



Daily Report

Thursday, 25 February 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 25 February 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:46 P.M., 25 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**■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Anne McLaughlin:****[912435]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the UK leaving the EU on UK businesses that hire rather than sell goods.

Paul Scully:

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement secured zero tariffs and zero quotas on trade in goods between the UK and EU.

The Agreement also guarantees that UK investors and service suppliers will be able to access the EU's markets and will not be subject to discriminatory barriers to trade.

If someone hires goods to the EU, they will need to check the national regulations of the country they are doing business in to understand how best to operate.

If the supplier intends to travel for business, they should check whether they need to apply for a visa, work permit or other documentation before travelling to the EU.

The Department has undertaken no specific analysis in relation to leaving the EU and goods for hire.

■ **Additional Restrictions Grant****Lucy Powell:****[156405]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding has been allocated to local authorities through the Additional Restrictions Grant; and how much of this funding has been disbursed.

Paul Scully:

The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) is a discretionary scheme aimed at supporting businesses, including those that have not been mandated to close but have had their trade adversely affected by the nationalised restrictions. Local Authorities have been allocated a further £500m in discretionary funding via the ARG, in addition to £1.1bn already allocated in November 2020. Local Authorities can use the ARG to support businesses in their local area, as they see fit. We expect Local Authorities to use this additional resource quickly to support businesses in their area.

This data relates to allocations and grant payments made by Local Authorities to businesses up to 17 January 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-grant-funding-local-authority-payments-to-small-and-medium-businesses> .

■ Certification Officer

John Spellar:

[156255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Certification Office.

Paul Scully:

The Certification Officer is the independent statutory office holder responsible for regulating trade unions and employers' associations.

The Certification Officer lays a report before Parliament annually. The most recent report was laid in July 2020. The Certification Officer also publishes an annual operational plan, the most recent of which was published in June 2020. These documents provide insight to the effectiveness of the operations of the Certification Officer. Furthermore, the Labour Market Director within the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy reviews the Certification Officer's performance annually.

■ Closed Businesses Lockdown Payment

Lucy Powell:

[156404]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding has been allocated to each local authority for the one-off business covid-19 lockdown grants payment announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 5 January 2020; and how much of this funding has been disbursed by local authorities.

Paul Scully:

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 5 January a further package of support for businesses that are required to close, or which are severely affected by the restrictions put in place to tackle Covid-19 and save lives. Business that are mandated to close may be eligible for grants of up to £4,500 for every six weeks of closure through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) Addendum: 5 January onwards. The Closed Business Lockdown Payment (CBLP) is a one-off payment of up to £9,000 to support business during the difficult Spring period. In order to make administration simpler for Local Authorities, the CBLP has been paid to eligible businesses, together with the LRSG, in one single payment.

We have not yet published data on the CBLP. Yesterday, we published data relating to allocations and grant payments made by Local Authorities to businesses up to 17 January 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-grant-funding-local-authority-payments-to-small-and-medium-businesses> .

■ Competition and Markets Authority: Pay

John McDonnell:

[154690]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many non-senior civil service staff at the Competition and Markets Authority will receive a performance related pay bonus for the financial year 2019-20, broken

down by (a) ethnicity, (b) age, (c) gender, (d) part-time working and (e) other protected characteristics.

Paul Scully:

The number of staff by protected characteristic¹ and part-time working that will receive a performance related payment for performance in the 2019 - 2020 financial year is as follows:

(a) Ethnicity

ETHNICITY	COUNT
BAME	56
Non-BAME	208
Prefer not to say	3
Not Reportable ²	21

(b) Age

AGE	COUNT
16 - 24	10
25 - 34	123
35 - 44	84
45 - 54	55
55+	15

(c) Gender

GENDER	COUNT
Female	139
Male	148

(d) Part-time working

WORKING PATTERN	COUNT
Full Time	255
Part Time	32

(e) Other protected characteristics

DISABILITY	COUNT
Disabled	12
Not Disabled	243
Not Reportable ²	32
Marital Status	Count
Married / Civil Partnership	98
Other Marital Status	173
Not Reportable ²	16
Religious Belief	Count
Declared Religion or Belief	124
No Religion or Belief	121
Prefer not to say	16
Not Reportable ²	26
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	COUNT
LGBTQ+	22
Straight / Heterosexual	241
Prefer not to say	12
Not Reportable ²	12

¹ The CMA does not currently report on gender reassignment or pregnancy and maternity protected characteristics, as defined under the Equality Act (2020), due to the small number of staff.

² Not Reportable refers to staff that have not disclosed information for a given diversity characteristic.

³ For groups with less than 5 staff under a given protected characteristic, these groups have been combined with larger groups and / or recorded as ‘

■ Competition and Markets Authority: Performance Appraisal

John McDonnell:

[\[154692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of non-senior civil service BAME staff employed by the Competition and Markets Authority have received a poor performance marking of partly achieved or needs to improve for the financial year 2019-20; and how that

proportion directly compares to the proportion of non-BAME staff that have received that marking.

Paul Scully:

The proportion of BAME and non-BAME staff in receipt of 'Partially Achieving' or 'Needs to Improve' ratings for the performance year 2019 – 2020 is as follows:

ETHNICITY	PARTIALLY ACHIEVING	NEEDS TO IMPROVE
BAME	12.3%	1.1%
Non-BAME	5.0%	0.2%
Prefer not to say	21.4%	0.0%
Not Reportable ¹	6.3%	2.1%

It should be noted that only a small number of 'Partially Achieving' (52) and 'Needs to Improve' (4) were issued across 736 overall ratings. In addition, the 'Prefer not to say' cohort for ethnicity is only comprised of 16 staff

¹ Not Reportable refers to staff that have not disclosed information for a given diversity characteristic.

■ **Competition and Markets Authority: Performance Related Pay**

John McDonnell:

[\[154693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the average value of bonuses paid to non-senior civil service staff eligible for performance related pay at the Competition and Markets Authority has been in each financial year since 2015, broken down by protected characteristics.

Paul Scully:

The average (mean) value of performance related bonuses to non-SCS staff by protected characteristic¹ for the financial years 2015/16 to 2020/21 is as follows. It should be noted that payments made in a given financial year are attributable to performance in the previous financial year.

AGE	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
16 - 24	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£288.08	£874.41
25 - 34	£1,164.79	£1,630.00	£1,623.61	£2,102.95	£1,105.31	£1,845.48
35 - 44	£1,826.05	£2,098.81	£2,356.92	£2,978.63	£1,624.57	£2,250.99
45 - 54	£2,141.31	£2,421.07	£2,272.87	£3,027.90	£1,353.08	£1,876.27
55 - 64	£1,625.16	£2,195.39	£1,927.40	£2,682.08	£1,139.67	£1,687.26
65+	£1,696.25	£661.33	£2,385.00	£3,630.00	£867.47	£1,325.00
Disability	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21

AGE	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Disabled	£1,208.30	£1,654.22	£1,591.00	£2,675.00	£1,630.52	£2,316.86
Not Disabled	£1,785.01	£2,074.33	£2,107.57	£2,658.10	£1,278.88	£1,880.36
Not Reportable	£1,862.05	£2,021.93	£2,279.42	£2,844.06	£1,450.76	£2,164.22
Ethnicity	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
BAME	£1,217.54	£1,542.94	£1,638.15	£2,363.74	£1,180.51	£1,682.45
Non-BAME	£1,772.91	£2,061.00	£2,136.92	£2,776.90	£1,348.38	£1,979.60
Prefer not to say	£2,056.00	£2,620.25	£569.00	£4,000.00	£873.58	£737.60
Not Reportable	£2,351.43	£2,293.14	£2,543.70	£2,720.13	£1,604.28	£2,232.62
Gender	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Female	£1,804.01	£1,999.96	£2,149.27	£2,469.59	£1,218.69	£1,910.79
Male	£1,728.75	£2,063.20	£2,070.52	£2,945.74	£1,451.38	£1,946.10
Marital Status	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Married / Civil Partnership	£1,733.30	£2,060.78	£2,372.43	£2,984.02	£1,479.18	£2,033.39
Other Marital Status	£1,721.42	£1,942.37	£2,340.89	£2,515.19	£1,202.63	£1,862.71
Not Reportable	£1,969.78	£2,363.25	£1,885.74	£2,762.10	£1,664.53	£2,028.27
Religious Belief	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Declared Religion or Belief	£1,417.42	£1,966.38	£2,019.61	£2,513.84	£1,263.08	£1,761.20
No Religion or Belief	£1,878.19	£2,015.48	£2,037.40	£2,829.85	£1,355.32	£2,039.18
Prefer not to say	£1,910.67	£2,364.00	£2,035.25	£2,775.00	£998.65	£1,922.22
Not	£2,245.56	£2,154.48	£2,483.85	£3,029.81	£1,626.40	£2,282.29

AGE	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Reportable						
Sexual Orientation	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
LGBTQ+	£1,188.38	£2,496.40	£1,767.00	£2,743.11	£1,805.29	£2,030.67
Straight / Heterosexual	£1,710.97	£1,969.03	£2,078.45	£2,664.78	£1,269.27	£1,917.40
Prefer not to say	£1,899.22	£2,148.13	£2,018.00	£2,938.40	£1,155.14	£1,913.55
Not Reportable	£2,290.10	£2,380.00	£2,456.94	£2,943.36	£1,637.35	£2,000.67

Since the 2018/19 financial year, the CMA has calculated performance related bonuses as a flat rate payment which is tiered based on grade. Prior to the 2018/19 financial year, payments were made as a fixed percentage of a qualifying staff member's base salary. In both approaches, it is noted that some groups of protected characteristics (e.g. younger staff between 25 - 34) received lower average performance related bonuses as they historically have primarily occupied more junior grades with lower base salaries.

¹ The CMA does not currently report on gender reassignment or pregnancy and maternity protected characteristics, as defined under the Equality Act (2020), due to the small number of staff

² Not Reportable refers to staff that have not disclosed information for a given diversity characteristic.

■ Competition and Markets Authority: Senior Civil Servants

John McDonnell:

[\[154694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many staff at the Competition and Markets Authority hold senior civil service roles at grade five or above, broken down by protected characteristics.

