the Triple Lock will be taken as part of the annual Budget process in the context of the wider public finances. Final decisions on uprating policy for pensions and welfare benefits are taken by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions through her annual uprating review.

■ Taxation: Self-assessment

Jessica Morden:

[\[151646\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much in interest payments on Time to Pay arrangements has been (a) billed, (b) recovered and (c) sent to debt collection agencies by his Department since the start of the covid-19 pandemic.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ UK Trade with EU: VAT

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[150879\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the economic effect on British importers of VAT charges on imported goods from the EU.

Jesse Norman:

VAT has historically been charged on goods imported into the UK from the EU. What has changed since 1 January 2021 is the way in which that VAT is collected.

As with all tax measures, where new changes have been introduced, the Government includes its assessment of the impacts of the changes in Tax Information and Impact Notes. Notes for measures recently legislated for in the Taxation (Post-transition Period) Act were published alongside that legislation.

■ Video Games: Tax Allowances

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[150968\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential economic merits of the Independent Game Developers' Association's proposal for an increase in the rate of video games tax relief from 25 per cent to 32 per cent.

Jesse Norman:

In 2019-20 the Video Games Tax Relief (VGTR) supported UK expenditure of £355 million on the production of 150 video games.

The Government keeps all tax reliefs under review, and regularly receives proposals for changes to tax reliefs. When considering changes, HM Treasury must ensure they provide support to businesses across the economy in a fair way and represent good value for money for the taxpayer.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus

Caroline Nokes:

[\[150781\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending business rates exemptions and the temporary VAT reduction for businesses in the wedding industry to relieve the financial pressure on the sector resulting from the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

This year the Government has provided an unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties due to the direct adverse effects of COVID-19, worth over £10 billion, and has frozen the business rates multiplier for all businesses for 2021-22.

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 continues to keep all taxes under review, and any tax decisions will be made at Budget.

The Government has provided various schemes to support firms overall, including Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans, Bounce Back Loans, grants and VAT deferrals.

■ Weddings: Insurance

Carolyn Harris:

[\[151773\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the availability of insurance cover for the weddings industry during the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

The Government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector regarding its response to this unprecedented situation, and is encouraging insurers to do all they can to support customers during this difficult period.

Insurers take commercial decisions regarding the products they offer and risks they cover based on their view of the likelihood of a risk occurring, and have cited the likelihood of COVID-19 risk crystallising as a challenge to insure. Different insurers may take a different view, therefore customers in the wedding sector are encouraged to shop around to seek the most suitable cover at the best price.

The Government is committed to ensuring consumers have access to a range of financial products that suit their needs and is keeping this situation under review.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Coronavirus: Prohibition Notices

Ian Lavery:

[\[149766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many prohibition notices for each sector have been served by the Health and Safety Executive to employers for breaching covid-19 safety.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) takes Covid-19 safety at work very seriously and it is playing a critical role in the national response to the pandemic. The Government has provided additional funding of £14 million to HSE to strengthen its capacity to tackle Covid-19.

Since the start of the pandemic HSE has carried out over 110,000 Covid-19 spot checks and responded to over 18,000 concerns. Over 700 checks a day are currently taking place. Spot checks have been targeted in those industries where workers are most likely to be vulnerable to transmission risks.

HSE's evidence is that more than 90% of the businesses checked have the right precautions in place or are willing to make necessary changes promptly and without the need for enforcement notices. HSE will continue to take enforcement action where appropriate, but the best use of its time and resource to ensure employers take the right action promptly is often to educate, persuade or require matters to be put right immediately.

HSE has to date issued two prohibition notices for breaches of workplace COVID-secure standards, both in the oil and gas industry (part of the extractive utilities sector).

A further 212 COVID-19 related interventions have resulted in improvement notices, 1,422 in written correspondence and 6429 in verbal advice.

The tables below provide the breakdowns by industry sector. To note, sector comparisons cannot be made as the figures are not like for like in each sector due to our targeting approach.