Paul Scully:

The number of CMA staff that hold Senior Civil Servants positions (grade five or above) as at 19 February 2021 is as follows. This has been broken down by protected characteristic¹:

AGE	COUNT
Under 34	3
35 - 44	53
45 - 54	45

AGE	COUNT
55+	12
Disability	Count
Disabled	3
Not Disabled	92
Prefer not to say	3
Not Reportable ²	17
ETHNICITY	COUNT
BAME	3
Non-BAME	96
Prefer not to say	3
Not Reportable ²	15
Gender	Count
Female	52
Male	62
Marital Status	Count
Married / Civil Partnership	66
Other Marital Status	33
Not Reportable ²	15
Religious Belief	Count
Declared Religion or Belief	39
No Religion or Belief	54
Prefer not to say	6
Not Reportable ²	15
Sexual Orientation	Count
LGBTQ+	5
Straight / Heterosexual	93
Prefer not to say	6

ETHNICITY	COUNT
Not Reportable ²	10

It should be noted that CMA staff of all contract types have been included in the tables listed above. This includes permanent staff, fixed-term contracts and those on loan from other government departments.

¹ The CMA does not currently report on gender reassignment or pregnancy and maternity protected characteristics, as defined under the Equality Act (2020), due to the small number of staff.

² Not Reportable refers to staff that have not disclosed information for a given diversity characteristic.

³ For groups with less than 5 staff under a given protected characteristic, these groups have been combined with larger groups and / or recorded as ‘

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Tony Lloyd: [\[153126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with pharmaceutical companies on differential pricing policies of covid-19 vaccines for different countries.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Pricing of COVID-19 vaccines between pharmaceutical companies and other countries is a commercial matter for those parties involved.

■ Energy: Meters

Bambos Charalambous: [\[153333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of pausing the installation of smart meters to help prevent the spread of covid-19.

Bambos Charalambous: [\[153334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of banning energy meter readings to help prevent the spread of covid-19.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Government guidance on the current national restrictions enables tradespeople, such as meter readers and smart meter installers, to work in peoples' homes if it is a necessary part of their job.

When visiting peoples' homes, tradespeople should follow the Safer Working [guidance](#) and take appropriate Covid-19 secure precautions.

■ Energy: Prices

Alan Brown:

[\[152576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the merits of ringfencing an allocation of generation capacity specifically for wave and tidal generation in the round 4 contracts for difference auction; and will he make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government recently ran a Call for Evidence inviting views on the scope for marine technologies across the UK. This concluded on 30th September 2020 and we are currently reviewing the responses received. Wave and tidal stream projects remain eligible to compete in pot 2 for Contracts for Difference auctions. We will publish specific allocation round parameters in advance of the next auction; typically, five to six months in advance. This will include the details of whether any technology-specific minima will apply.

Alan Brown:

[\[153305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his timescale is for announcing the timetable for the Contracts for Difference Allocation Round 4; and what steps he is taking to help ensure that renewable energy contributes to future economic recovery.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister in October 2020, the next Contracts for Difference (CfD) auction round (Allocation Round 4) is due to open in late 2021. Preparations for the round are ongoing, and we will publish the timetable for the round later this year.

The Government is eager to deliver supply chain investment from CfD contracts. The public consultation on proposals to strengthen Supply Chain Plan policy has now closed. A Government response will be published in due course.

These measures sit alongside the Prime Minister's announcement on £160 million of new funding towards investment to upgrade ports and infrastructure and long-term ambitions to increase renewable energy capacity, which, together, will support new UK content, jobs and investment.

Ian Murray:

[\[156337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 152474 on Energy: Prices, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of transmission charges on the competitive process of awarding contracts for difference.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

National Grid Electricity System Operator collects transmission charges from network users to recover the cost of installing and maintaining the transmission system in Great Britain and the offshore electricity network infrastructure. These include a locational element to reflect network use as part of the requirement for cost reflective network charges.

Individual Contracts for Difference bidders will determine their bid prices based on their own assessment of expected costs and revenues. The price paid to each successful bidder is based on the clearing price of a competitive auction.

However, the Department does set the maximum strike price each technology can receive (the Administrative Strike Price), which takes into account a broad range of factors. This incorporates our latest view of transmission charges, estimated for pipeline projects where possible using tariffs and network charging assumptions for each location (provided by National Grid).

■ English Language: Education

Alex Sobel:

[\[155361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether English Language Teaching Centres will be made eligible for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant.

Paul Scully:

The Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund (RHLGF) closed on 28 August 2020, with final payments completed by 30 September. There is therefore no scope for businesses to receive funding as part of this programme.

During the period of local and national restrictions the government has introduced support for business that are mandated to close and those that have been severely affected by the restrictions.

For this period of nationalised restrictions, English Language Teaching Centres may be eligible for support through the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) which is a discretionary scheme administered by Local Authorities.

In January, a further £500m was made available in discretionary funding via the Additional Restrictions Grant in addition to the £1.1bn already allocated in November 2020. This additional discretionary funding is to support businesses that are significantly impacted by the restrictions even though not required to close.

Alex Sobel:

[\[155362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether sector-specific support will be announced for English Language Teaching Centres.

Paul Scully:

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

English Language Teaching Centres may be eligible for support through the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), a scheme administered by Local Authorities. It is within Local Authorities' discretion to use this funding to support businesses in the way they see fit. Local Authorities may choose to

support those business who have not be mandated to close but have had their trade adversely affected by restrictions.

Local Authorities have been allocated a further £500m in discretionary funding via the Additional Restrictions Grant. This is in addition to £1.1bn already allocated in November 2020.

■ EU Grants and Loans

Kate Hollern:

[\[155062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding England will receive as part of previously allocated funding from the European Structural and Investment Fund in (a) 2021-22, (b) 2022-23, (c) 2023-24 and (d) 2024-25.

Paul Scully:

No approved data is yet available for allocations of European Structural and investment Funds (ESIF) for 2021/22, 2022/23, or 2023/24. We do not expect any allocation for 2024/25 as ESIF programmes will end in 2023.

■ Green Deal Scheme

Alan Brown:

[\[152575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many appeals to the First Tier Tribunal his Department is aware of as a result of sanction notices issued in response to complaints of Green Deal mis-selling by Home Energy & Lifestyle Management Ltd.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As of 15th February, the Department is aware of 17 appeals made to the General Regulatory Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal in response to sanction notices regarding complaints of Green Deal mis-selling by Home Energy & Lifestyle Management Ltd.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Helen Hayes:

[\[154563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with representatives of small business installers on (a) the accessibility of, (b) effectiveness of and (c) potential improvements to Green Home Grants schemes.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Department regularly engage with stakeholders across the installer supply chain, including small businesses, through roundtable meetings, webinars, and individual engagements. Recently Certification Bodies, individual installers, Trade Associations and representatives from TrustMark and MCS have been engaged and views sought on how the scheme could be improved. Based on business and expert feedback, my officials have:

(a) allowed subcontractors to more easily take part in the scheme and reduced the cost of accreditation by 50% for Green Homes Grant installers for some PAS standards.

(b) improved guidance for installers on providing quotes, to clarify the information needed for the scheme administrator to approve an application and reduce time to approval. We have also updated guidance around the payment processes.

(c) opened channels for further dialogue and feedback within the scheme. The Department held its first installer Webinar in December with over 150 installers in attendance, taking questions and walking through the scheme details and processes.

Sarah Olney:

[\[156497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it remains his Department's policy to deliver the £2 billion pledged to the Green Homes Grant as set out in Sustainable Warmth: protecting vulnerable households in England, published on 11 February 2021.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The £2 billion pledged to the Green Homes Grant (GHG) is comprised of £500m of funding for the Local Authority Delivery element and £1.5 billion of funding originally allocated to the Voucher Scheme for use in the 2020/21 financial year. £320 million of funding was announced for the Voucher Scheme for 2021/22 in the November 2020 Spending Review.

■ Green Jobs Taskforce

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[153319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many times the Green Jobs Taskforce has met since its inception; and whether (a) he or (b) the Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth will chair that taskforce.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Green Jobs Taskforce will assess how the UK jobs market and the skills sector will adapt to support net zero. I chair the taskforce jointly with my Hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Apprenticeships and Skills. Following the first meeting in November, the 2nd meeting of the Taskforce will take place on the 22nd of February, with further meetings planned with the aim of concluding our work in spring 2021. The resulting actions will feed into policy development across Whitehall on Net Zero, including our Net Zero Strategy to be published later in the year.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[156296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that hospitality businesses in (a) Kingston upon Hull North constituency and (b) the UK do not close down as a result of covid-19 restrictions in advance of those restrictions being eased.

Paul Scully:

The Government has brought forward a substantial package of financial support for the hospitality sector over the last year. My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer will be making further announcements on the next phase of our economic support package in his Budget on 3 March.

Local Restrictions Support Grant**Daisy Cooper:**[\[156580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will extend business grant funding via the Local Restrictions Grant scheme beyond 15 February 2021 for the duration of the covid-19 restrictions.

Paul Scully:

Yes. Businesses that are required by law to close will continue to be able to access grant support via the Local Restrictions Support Grant.

The current payment cycle will be for a 44-day period up to the end of the financial year, covering 16 February – 31 March 2021. It follows on directly from the first payment cycle, which covered 5 January – 15 February 2021.

Minimum Wage: Young People**Claire Hanna:**[\[155454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) raising the minimum wage to £10 an hour and (b) ending the lower rates of pay for people under (i) 25, (ii) 21 and (iii) 18 years of age.

Paul Scully:

The Government considers the expert and independent advice of the Low Pay Commission (LPC) when setting the rates for the National Living Wage (NLW) and National Minimum Wage (NMW). We reward workers with the highest possible minimum wage while considering the impact on the economy and affordability for businesses. In April, the National Living Wage rate will increase to £8.91, a 2.2% increase, and the highest ever UK minimum wage.

The Government's target is for the NLW to reach two-thirds of median earnings by 2024. This is a floating number to take into account wider trends in average earnings. On current forecasts it is likely to be around £10 an hour.

For younger workers, the priority in those first years is to secure work and gain experience – something that has always been reflected in the National Minimum Wage rate structure. The LPC estimate that almost 230,000 young workers will benefit from the increases in the 2021 NMW rates.

The NLW currently applies to workers aged 25+, however, from April 2021 it will be extended to those aged 23+, following previous recommendations from the LPC. Government is committed to lowering the age threshold of the National Living Wage to age 21+ by 2024, and will continue to monitor economic conditions.

■ Printing Machinery

Mr David Davis:

[\[154747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to prevent printer manufacturers from locking devices to only being able to use approved printer cartridges.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to tackling consumer rip-offs and bad business practices, including profiteering. Under competition law, responsibility for investigating individual and market-wide competition issues falls to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), the UK's competition authority.

The Government has ensured that the CMA has significant powers and expertise to investigate anti-competitive practices. Consumers and businesses can report concerns regarding competition issues to the CMA.

The Government continues to work with the CMA and other consumer and retail organisations to monitor the extent of profiteering, and will update the law if it is proportionate to do so.

■ Public Houses: Coronavirus

Olivia Blake:

[\[156641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what public health guidance informed his decision prior to the national lockdown that pub patrons had to purchase a substantial meal if they wanted to buy an alcoholic beverage.

Paul Scully:

On 22 February, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister published the Government's 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021'. The roadmap is a step-by-step plan to ease restrictions in England cautiously, starting with education. Across the four steps, the roadmap sets out the sequencing and indicative timing for easing restrictions. This is a cautious and gradual approach.

With regard to the reopening of the hospitality sector, Step 2 will take place no earlier than 12 April, when hospitality venues will be able to open for outdoor service, with no requirement for a substantial meal to be served alongside alcoholic drinks, and no curfew. The requirement to order, eat and drink while seated ('table service') will remain.

■ Redundancy: Equality

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[156551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recommendation by the Women and Equalities Select Committee that HR1 forms should be amended to collect data on the protected characteristics of people that are made redundant in large numbers.

Paul Scully:

The Government is grateful for the work of the Women and Equalities Select Committee on “*Unequal impact? Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact*”. We are currently considering the report and will be responding to its recommendations in due course.

■ **Renewable Energy****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[156502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many (a) organisations and (b) individual members of the public responded to the Aligning UK international support for the clean energy transition consultation, which closed on 8 February 2021.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government is now considering the information received from the consultation, and will respond in due course, including details of the number and type of respondent.

■ **Small Businesses: Coventry****Colleen Fletcher:**[\[156419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase the financial support available for small businesses in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

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

The measures introduced – including four Government-backed loan schemes, local authority grant funding, tax deferrals and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) – have been designed to be accessible to businesses in most sectors and across the UK.

For business who have been mandated to close during the current national restrictions grants of up to the equivalent of £4,500 per 6 weeks of closure have been made available through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed). Further one-off grants of up to £9,000 can also be accessed via the Closed Business lockdown Payment.

Local Authorities have been allocated a further £500m in discretionary funding via the Additional Restrictions Grant to support businesses that are significantly impacted by the restrictions even though not required to close, this is in addition to £1.1bn already allocated in November 2020.

The CJRS will remain open until the end of April 2021, with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500.

We have also extended the application deadline for the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs), the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILs), and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILs) until the end of March 2021, ensuring there is further support in place for firms who need it during this ongoing period of difficulty.

Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership are utilising their close working relationships with the public, private and education sectors in the area to develop and implement a newly-focused Strategic Framework, to address local economic needs and ensure economic resilience during and after the pandemic.

■ **Woodhouse Colliery**

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[156489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made a recent estimate of levels of Chinese investment in West Cumbria Mining Ltd's proposed Woodhouse Colliery deep coal mine project in Whitehaven, West Cumbria.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Planning decisions are made at a local level wherever possible. The planning application for the Whitehaven coal mine has not been called in by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and is a matter for Cumbria County Council to decide. There is no consultation role for my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in this decision.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[912438\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent steps he has taken to simplify trading arrangements between the UK and the EU.

Paul Blomfield:

[\[912441\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent steps he has taken to simplify trading arrangements between the UK and the EU.

Clive Efford:

[\[912460\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent steps he has taken to simplify trading arrangements between the UK and the EU.

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[912468\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent steps he has taken to simplify trading arrangements between the UK and the EU.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Hon Members to the [answers](#) given in Cabinet Office orals on 11 February. Guidance and published information are available on gov.uk.

■ **Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships**

Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[154705\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the average number of days taken to register a birth has been in each of the last 12 months.

Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[154706\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the average number of days taken to register a death has been in each of the last 12 months.

Chloe Smith:

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 PQ154705 , 154706 [UKSA's response to PQ 154705 , 154706.pdf]

DEFENCE

■ **Aircraft Carriers**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[154822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which ships will make up the Carrier Strike Group Task Force.

James Heappey:

The Carrier Strike Group will be formed by the aircraft carrier HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH, two Type 45 destroyers, two Type 23 frigates, two Royal Fleet Auxiliary re-supply ships, and the US Navy destroyer, USS The Sullivans. We are likely to see other NATO allies and international partners contributing ships to the Strike Group throughout the deployment.

■ **Armed Forces: Sexual Offences**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[156410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the new independent body proposed in the Armed Forces Bill will allow people and external organisations to review historical decisions made by the Military Police or Army Legal Services where the survivor thought the investigation into an alleged rape and/or sexual abuse case was unsatisfactory and unjust.

Johnny Mercer:

The Armed Forces Bill will create a new regime for complaints against the Service Police. The proposal seeks to create a new statutory police complaints regime that mirrors the framework in place for independent oversight of the civilian police forces in England and Wales.

The Service Police Complaints Commissioner (SPCC) will oversee the new regime and will have an equivalent role to that carried out by the Director General of the Independent Office for Police Conduct in England and Wales. The Commissioner will carry out investigations into the most serious allegations against the Service Police and will also have overall responsibility for securing the maintenance of suitable arrangements for making complaints and dealing with other serious matters.

The new procedures will only relate to the Service Police forces. We are giving careful consideration to how the procedures will work in practice and how the new regime might apply to historic cases. These procedures will be detailed in a set of regulations that will undergo Parliamentary scrutiny before they are formalised.

The new regime will set out the role of the SPCC, as well as those already responsible for the three Service Police forces as well as the forces themselves. It will not give other people or organisations a role in the new complaints system.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) will be involved in super-complaints about the Service Police, as super-complaints about civilian forces in England and Wales are made to HMICFRS. Organisations who might be designated to make such a complaint will be detailed in the super-complaints regulations that will be made in due course.

■ Armed Forces: Training**John Healey:**[\[154755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what qualifications are required for a general duty personnel to be selected for vaccinator training.

James Heappey:

Prerequisite qualifications for general duty personnel to be selected for vaccinator training is a minimum of two A-levels.

Following selection candidates undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check, complete the NHS online training package, which is the same course as the civilian volunteer workforce undertake, followed by a practical training day, prior to commencing vaccination tasks.

■ Armed Forces: Turks and Caicos Islands**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[154576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what support his Department is providing for the establishment of the Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to the establishment of the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Regiment. MOD support that has or will be provided includes:

Six places on the eight-week Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) Commissioning Course (Short)

The provision of Short-Term Training Teams (STTTs) to deliver basic training packages for up to 150 recruits

The provision and delivery of personal clothing and equipment for each of these recruits and officers

Further STTTs focused on a 'train the trainer' approach to produce qualified instructors able to train further recruit intakes without direct UK support

Our Defence Attaché is working closely with the Regiment's Commanding Officer to provide this package of support on a timeline that suits them. This same package of support is being delivered to the Cayman Islands Regiment.

In addition, in order to assist the establishment and onward professional development of both Regiments, the UK will soon deploy a military staff instructor to the region to work directly with the Regiments' leadership on attaining self-sufficiency.

■ Army**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[154813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which criteria his Department plans to use in assessing the need for the Army to maintain the current number of light infantry battalions.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[154814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of disbanding a light infantry battalion of the Royal Anglian Regiment on UK defence capability.

James Heappey:

Our Armed Forces work tirelessly to protect the UK and our interests at home and abroad, and deliver against the UK's strategic priorities. We will always prioritise our response to the threats that the UK faces, and our Armed Forces must rebalance, evolve, and modernise to meet the threats of the future.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the UK continues to have the world-class Armed Forces that it needs and deserves. The full conclusions of the Integrated Review will be published next month, and the Defence Secretary intends to set out his plans for Defence shortly afterwards.

Stephen Morgan:[\[155355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to disband light infantry battalions; and what assessment he has made of the effect of those on operational effectiveness.

James Heappey:

Our Armed Forces work tirelessly to protect the UK and our interests at home and abroad, and deliver against the UK's strategic priorities. We will always prioritise our response to the threats that the UK faces, and our Armed Forces must rebalance, evolve, and modernise to meet the threats of the future.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the UK continues to have the world-class Armed Forces that it needs and deserves. The full conclusions of the Integrated Review will be published next month, and the Defence Secretary intends to set out his plans for Defence shortly afterwards.

■ Army Foundation College: Coronavirus**Stephen Morgan:****[155353]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what arrangements are in place at the Harrogate Army Foundation College to protect trainees and staff from covid-19.

James Heappey:

Defence is mindful of our responsibilities to all staff and recruits across all our ongoing activities. I would like to assure you that the Army Foundation College (Harrogate) is and continues to be a COVID-19 compliant training establishment.

Staff and recruits are protected by stringent Force Health Protection measures. Apart from very limited occasions where safety elements of training cannot be effective by maintaining a 2m+ distance, staff remain socially distanced from recruit households as a matter of course. In addition, since January, Army Foundation College (Harrogate) have been part of an innovative Defence trial of asymptomatic testing; Junior Soldiers are tested on return to training, both on the day of their arrival and again seven days in to training. This asymptomatic testing has enabled the effective isolation of Junior Soldiers and actively reduced further infections. This testing is not used as a replacement for maintaining strict Force Health Protection measures, but as another layer in caring for these young recruits and in mitigating transmission to the wider community.

■ Bomb Disposal: Seas and Oceans**Christine Jardine:****[156525]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many underwater munitions disposals his Department has performed in each of the last five years in the waters surrounding the UK; and what proportion of those disposals involved (a) high order detonations and (b) low order deflagarations.

James Heappey:

The Royal Navy's Area Diving Groups, part of the Fleet Diving Squadron, are responsible for the disposal of underwater ordnance along the UK coastline, up to 12 nautical miles offshore. In the last five years they have conducted the following numbers of underwater demolitions involving High Order detonation of munitions at sea. No Low Order detonations were conducted.

YEAR	OPERATIONAL TASKS
2020	4
2019	7
2018	13
2017	18
2016	18

■ C17 Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[156277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the through-life support costs are for the C-17 aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

The through life support costs for the C-17 aircraft, over the current expected in-service life of the aircraft are estimated to be in the region of £2.8 billion.

■ Coronavirus: British Overseas Territories

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[154584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what support his Department has provided to governments of the Overseas Territories to help tackle the covid-19 pandemic.

James Heappey:

In support of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Defence has provided a range of assistance to British Overseas Territories in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes the provision of advisory teams, the transportation of medical supplies and, more recently, logistical support with vaccine delivery to the Falkland Islands, Ascension Island and Gibraltar. Defence continues to work closely with the FCDO in order to respond to any request for support to British Overseas Territories.

■ European Fighter Aircraft

Dave Doogan:

[\[156559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost is per flying hour of operating the Typhoon aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

I am withholding the information requested as its release would prejudice commercial interests.