Table 1: COVID-19 related interventions resulting in an outcome of improvement notice

INDUSTRY SECTOR	NUMBER OF COVID-19 RELATED INTERVENTIONS RESULTING IN AN OUTCOME OF AN IMPROVEMENT NOTICE
Agriculture	0
Construction	107
Extractive Utilities	2
Manufacturing	38
Services	53
Water / Waste Management	7
(Sector not specified)	5
Total	212

Table 2: COVID-19 related interventions resulting in an outcome of written correspondence

INDUSTRY SECTOR	NUMBER OF COVID-19 RELATED CASES RESULTING IN AN OUTCOME OF WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE
Agriculture	8
Construction	457
Extractive Utilities	24
Manufacturing	474
Services	367
Water / Waste Management	65
(Sector not specified)	27
Total	1,422

Table 3: COVID-19 related interventions resulting in an outcome of verbal advice

INDUSTRY SECTOR	NUMBER OF COVID-19 RELATED CASES RESULTING IN AN OUTCOME OF VERBAL ADVICE
Agriculture	69
Construction	1,165
Extractive Utilities	107
Manufacturing	2,724
Services	2,030
Water / Waste Management	299
(Sector not specified)	35
Total	6,429

Note: This data was extracted from HSE's live operational database on 9th February 2021 and is subject to change e.g. as there can be a delay of up to 10 working days before actions are updated on the database.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Cat Smith:

[\[150834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2021 to Question 140162, how many Kickstart jobs have been confirmed through grant agreements with the employer and uploaded as a vacancy through jobcentres.

Mims Davies:

As of 04/02/2021 there were around 15,000 jobs uploaded to Job Centre Plus provision service.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Scottish Borders

John Lamont:

[\[151796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many new job placements have been created in the Scottish Borders as part of the Kickstart Scheme.

Mims Davies:

I refer my Right Honourable friend to PQ [145013](#)

■ Universal Credit

Alan Brown:

[\[151764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what changes she has made to the universal credit system to comply with the Court of Appeal judgement of 22 June 2020 on assessing two wage payments received within a single assessment period.

Will Quince:

The Universal Credit (Earned Income) Amendment Regulations 2020 were laid in October 2020, so for cases affected by this issue, monthly earnings can be reallocated to another assessment period. To support this, we have designed a tool which interacts with the Universal Credit Service to allow the redistribution of earnings where appropriate, with guidance having been issued to staff to ensure that where an issue is identified, the correct remedial action is taken.

Automated identification of affected claimants is expected to be implemented in early 2021. This will allow us to proactively correct Universal Credit awards before they are paid without the claimant needing to raise the issue.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Palestinians: Remote Education

Scott Benton:

[\[149822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what mechanisms are in place to monitor self-learning educational materials distributed by the UN Relief and Works Agency to Palestinian children in the West Bank and Gaza.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 15 February 2021. The correct answer should have been:

James Cleverly:

The UK Government has zero tolerance to incitement of violence, and we have raised this issue with UNRWA. FCDO monitors UNRWA's performance via programme monitoring and annual assessments to ensure it continues to deliver quality services.

We contacted UNRWA directly regarding this issue and understand that as soon as the mistake was identified, UNRWA took swift action to correct the issue and conducted a thorough review to identify and address any education materials in breach of its policies.

We continue to monitor the situation to ensure self-learning materials remain in line with UN values.

The FCDO monitors UNRWA's self-learning material via different tools including programme monitoring and annual assessments to assess UNRWA's implementation of the curriculum framework. This ensures lessons taught with UNRWA self-learning materials are in line with UN values.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Carers: Coronavirus

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[146895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing covid-19 testing and personal protective equipment to family carers on a similar basis to the provision of that equipment to care home staff.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 16 February 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Helen Whately:

In response to clinical advice and following a successful pilot, free personal protective equipment (PPE) for COVID-19 needs is now being provided to

unpaid carers who do not live with the person they care for. In line with the Government's commitment to provide free PPE for COVID-19 needs to the adult social care sector, this offer for unpaid carers is currently available until the end of June 2021 and can be accessed through local authorities and local resilience forums. As of May 2020, the Government included unpaid carers in its list of essential workers and those prioritised for COVID-19 testing in England. If they have symptoms of COVID-19, unpaid carers can book a test directly online and access testing themselves or for members of their household who are experiencing symptoms.

The family leave guidance published by NHS Employers in October 2020 sets out what an employer may consider should a member of staff who is currently on family leave – maternity, adoption, or shared parental leave – indicate that they would like to return to work early or for a period of time to support the National Health Service during the pandemic.

Employers will need to carry out a risk assessment and provide appropriate facilities in accordance with the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 for any employee returning from a period of maternity leave, in particular mothers who are breastfeeding.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ 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.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 10 February 2021. The correct answer should have been:

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 £ 154 201 m 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.