■ Indo-Pacific Region: Aircraft Carriers

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[154821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when Carrier Strike Group will be deployed to the Indo-Pacific.

James Heappey:

Detailed military planning for the Carrier Strike Group deployment is ongoing. The Indo-Pacific phase of the deployment will be taking place in the latter half of 2021.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[154825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which ports the Carrier Strike Group Taskforce will enter as part of its deployment to the Indo-Pacific.

James Heappey:

Detailed planning for the Carrier Strike Group with partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region is on going.

■ Indo-Pacific Region: Navy

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[154816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential operational advantages for the Royal Navy of deploying to the Indo-Pacific in 2021.

James Heappey:

An increased Royal Navy (RN) presence in the Indo Pacific provides the opportunity to reassure, cooperate and operate alongside key regional allies and partners, contributing to regional security and protecting UK interests. Such operations will demonstrate the RN's ability to persistently and credibly operate around the globe in support of UK interests, including for the protection of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and Rules Based International System.

Furthermore, an Indo-Pacific RN presence supports UK prosperity and trade objectives in an increasingly important region of the world. Such operations will allow the RN to develop new, and strengthen existing, navy to navy linkages, that will assist with building partner capacity and interoperability.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[154823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department has taken to prepare (a) individual ships and (b) personnel for deployment to the Indo-Pacific.

James Heappey:

In preparation for this year's deployment of the Carrier Strike Group (CSG) to the Indo-Pacific, individual Force Elements have undergone a planned and recognised generation pathway, which has taken the people, Ships and equipment through a host of mission specific training scenarios.

■ International Criminal Court

Chris Green:

[156447]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with his International counterparts on the implications for military personnel of the ruling that non-state actors can initiate proceedings at the International Criminal Court (ICC), with reference to the February 2021 decision that the ICC has jurisdiction over the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

Chris Green:

[156448]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the implications for British military personnel of the International Criminal Court's ruling that it has jurisdiction to open a probe into allegations of war crimes initiated by non-state actors.

James Heappey:

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

■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones:

[154820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the UK maintains operational sovereignty over F-35 aircraft in the event that it does not have the ability to perform depth maintenance in the UK.

Jeremy Quin:

Yes.

■ Military Bases: Closures

Dave Doogan:

[156561]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what databases are kept on the location of his Department's UK base closures; and whether those databases are publicly available.

Jeremy Quin:

All publicly announced planned disposals are extracted from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation internal management system and can be found on the Defence Disposals Database which is publicly available at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disposal-database-house-of-commons-report>

■ Military Bases: Gyms

Mark Pritchard:

[154891]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's guidance is on the use of gyms on UK military bases and maintaining the fitness of the armed forces during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

Maintaining the fitness of our Armed Forces is critical to ensuring their operational effectiveness and this has continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Defence has benefitted from specific exemptions in law to continue to use gyms and sports facilities on the Defence estate throughout lockdown, taking into account risk assessments and Devolved legislation. However, these facilities are only open where it is deemed essential and COVID-19 secure measures are in place to minimise risks. Other forms of COVID-secure exercise and physical training are being encouraged where the use of gyms is not permitted.

■ Military Bases: Scotland**Dave Doogan:**[\[156560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list his Department's operational establishments in Scotland.

Jeremy Quin:

Of the 110 establishments previously given in Question 134567, 83 are operational establishments, defined as having personnel permanently and routinely stationed at the establishment providing military capability.

These are listed in the attachment.

Attachments:

1. List of MOD Operational Establishments in Scotland [156560 - List of MOD Operational Establishments in Scotland.xlsx]

■ Ministry of Defence: Arms Length Bodies**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[153310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the level of compliance of his Department's arms-length bodies with the UN's Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights.

James Heappey:

The Ministry Of Defence's Arms-Length Bodies (ALBs) are expected to comply with all relevant legislation and with the principles set out in "Good Business", the update to the National Action Plan to implement the United Nations Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights, which is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/522805/Good_Business_Implementing_the_UN_Guiding_Principles_on_Business_and_Human_Rights_updated_May_2016.pdf

■ Ministry of Defence: Crime and Justice Taskforce**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[154901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what targets the Crime and Justice Task Force has set for his Department.

Johnny Mercer:

The Ministry of Defence is not aware of being subject to any targets set by the Crime and Justice Task Force within the Home Office.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Freedom of Information****Tulip Siddiq:**[\[155267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Freedom Of Information requests his Department has pending; and how many of those requests have been pending for more than six months.

James Heappey:

FOIs	OPEN REQUESTS	OPEN REQUESTS OVER 6 MONTHS OLD (RECEIVED BEFORE 22 AUGUST 2020)	OPEN REQUESTS WITHIN THE STATUTORY TIME FRAMES UNDER FOI
As at 22 February 2021	772	295	407

Further information on Government FOI Performance can be found in the National Statistics published at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/government-foi-statistics>

Tulip Siddiq:[\[155268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to reduce the backlog of unanswered Freedom of Information requests at his Department.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence has a plan to drive a reduction in the backlog of outstanding FOI requests as quickly as possible through senior-level focus, visibility and engagement. However, this effort is being conducted against competing Defence Priorities, the COVID 19 pandemic and the Department's statutory obligations to all new requests received under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

■ **Veterans: Medals****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[154812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many veterans who were discharged for reasons of their sexuality have had their medals restored since 2010.

Johnny Mercer:

LGBT+ personnel have made, and continue to make, significant contributions to the Armed Forces. It is deeply regrettable that, because of their sexuality, some members of the Armed Forces were, in the past, treated in a way that would not be acceptable today and the Ministry of Defence has now set up a process to enable those individuals to apply to have their medals restored.

One individual has had medals restored in advance of the policy on medal restoration that was announced on 15 February 2021.

■ War Pensions: Appeals

Justin Madders:

[\[155121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many applications for appeals against decisions made on war pensions have been received by his Department in each year since 2011; and what proportion of those applications for appeal have been successful for the applicant in each of those years.

Johnny Mercer:

There were 16,609 appeals registered under the War Pension Scheme (WPS) between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2020. The table below shows these by the financial year in which they were registered.

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Appeals	1,812	1,599	2,233	2,025	2,224	1,788	1,859	1,515	1,554

There were 6,469 successful WPS appeals between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2020. The table below shows these by the financial year the appeal was cleared.

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Successful Appeals	895	660	625	910	770	675	720	655	560

Information regarding the number of registered appeals against decisions made on war pensions is accessible in the WPS annual statistics <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/war-pensions-scheme-statistics-2020>. The number of appeals registered in each financial year between 2010-11 and 2019-20 can be found in the accompanying excel file, Table 1.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Arts: Coronavirus

Gill Furniss:

[\[156494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on support for the cultural sector after existing support packages end in March 2021.

Caroline Dineneage:

We recognise the significant challenge the Covid pandemic poses to our world-leading cultural sectors, and DCMS is fully committed to supporting cultural organisations to survive this period.

This is why over £1bn of funding has already been committed across arts, heritage and independent cinemas through the £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund, and we are working hard to ensure that Round 2 funding supports as many culturally significant organisations as possible. We are continuing to work closely with our Arm's Length Bodies to understand the need in the sector and how best to support them as we transition out of lockdown over the coming months.

The Government's response to Covid-19 impacts on workers has been one of the most generous and comprehensive in the world. This includes the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, both of which have been extended until April 2021. And the £2 billion Kickstart Scheme is creating job placements for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit, with employers able to spread the start date of job placements up until the end of December 2021.

At the Budget the Chancellor will set out the next phase in our economic support package to reflect the steps set out in the Prime Minister's roadmap to easing restrictions published last month, tailoring support for individuals and businesses to reflect the changing public health restrictions.'

■ Arts: EU Countries

Gill Furniss:

[\[156495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to support creative workers affected by barriers to work in the EU.

Caroline Dinenage:

The UK's creative industries are the finest in the world and this government is determined to support them.

This Government understands that the cultural and creative sectors rely on the ability to move people across borders quickly, simply, and with minimal cost and administration. Touring is a vital part of musicians and performers' careers, providing not only a vital income stream, but also enriching opportunities for cultural exchange across the world.

Being outside the European Union does not change this. It does, however, mean practical changes on both sides of the Channel that will require understanding and adaptation.

UK performers and artists are of course still able to tour and perform in the EU, and vice versa. However, we understand the concerns about the new arrangements and we are committed to supporting the sectors as they get to grips with the changes to systems and processes.

We are now working urgently across government and in collaboration with the music and wider creative industries, including through a new working group, to help address these issues so that touring in Europe can resume with ease as soon as it is safe to do so.

■ BBC: Football**Allan Dorans:**[\[155381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many (a) English Football Club matches have been shown live on BBC One Scotland and (b) Scottish Football Club matches have been shown live on BBC England between 1 January 2020 and 1 February 2021.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government welcomed the English Premier League's decision to show live games on the BBC for the first time in its history, whilst fans cannot attend matches.

However, scheduling decisions are for the BBC and the department does not hold data on the number of English and Scottish club matches shown live on any BBC channels.

■ Counter Disinformation Unit**Owen Thompson:**[\[155207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government has any plans to ensure that the Counter Disinformation Unit is active outside of periods of heightened vulnerability in order to tackle the persistent circulation of disinformation in the periods between democratic events.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government takes this issue very seriously and is committed to ensuring that there is an appropriate response to misinformation and disinformation in the periods between democratic events. This includes responding to Covid-19, for which the Counter Disinformation Unit was stood up on 5 March 2020, bringing together cross-Government monitoring and analysis capabilities to provide a comprehensive picture of the extent, scope and the reach of disinformation and misinformation linked to Covid-19, and to work with partners to stamp it out.

■ Email: Privacy**Chi Onwurah:**[\[155031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect on consumer privacy expectations of the use of tracking beacons in emails.

Mr John Whittingdale:

All organisations in the UK that process personal information must comply with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). In addition, organisations are also regulated by the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (PECR), which gives individuals specific privacy rights in relation to electronic communications. This includes communications that use cookies, tracking pixels, or similar technologies, to track information about people accessing a website or other electronic services.

The PECR requires organisations to give people clear and comprehensive information about the use of tracking technologies and give people a choice on whether or not they are applied on their devices.

The ICO has produced guidance for organisations on the use of tracking technologies, available on its website at:

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-pecr/guidance-on-the-use-of-cookies-and-similar-technologies/what-are-cookies-and-similar-technologies/#cookies5>

■ Entertainers: Visas

Mike Amesbury:

[155369]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent progress has been made between the Government and the EU Commission on visa restrictions for touring musicians, artists and support staff.

Caroline Dinenage:

In negotiations with the EU, the UK proposed expanding a list of activities for Short Term Business Visitors to cover musicians, artists and their accompanying staff. This would have enabled musicians, artists and support staff to tour and perform in the EU without needing work-permits. I deeply regret that the EU rejected our proposals. There is scope to return to this issue in the future should the EU change its mind.

UK performers and artists are of course still able to tour and perform in the EU, and vice versa. However, they will be required to check domestic immigration rules for each Member State in which they intend to tour. This is because, while some Member States may allow paid performances without a visa or work permit, others will require musicians, artists and other creative professionals to obtain a visa or work permit, in the same way that they are required for other international artists.

The Government is looking at how we can work with our partners in EU Member States to find ways to make life easier for the creative industries touring in the EU.

We understand the concerns of the sector regarding the new arrangements and we are committed to supporting them as they get to grips with the changes to systems and processes. The DCMS-led working group on creative and cultural touring, which involves sector representatives and other key government departments, is looking at the issues and options to help the sectors resume touring with ease as soon as it is safe to do so.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus

Julie Elliott:

[156394]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to reopen the live events industry.

Caroline Dinenage:

The 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021' announced by the Prime Minister yesterday provides a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England, including for live events.

The design of the roadmap has been informed by the latest scientific evidence and seeks a balance between our key social and economic priorities, whilst preserving the health and safety of the country.

The Government aims to allow spectators to attend some large events, including live music events, from Step 3, subject to a cap on attendance and local authority approval.

Pilots will run as part of the Events Research Programme to examine how large events, such as festivals, can take place without the need for social distancing using other mitigations. Subject to the outcome, the Government aims to reopen the remaining closed settings, including large events, at Step 4.

Julie Elliott:[\[156396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish a strategy to reopen the live events industry.

Caroline Dinenage:

The 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021' announced by the Prime Minister yesterday provides a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England, including for live events.

The design of the roadmap has been informed by the latest scientific evidence and seeks a balance between our key social and economic priorities, whilst preserving the health and safety of the country.

The Government aims to allow spectators to attend some large events, including live music events, from Step 3 subject to a cap on attendance and local authority approval.

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■ Events Industry: Insurance**Julie Elliott:**[\[156393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to implement an insurance underwriting model for live music events.

Caroline Dinenage:

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

Understandably, the bar for considering Government intervention is set extremely high. Given the high costs involved in setting up a scheme HMT

need to make sure it is the most effective use of funds at a time when we are looking at how best to support the sector.

The evidence of market failure must clearly demonstrate that such a scheme is the only barrier to staging events. At the moment, progress with the vaccine rollout and beating the virus is crucial in achieving the next stages for large events as set out in the roadmap. As such, we do not believe that now is the right time for an insurance intervention.

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

■ Exercise and Gyms: Coronavirus

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[155222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to support the re-opening of (a) gyms and (b) group exercise classes as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

On Monday 22 February, the Prime Minister announced a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. Step 2 will take place no earlier than 12 April and as part of this indoor leisure (including gyms) for individual use will reopen. Step 3 will take place no earlier than 17 May and as part of this exercise classes can resume. This will be subject to social contact limits.

To ensure they can reopen the Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support. The National Leisure Recovery Fund seeks to support eligible public sector leisure centres to reopen to the public, giving the sport and physical activity sector the best chance of recovery to a position of sustainable operation over the medium term. A total of £100 million is available as a biddable fund to eligible local authorities in England.

■ Food: Advertising

Craig Whittaker:

[\[153187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of proposed (a) advertising and (b) promotional restrictions on foods high in fat, salt or sugar on (i) sponsorship (ii) outdoor advertising.

Craig Whittaker:

[\[153188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of proposed (a) advertising and (b) promotional restrictions on foods high in fat, salt or sugar on the structure of the UK advertising market.

Caroline Dinenage:

My department and the Department of Health and Social Care have carefully considered all views and potential impacts of advertising and promotional restrictions on foods high in fat, salt or sugar, inclusive of sponsorship and outdoor advertising. This includes feedback from a wide range of experts and stakeholders on specific policy proposals and in response to our public consultations.

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

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/903712/Calorie_Labelling - Impact_Assessment.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/903712/Calorie_Labelling_-_Impact_Assessment.pdf)

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

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

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

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

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

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

A consultation proposing a total restriction of online advertising for products high in fat, salt and sugar closed on 22 December 2020 and is available at the following link:

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

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

■ Gambling: Advertising**Martyn Day:****[155211]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the amount of gambling advertising that is broadcast on television has increased since March 2020.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Chief Medical Officer is clear that being physically active is important to long-term health and crucial for keeping people healthy. Sports and physical activity, including the use of gyms, have been shown to treat, manage and prevent a range of conditions including heart disease, cancers, diabetes, stress, depression or anxiety. It can also bring communities together and tackle issues such as loneliness. That's why we have continued to make sure that people can exercise throughout the national and the local tiered restrictions.

Sport England's Active Lives Adult and Children surveys provide information not only on activity levels but also on social outcomes such as physical and mental wellbeing too. The latest reports can be found [here](#).

Furthermore, last month Sport England published its new strategy Uniting the Movement which sets out their 10 year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity. The strategy seeks to tackle the inequalities we have seen in sport and physical activity and provide opportunities to people and communities that have traditionally been left behind, helping to remove barriers to activity.

On Monday 22 February, the Prime Minister announced a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. Step 2 will take place no earlier than 12 April and as part of this indoor leisure (including gyms) for individual use will reopen. Step 3 will take place no earlier than 17 May and as part of this exercise classes can resume. This will be subject to social contact limits.

■ Gaming: Coronavirus**Mark Pawsey:****[154592]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the risks of classifying adult gaming centres as non-essential retail during the period of covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[155057]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether adult gaming centres will reopen at the same time as other retail venues listed in the Government's shops and branches guidance when covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:**[156249]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential economic effect of delaying the re-opening of adult gaming centres in line with (a) licensed betting offices and (b) other elements of the non-essential retail sector.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Prime Minister announced on Monday 22 February that indoor entertainment venues, which will include Adult Gaming Centres, will open at Step 3 of the roadmap, not before 17 May. The design of the roadmap has

been informed by the latest scientific evidence and seeks a balance between our key social and economic priorities, while preserving the health and safety of the country.

At next week's Budget the Chancellor will set out the next phase in our economic support package to reflect the steps set out in the Prime Minister's roadmap to easing restrictions, tailoring support for individuals and businesses to reflect the changing public health restrictions.

Further details will be announced in due course.

■ Golf: Coronavirus

Bill Esterson:

[\[151701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to reopen golf courses closed in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity including golf are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus. Golf courses were one of the first sports facilities to be reopened following the initial lockdown and they were also able to stay open in the local tiered restrictions.

On Monday 22 February, the Prime Minister announced a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. The approach focuses on data, not dates. Each step has a "no earlier than" date, 5 weeks later than the previous step, to allow time to assess the impact of the previous step and provide a week's notice before changes occur. As part of step one, outdoor sports facilities like tennis and basketball courts, golf courses, including adventure golf will be opened from 29 March, subject to social contact limits.

■ Leisure: Coronavirus

Sajid Javid:

[\[154957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure leisure services operated by district councils are supported during the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

The National Leisure Recovery Fund seeks to support eligible public sector leisure centres to reopen to the public, giving the sport and physical activity sector the best chance of recovery to a position of sustainable operation over the medium term.

A total of £100 million is available as a biddable fund to eligible local authorities in England, which will be allocated in a single funding round covering the period 1 December 2020 to 31 March 2021. Eligible local authorities include: those in England who hold responsibility for the provision of leisure services, those who have outsourced their leisure provision to an

external body to and those whose outsourced leisure arrangements have ended since 20 March 2020 and services are now delivered as an in-house function. This is in addition to the wider financial support provided to councils throughout the pandemic.

Government has worked closely with the Local Government Association (LGA), ukactive, the District Councils' Network, Community Leisure UK, Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association and others to make sure the application and funding process is as fast and simple as possible.

In addition, the Local Government Income Compensation Scheme looks to compensate authorities for eligible losses income from sales, fees and charges.

■ **Local Press: Slough**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[153347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on news outlets in Slough.

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.

■ **Musicians: Visas**

Steve Reed:

[\[156409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on the UK economy of the removal of visa free travel for British musicians within the EU.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government recognises the world-leading position of the UK music sector and the rich breadth of musical talent across the UK. According to UK Music's 2020 report, the sector contributed £5.8bn GVA to the UK economy in 2019 and generated £2.9bn in export revenue.

In negotiations with the EU, the government fought for a good deal for our world-leading creative industries. The UK's proposal was developed in consultation with our creative sectors, and would have enabled performers, artists and support staff to tour and perform in the EU without needing work-permits. Regrettably, the EU rejected our proposals.

The Government is committed to supporting the sector to maintain its world-leading position, and to help it recover from the impact of the Covid pandemic. We recognise that the new provisions in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) will require the sector to adapt to new requirements and ways of working with the EU now we are no longer a Member State.

Therefore, UK cultural professionals, including musicians, seeking to perform within the EU will be required to check domestic immigration and visitor rules for each Member State in which they intend to perform. We are committed to continuing to help the music sector understand and adapt to these changes. These issues are being looked at as part of the DCMS-led working group on creative and cultural touring, which involves sector representatives and other key government departments, to ensure the sector gets the clarity and support it needs.

■ Social Media: Disinformation**Owen Thompson:**[\[155208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the recent report entitled *Industrialized Disinformation: 2020 Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation*, published by the University of Oxford, what plans the Government has to collect data on cyber troop activity in the UK.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government takes the issue of disinformation and misinformation very seriously. Disinformation and misinformation threaten our democratic freedoms, and can cause harm to individuals and to our society.

We welcome the valuable analysis and insights from academia and other experts who have a huge amount of expertise in this space. We take their findings and recommendations very seriously and engage widely with academia and civil society to ensure we are able to benefit from this work.

■ Sports: Coronavirus**Gill Furniss:**[\[156493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on support for sporting venues operating at reduced capacity once reopened as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

To date, the government has provided an unprecedented £300 million Sport Winter Survival Package to give a lifeline to organisations that would otherwise not survive the winter as a result of the restriction on spectators announced from 1 October.

At next week's Budget the Chancellor will set out the next phase in the Government's economic support package to reflect the steps set out in the roadmap, clarifying the further support for individuals and businesses to reflect the changing public health restrictions.

■ Tennis: Coronavirus**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[155274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of permitting socially-distanced outdoor singles tennis games for under 18s to be played during the period of covid-19 restrictions announced in January 2021.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity providers and facilities are at the heart of our communities, and play a crucial role in supporting adults and children to be active.

The National Restrictions are designed to get the R rate under control through limiting social contact and reducing transmissions. You can currently exercise alone, with one other person or with your household or support bubble. This should be limited to once per day, in a public outdoor place and you should not travel outside your local area. You should maintain social distancing.

On Monday 22 February, the Prime Minister announced a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. From 8 March, sport can take place in school for all children, or as part of wraparound activities (if children are attending in order to enable their parents to work, seek work, attend education, seek medical care, or attend a support group).

Any organised outdoor sport (for children or adults) can restart on 29 March, and indoor sport for under 18s can restart from Step 2 which will take place no earlier than 12 April. This will be subject to social contact limits.

EDUCATION**■ 16 to 19 Tuition Fund****Dan Carden:**[\[156534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will ensure that covid-19 catch-up funding for 16 to 19 year olds is not limited to students with low prior attainment in GCSE English and maths.

Gillian Keegan

Catch-up funding for 16 to 19 year olds is provided through the 16-19 Tuition Fund. This is focused on supporting those young people who are at significant

disadvantage and whose learning has been impacted most severely by the COVID-19 outbreak.

We targeted this funding among 16 to 19 year old students for those with low prior attainment because:

We know that these young people are disproportionately likely to be from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Students who leave full-time education with low attainment are far more likely to become Not in Education, Employment or Training and far less likely to progress to higher level courses, including higher education and apprenticeships. We also know that they earn significantly less over their lifetimes.

Students with low prior attainment are more likely to have fallen behind in lockdown, as they will have found it harder to 'self-study' at home and are more likely to disengage.

Those without GCSE English and/or maths at the expected standard at age 16 is the agreed measure used for disadvantage in 16 to 19 education and an established part of the 16 to 19 funding formula.

Funding is available to spend on those students without a grade 5 or above in English and/or maths GCSE. However, providers are required to prioritise support for students who have not achieved a grade 4 in English and/or maths. If providers have funding available within their allocations, they can consider whether any young people with a grade 4 also needs catch up support.

As further evidence emerges, we will consider if refinements to eligibility for future funding are needed to maximise its value and impact in providing catch-up support for 16 to 19 students.

■ Academic Freedom

Andrew Gwynne:

[154854]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on academic freedom.

Michelle Donelan:

Tougher legal measures to strengthen free speech and academic freedom at universities in England have been announced by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, on 16 February, to stamp out unlawful 'silencing' on campuses. The new measures set out in the February 2021 policy paper will ensure that our universities are places where free speech can thrive.

We engaged with other government departments on the policy paper prior to being laid in parliament. Officials and ministers will continue to work together to ensure that government commitments are met.

■ Adoption Support Fund: Carers

Munira Wilson:

[\[154567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the Adoption Support Fund to kinship carers.

Vicky Ford:

The government is committed to supporting families whose children have been in the care system prior to living with their new families. The Adoption Support Fund was extended in 2016 to include previously looked after children being cared for by special guardians, many of whom are kinship carers. The forthcoming Spending Review process will consider the Adoption Support Fund and its budget, scope and eligibility criteria.

■ Children: Day Care

Daisy Cooper:

[\[155406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the 30 hours of free childcare a week to full-time graduate students.

Vicky Ford:

30 hours free childcare is an entitlement for working parents of three and four-year-olds. It aims to help working parents with the costs of childcare so they can take up paid work if they want to or can work additional hours.

The Childcare Bill policy statement, published in December 2015, is clear that students will not qualify for 30 hours free childcare. However, students who undertake paid work in addition to their studies and meet the income requirements will be eligible for the additional hours. This means they do not have to physically work 16 hours a week but need to earn the equivalent of a week of 16 hours at national minimum wage or national living wage (currently just over £7,250 a year).

Students with children aged three and four will qualify for the universal 15 hours free childcare entitlement in England, regardless of the income or employment status of the parent, allowing them to access 15 hours per week of high-quality early education for their child.

Those undertaking a master's degree are able to apply for a postgraduate master's loan of up to £11,222 for help with course fees and living costs, which may include childcare.

Students starting a doctoral degree on or after 1 August 2020, can apply for a postgraduate doctoral loan of up to £26,445 which can also help with course fees and living costs, including childcare.

In cases where full-time students have additional needs that are not met through the student support system, support already available to them from their education institutions, they may be able to apply for help through Universal Credit. It remains the case that to be eligible for 85% reimbursement of childcare costs through Universal Credit Childcare a claimant must be in employment.

Further details on claiming Universal Credit, and Universal Credit Childcare, as a student can be found on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/universal-credit-and-students>.

■ **Durham University: Freedom of Expression**

Dr Julian Lewis:

[152398]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 29 January 2020 to Question 5319 on freedom of speech at Sheffield University, what steps he plans to take to block reported proposals by Durham University Student Union to (a) vet in advance external speakers invited to address student societies, (b) require such speakers to submit their speeches to the Union in advance and (c) cancel the invitations to such speakers or require that additional speakers should also be invited; what the legal basis is for student unions to exercise such powers against speakers whom they judge to be controversial; what recent assessment he has made of whether universities are meeting their obligations to (i) protect freedom of speech and (ii) exercise any necessary restrictions on speaker invitations by student societies which pose an identifiable threat to students on campus; and what assessment he has made of whether those obligations require review.

Michelle Donelan:

This government has been clear in its commitment to strengthen academic freedom and ensure that our universities are places where free speech can thrive. That is why tougher legal measures have been announced by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, on 16 February, to stamp out unlawful 'silencing' on campuses.

The Education Act 1986 imposes a legal duty on those involved in the government of universities to secure lawful free speech. If it has been accurately reported in the press, the decision by Durham University is gravely disappointing and not in line with our high expectations for universities in this area. To give a student union this power over external speakers is wholly inappropriate: no university should ever grant a student union any authority or role in vetting, limiting or otherwise overseeing which external speakers may be invited to speak on campus, or under what circumstances they may do so.

Although it is true that when considering external speakers, higher education providers should, under the Prevent duty, consider the risks that the event may pose in drawing students into terrorism, this must be balanced against their duty to secure freedom of speech; it is only rarely that speakers will form into this category, and applying intrusive procedures on a blanket basis, such as asking all speakers to submit their speeches in advance, is unnecessary and inappropriate. In the vast majority of cases these risks can be mitigated without shutting down speech. In any case, to outsource such decisions to a Student Union, giving them de facto control of who can speak on campus, is completely unacceptable.

At my request, officials have asked the Office for Students, the independent regulator, to investigate this matter and have also contacted the Vice Chancellor of the university to express my concerns.

The new measures set out in the February 2021 policy paper are a part of this government's commitment to strengthen free speech and academic freedom at universities in England.

The policy paper can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-free-speech-and-academic-freedom>.

■ **Employment Schemes: Equality**

Kate Green:

[154600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 10 February 2021 to Question 149748 on Employment Schemes: Equality, if he will publish those equalities impact assessments.

Gillian Keegan:

We have undertaken an assessment of the equalities impact of the Skills Bootcamps and level 3 adult offers.

Further detail of the policies, their equalities impact and ongoing work to support equality across both the Skills Bootcamps and level 3 adult offer will be published online in due course.

■ **Free School Meals: Coronavirus**

Sir Alan Campbell:

[154788]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether children entitled to age related free school meals should be receiving them (a) at home or (b) for collection during covid-19 lockdown.

Vicky Ford:

All infant pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 in England's state-funded schools, including academies, are entitled to a free school meal (FSM) under the universal infant free school meal (UIFSM) policy introduced in September 2014.

Whilst attendance restrictions are in place for the majority of pupils, schools should provide meal options for all pupils who are in school, including vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. Meals should be available free of charge to all infant pupils and pupils who meet the benefits-related FSM eligibility criteria.

Under normal circumstances, schools do not provide FSM to eligible pupils who are not in school. During the national lockdown, we have provided additional funding for schools to continue supporting pupils eligible for benefits-related FSM (including infant pupils who meet the benefits related criteria) who are at home during term-time.

Schools continue to receive their usual funding for UIFSM and can use this to provide infant pupils with a meal at home, where they are not otherwise eligible for benefits-related FSM.

Schools will fully open to all pupils on 8 March 2021 and from this date pupils will eat lunch at school, unless they are self-isolating.

The government remains committed to ensuring the most disadvantaged children continue to be supported. The government has provided an additional £170 million through the Covid Winter Grant Scheme for local authorities in England to support the hardest-hit families with children and other vulnerable people with the cost of food and essential utilities.

■ Further Education: Ethnic Groups

Mr Toby Perkins:

[154961]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many BAME people currently hold posts as (a) heads of further education colleges and (b) further education governors.

Gillian Keegan:

Our College Staff Survey (CSS) 2018 found that 9% of heads (principals) of further education colleges in England were from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background (87% white, 4% preferred not to say). This data is self-reported from 140 principals. The CSS also reports that 4% of leaders generally, encompassing those at other management levels and governors, were from a BAME background (91% white, 2% other and 3% preferred not to say). This data is self-reported from 2,486 leaders. We are unable to distinguish the ethnicity of governors because of a low response rate from this group. The CSS is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/college-staff-survey-2018>.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency will introduce a comprehensive further education workforce data collection from the academic year 2020/2021, including ethnicity data. This will be mandatory from the following academic year (2021/2022). This will enable us to better identify the proportion of governors from a BAME background.

■ Nurseries: Coronavirus

Yasmin Qureshi:

[156321]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support nurseries in Bolton to reduce transmission of covid-19; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of prioritising nursery staff in the covid-19 vaccination rollout.

Vicky Ford:

We are grateful to early years staff as they continue to provide support to children and families during the period of national lockdown.

The department continues to work closely with other government departments throughout its response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including Public Health England (PHE) and the Department of Health and Social Care, as well as stakeholders across the sector, to ensure that our policy is based on the latest scientific and medical advice, to continue to develop comprehensive guidance based on the PHE-endorsed 'system of controls', and to understand the impact and effectiveness of these measures on staff, children and parents.

As new evidence or data emerges, the department updates its advice accordingly to ensure that all our settings have the right safety measures in place. The latest guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>.

The 'system of controls' measures outlined in our guidance create an environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. Settings therefore need to continue to implement these controls to the fullest extent possible, including the new advice that face coverings are recommended in early years settings for staff and adult visitors in situations where social distancing between adults is not possible, for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the government on which vaccine/s the UK should use and provide advice on who should be offered them. The JCVI will provide advice on the next phase of the vaccine rollout. The government is committed to offering every adult a dose of the vaccine by 31 July 2021.

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

■ Remote Education

Munira Wilson:

[155412]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support the additional educational needs of children in kinship care who are homeschooling as a result of the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Vicky Ford:

During the period of national lockdown announced on 4 January 2021, primary, secondary, alternative provision, special schools, and further education providers have remained open to vulnerable children and young people. The definition of vulnerable children and young people includes those who have been identified as vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities, including children who left care through a special guardianship order, and others at the discretion of the provider or local authority.

Where vulnerable children and young people are not able to attend their education setting, they are able to access remote education. 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. Laptops and tablets are owned by schools, academy trusts or local authorities who can lend these to children who need them most, including children in kinship care, during the current COVID-19 restrictions.

Schools are expected to offer pupils online lessons and a set number of hours of remote education for pupils, with an expectation that schools set work that is of equivalent to the core teaching pupils would receive in school.

A comprehensive package of support is available which can be accessed through the Get Help with Remote Education page on gov.uk. The department has also made £4.84 million available for the Oak National Academy which is continuing to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects for reception up to year 11, including content for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

To support schools to make up for lost teaching time, the government introduced a catch-up package worth £1 billion, including a 'Catch up Premium' worth a total of £650 million and a £350 million National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged pupils. The government will also provide a programme of catch-up over the next financial year. This will involve a further £300 million of new money to early years, schools, and providers of 16 to 19 further education for tutoring, and the department will work in collaboration with the education sector to develop, as appropriate, specific initiatives for summer schools and a COVID Premium to support catch up.

■ Remote Education: ICT

Robert Halfon:

[\[154631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to ensure that 16-19 year-olds receive adequate IT device support to continue their education remotely during the covid-19 outbreak.

Robert Halfon:

[\[154970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason mobile data increases are not available to young people over the age of 16 in sixth forms and further education colleges.

Gillian Keegan:

The Get Help with Technology (GHWT) service has been extended to provide support with devices and connectivity for disadvantaged 16-19 year olds. This forms part of a £400 million investment to help children and young people continue their education at home and access online social care services.

Schools with sixth form provision and further education providers are eligible to receive devices where they have students that are aged 16-19 who are in receipt of free meals, and where they have students aged 19 and over with an Education, Health and Care Plan who are also in receipt of free meals. All eligible providers were invited to order devices in January 2021. Over a million devices have now been dispatched to schools, trusts, local authorities and further education institutions since the start of the scheme.

Through the GHWT service, providers eligible to receive devices are also able to access support for connectivity for financially disadvantaged students where they do not have access to the internet at home.

The mobile data network offer has to date been focused on providing connectivity support to pupils in years 3-11 who have experienced disruption to their face-to-face education. The amount of free data provided will vary by operator and uplifts will be in place until the end of July 2021. However, we are working with mobile network operators to make this offer available for disadvantaged 16-19 year olds until the end of July 2021.

Currently, 16-19 providers eligible for help via the GHWT service can access 4G wireless routers to provide connectivity support for financially disadvantaged learners without access to broadband at home.

Kate Green:

[\[156380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether it is his Department's policy that devices distributed through the Get Help with Technology Service should be returned to his Department at the end of that scheme.

Kate Green:

[\[156381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his timeframe is for the end of the get help with technology scheme.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care. We have secured 1.3 million laptops and tablets and have already delivered over one million of these to schools, colleges, academy trusts and local authorities, supporting disadvantaged children and young people who would not otherwise have access to a digital device.

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.

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. They are not required to be returned to the Department.

The Department has partnered with the UK's leading mobile network operators to provide free data to disadvantaged families, which will support access to education resources. Families will benefit from this additional data until July 2021.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Wes Streeting:

[\[156471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring the wearing of protective masks in schools by (a) pupils and (b) staff.

Nick Gibb:

The Department continues to work closely with other government departments throughout its response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including Public Health England (PHE) and the Department of Health and Social Care, as well as stakeholders across the sector, to ensure that our policy is based on the latest

scientific and medical advice, to continue to develop comprehensive guidance based on the PHE-endorsed 'system of controls' and to understand the impact and effectiveness of these measures on staff, pupils and parents.

As new evidence or data emerges, the Government updates its advice accordingly to ensure that all schools and colleges have the correct safety measures in place.

On 22 February 2021, the Department published 'Evidence summary: COVID-19 - children, young people and education settings' which includes a section on face coverings. It can be found at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963639/DfE_Evidence_summary_COVID-19 - children_young_people_and_education_settings.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963639/DfE_Evidence_summary_COVID-19_-_children_young_people_and_education_settings.pdf).

We know that the predominant new variant of COVID-19 is more transmissible but the way to control this virus is the same, even with the current new variants. We are recommending additional precautionary measures during this period of high COVID-19 prevalence in the community.

The Department has published updated guidance for schools and colleges which includes a section on face coverings and takes effect from 8 March 2021. It can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964351/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf.

As our updated guidance outlines, where pupils in Year 7 and above are educated, we recommend that face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained.

In addition, we now also recommend that face coverings should be worn in classrooms unless social distancing can be maintained.

In primary schools, face coverings should be worn by staff and adult visitors in situations where social distancing between adults is not possible, for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas. Children in primary school do not need to wear a face covering.

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. This applies to those who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability, or if you are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate. The same exemptions should be applied in schools, and we would expect teachers and other staff to be sensitive to those needs.

These measures will be in place until Easter. We will keep this under review and update guidance at that point.

Wes Streeting:**[156472]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) the phased return of all pupils to schools and (b) the operation of rota systems from 8 March 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has been committed to getting all pupils back into schools full time, as soon as the public health picture allows. In doing so, the Department is guided by the scientific and medical experts. Data and evidence are considered regularly including by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, the Joint Biosecurity Centre, Public Health England, and the Chief Medical Officers.

On 22 February 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, confirmed that, based on the Government's assessment of the current data against its four tests for relaxing restrictions, it will be possible for children to return to schools from 8 March 2021. The latest data suggest that infection rates have fallen across all ages, including in children and young people.

Attendance will be mandatory for primary and secondary school pupils from that date. All secondary pupils will be offered testing from 8 March 2021 and those who consent to testing should return to face to face education following their first negative test result. Testing is voluntary but strongly encouraged. Pupils not undergoing testing should attend school in line with the phased return arrangements in their school. Head teachers in secondary schools can phase the return of their pupils during the first week as they carry out onsite asymptomatic testing.

Missing face to face education does have severe impacts for children and young people, with clear evidence that further time out of education is detrimental for cognitive and academic development, health and wellbeing. The Chief Medical Officer for England has stated that: "The chances of many children being damaged by not going to school are incredibly clear and therefore the balance of risk is very strongly in favour of children going to school - because many more are likely to be harmed by not going than harmed by going, even during this pandemic." That is why the Government avoided restricting attendance for as long as possible and committed to fully opening schools as the national priority.

Schools should not plan for rotas as there is no need to reduce occupancy in schools. Instead, everyone should follow the system of controls set out in our published guidance, which have been strengthened and are the correct techniques for minimising the risk of transmission within schools:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963541/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf.

Wes Streeting:**[156473]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the scientific advice he has received on the proposed opening of schools to all pupils from 8 March 2021.

Nick Gibb:

At every stage since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, decisions have been informed by the scientific and medical evidence, both on the risks of COVID-19 infection, transmission, and illness, and on the known risks to children and young people not attending school and college balancing public health and education considerations.

On 22 February 2021 the Department published 'Evidence summary: COVID-19 children, young people and education settings', which can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963639/DfE_Evidence_summary_COVID-19_-_children_young_people_and_education_settings.pdf.

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) also publish papers and minutes regularly following each SAGE meeting. The list of papers published are available by here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/scientific-evidence-supporting-the-government-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19>.

Wes Streeting:**[156475]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to ensure that all schools have adequate ventilation in place to enable the return of all pupils to schools from 8 March 2021.

Nick Gibb:

At each stage of the Department's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department has listened to the latest medical and scientific advice. The Department has worked closely with other Government departments, including Public Health England (PHE) and the Department of Health and Social Care, as well as stakeholders across the sector, to ensure that policy is based on the latest scientific and medical advice, and to continue to develop comprehensive guidance based on the PHE endorsed 'system of controls' and to understand the effectiveness of these measures on staff, pupils and parents.

It is important to ensure that schools are well ventilated and that a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.

Current evidence recommends that the way to control COVID-19 is the same, even with the current new variants. The PHE endorsed 'system of controls' which have been in use throughout the COVID-19 outbreak set out in the Department's published guidance, which includes ventilation, continue to be the right measures to take. These measures create an inherently safer environment for children, young people and staff, where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. PHE keeps all these controls under review, based on the latest evidence. Schools therefore need to continue to implement these controls to the fullest extent. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

Guidance signposts to further advice from the Health and Safety Executive on air conditioning and ventilation during the COVID-19 outbreak. The guidance

can be found here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation.htm>.

Daisy Cooper:

[156584]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Government's roadmap on easing lockdown restrictions announced on 22 February 2021, what assessment his Department made prior to that announcement of the potential merits of incorporating into the Government's policy on school reopening of the advice of the Eightieth SAGE meeting on Covid-19 on 11 February 2021 that A phased reopening would allow the effects to be assessed which would be particularly valuable if schools were one of the first things to reopen, as there will be more uncertainties in the early stages of releasing measures (e.g. around the impact of vaccines).

Nick Gibb:

At every stage since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, decisions have been informed by the scientific and medical evidence, both on the risks of COVID-19 infection, transmission, and illness, and on the known risks to children and young people not attending school and college, balancing public health and education considerations.

The overwhelming evidence is that the risk to children and young people from SARSCoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) is low, but the risks to children and young people of being out of school and college are high and increase the longer restrictions on education are in force. Whilst schools and colleges can be places where transmission occurs, there is no strong evidence of them driving largescale community transmission. Rather, case rates within schools and colleges have been shown to reflect those in the local community, and risks are reduced further in such a controlled environment by having appropriate mitigations and systems of control in place. Based on the recent data from the Office for National Statistics, the risks to education staff are similar to those for most other occupations.

That is why the Government's priority has been keeping education and nurseries fully open, with a consistent message that schools, colleges and nurseries should be considered last when implementing restrictions, and first when restrictions can be lifted. As such the Government has taken, and continues to take, other steps across society and the economy to manage the spread of the virus, to allow restrictions on education to be lifted.

The Government's Roadmap is a step-by-step plan to ease restrictions in England cautiously, starting with schools and colleges, taking into consideration the scientific evidence, now published by Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-scientific-evidence-supporting-the-uk-government-response>. The Roadmap sets out indicative, "no earlier than" dates for the steps which are five weeks apart. These dates are wholly contingent on the data; before taking each further step, the Government will review the latest data on the impact of the previous step against four tests. This is a cautious approach to easing lockdown, which is guided by the data, in order to avoid a surge in cases which would put

unsustainable pressure on the NHS and claim more lives before people have the chance to receive a vaccine. This approach maximises the value in breaks in the easing of measures to allow this assessment and help maintain control, including around school holidays, which the Chief Medical Officer has said is a natural firebreak at Easter. Even as restrictions are lifted, adherence to the nonpharmaceutical interventions that are still in place to reduce transmission remains essential.

Daisy Cooper:

[156585]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the publication of the Government's Roadmap out of Lockdown, if his Department will provide ventilation units for every classroom.

Nick Gibb:

At each stage of the Department's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we have listened to the latest medical and scientific advice. The Department has worked closely with other Government departments, including Public Health England (PHE) and the Department of Health and Social Care, as well as stakeholders across the sector, to ensure that our policy is based on the latest scientific and medical advice, and to continue to develop comprehensive guidance based on the PHE-endorsed 'system of controls' and to understand the impact and effectiveness of these measures on staff, pupils and parents.

The Department also works closely with the NHS Track and Trace and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and following their research the Department issued guidance on keeping spaces well ventilated. There are a number of tools, beyond ventilation, to reduce airborne transmission of COVID-19 (including engineering interventions), and research on these technologies is ongoing.

The findings from all this developing work will, in due course, inform our guidance and standards for school buildings.

Current evidence recommends that the way to control COVID-19 is the same, even with the current new variants. The PHE-endorsed 'system of controls' which have been in use throughout the COVID-19 outbreak set out in our published guidance, which includes ventilation, continue to be the right measures to take. These measures create an inherently safer environment for children, young people, and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. PHE keeps all these controls under review, based on the latest evidence. Schools therefore need to continue to implement these controls to the fullest extent. The guidance can be found here:

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

Our guidance signposts to further advice from the health and safety executive on air conditioning and ventilation during the COVID-19 outbreak. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation.htm>.

Daisy Cooper:

[156586]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the publication of the Government's Roadmap out of Lockdown, if he will take steps to ensure that from 8 March 2021 school pupil transport will not carry pupils from more than one school.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has published guidance on transport to schools and other places of education to help those responsible for the provision of dedicated transport to put in place proportionate safeguards to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19. The guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020>.

Dedicated transport to schools and other places of education often carries the same group of children or young people on a regular basis. They do not mix with the general public on those journeys which helps to limit the number of other people with whom they come into contact.

Those involved in the provision of home to school transport must do all that is reasonably practicable to maximise social distancing where possible and minimise the risk of transmission. What is practicable is likely to vary according to local circumstances.

Wherever possible it is recommended that children and young people from different schools do not travel at the same time or, if they do, the children from each school should sit together as group. However, the Department acknowledges that distancing and grouping may sometimes not be possible. Where this is the case, other measures become even more important such as increased cleaning of vehicles, washing of hands and opening windows for ventilation.

■ Schools: Food

Caroline Lucas:

[154947]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 4 June 2020 to Question 51682, on Schools: Food, if he will set out a timetable for the (a) delivery of the planned update of the School Food Standards and (b) publication of linked guidance to school caterers; and if he will make a statement.

Vicky Ford:

Due to the priority of responding to the COVID-19 outbreak and the pressures on schools that this presents, and considering the robustness of the existing school food standards, the government will not be taking further action during the course of the COVID-19 outbreak on updating the school food standards.

We have robust school food standards set in legislation. These standards require school caterers to serve healthy and nutritious food and drinks which make sure that school pupils get the energy and nutrition they need across the school day.

I wrote to schools in October 2020 to thank them for the hard work on getting their meals services up and running in the autumn term, supporting all children with healthy food as well as to remind them of the importance of the school food standards. The guidance in relation to free school meals during the COVID-19 outbreak can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>.

■ Schools: Mental Health Services

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[155104]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when the Government plans to introduce mental health leads and mental health support team roles in schools which are to be supervised by NHS Children and Young People NHS staff as proposed by the 2017 Green Paper, Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[155105]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what training and support his Department plans to make available for members of staff in order for them to qualify for mental health support team roles in schools as proposed by the 2017 Green Paper, Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[155106]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding his Department plans to make available to schools to encourage the uptake of mental health leads and mental health support team roles in schools as proposed by the 2017 Green Paper, Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[155107]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that mental health issues in children and young people are being (a) identified and (b) addressed where appropriate by schools and colleges before crisis intervention is required.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[155108]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that children and young people's mental health is supported in schools and colleges following crisis intervention or inpatient provision.

Vicky Ford:

We remain committed to our joint green paper delivery programme with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England, including introducing new mental health support teams for all schools and colleges, providing training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges and testing approaches to faster access to NHS specialist support.

To expand access to mental health support for children and young people with emerging mental health issues, we have committed to establishing new Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) in 20% to 25% of the country by 2023,

as part of the additional support for children and young people's mental health in the NHS Long Term Plan. MHSTs are intended to provide early intervention on mild to moderate issues, as well as helping staff within a school or college setting to provide a 'whole-school approach' to mental health and wellbeing. Where already established, MHSTs are adapting their services to continue supporting children and young people remotely during the COVID-19 outbreak. The first 25 trailblazer sites, delivering 59 MHSTs (covering approximately 4% of the country) were announced in December 2018. A further 57 sites were confirmed in July 2019 and started developing 123 MHSTs during 2020. More teams have been commissioned to begin training in the academic year 2020/21. These teams will become operational once the training of new Education Mental Health Practitioners completes. Training will be completed as soon as circumstances allow, in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The department is also committed to provide training for senior mental health leads in all state-funded schools and colleges in England. The training will equip senior mental health leads with the knowledge to introduce or develop their whole school/college approach to positive mental health are identified and implement effective processes for ensuring that they receive appropriate support, both to treat specific issues and appropriate pastoral support to keep them engaged in education where they are receiving or have had specialist treatment. MHSTs will be able to support leads with whole school approaches.

The COVID-19 outbreak has delayed the delivery of specific training for senior leads, as we decided to prioritise providing bespoke training and support to meet the immediate challenges that all schools and colleges will face in supporting the wellbeing of children and young people during the COVID-19 outbreak. We are reviewing how to provide training for senior leads, building on the wider recovery offer. In the interim, we know that mental health leads will want to consider their whole school/college approach to supporting students as they return to settings. The Wellbeing for Education Return training, which has been available during the COVID-19 outbreak, will support this by giving staff increased confidence to support their colleagues, children and young people, and local knowledge so that they know how and where to access appropriate specialist support where needed. Schools can also draw on existing guidance and evidence that we have already made available to support effective whole school approaches. This includes Public Health England guidance on whole school approaches and wellbeing measurement (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-children-and-young-peoples-emotional-health-and-wellbeing>) and our Mental Health and Behaviour Guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2>) and this advice aims to help schools to support pupils whose mental health problems manifest themselves in behaviour. In addition, in September 2020, the department made health education compulsory for pupils in all state-funded schools. In health education, there is a strong focus on mental wellbeing; pupils will be taught how to recognise the early signs of mental wellbeing concerns and where and how to seek support, amongst many other mental health-related topics. We published the mental wellbeing module ahead of the other Relationships,

Health and Sex Education modules to make sure that teachers felt confident to address the mental wellbeing needs of their pupils.

Dan Jarvis:

[156401]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to support children's mental health when schools reopen as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Vicky Ford:

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

The return to school for all pupils is being prioritised due to the significant and proven impact caused by being out of school, including on wellbeing. The support schools provide to their pupils as they return to face-to-face education should include time devoted to supporting wellbeing, which will play a fundamental part in supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing recovery. The expectations for schools in this regard are set out clearly in the main Department for Education guidance to schools which also signposts further support, available here:

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

We are also providing support and training to schools through the £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme, a Department for Education-led initiative alongside Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), Higher Education England, Public Health England and key voluntary sector organisations. It is funding local experts to provide training, advice and resources for schools and further education providers to help support pupil and student, parent and carer, and staff wellbeing, resilience, and recovery in light of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown. Over 90% of local authority areas in England have reported they are delivering additional training and support into local schools and further education providers because of the Wellbeing for Education Return funding and have been continuing to do so remotely.

We have also put in place a £1 billion COVID-19 catch-up package with £650 million shared across early years, schools and 16-19 providers over the 2020/21 academic year to support education settings to put the right catch-up and pastoral support in place. The Education Endowment Foundation have published a COVID-19 support guide to support schools to direct this funding, which includes further information about interventions to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing. In addition to this, the return to school for all pupils from 8 March 2021 will be supported with a new £700 million package, which includes a new one-off Recovery Premium for state primary, secondary and special schools to use as they see best to support disadvantaged

students. This will help schools to provide their disadvantaged pupils with a one-off boost to the support, both academic and pastoral, that has been proved most effective in helping them recover from the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Department for Education and DHSC have convened a Mental Health in Education Action Group. The purpose of the action group is to look across the age ranges at the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on children, young people and staff in nurseries, schools, colleges and universities.

Furthermore, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, appointed Dr Alex George (an A&E Doctor) as Youth Mental Health Ambassador to advise government and raise the profile of mental health education and wellbeing in schools, colleges and universities. As Youth Mental Health Ambassador, he will use his clinical expertise and personal experience to champion the government's work on children's and young people's mental health and shape policy on improving support for young people in schools, colleges and universities.

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

■ **Schools: Nutrition**

Jo Gideon:

[\[155448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of investing the Soft Drinks Industry Levy revenues for the coming year 2021-22 in healthy eating initiatives in schools.

Vicky Ford:

In 2016, the government announced investment in several children's health initiatives alongside the introduction of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy, including doubling the primary PE and sports premium to £320 million a year from September 2017, and introducing the National Schools Breakfast Programme from March 2018.

The Spending Review 2020 confirmed the department's overall budget for the 2021/22 financial year. We are committed to funding breakfast clubs and have extended the programme until July 2021. We are considering options for breakfast provision beyond this date and expect to say more shortly. The Healthy School Rating Scheme will also continue during the 2021/22 financial year.

■ **Sixth Form Education: Finance**

Dan Carden:

[\[156536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for sixth form students.

Gillian Keegan:

The government is investing an additional £291 million in 16 to 19 education in 2021 to 2022. This is in addition to the £400 million awarded in the 2019 Spending Review which was the biggest injection of new money into 16 to 19 education in a single year since 2010. This has allowed us to raise the base rate of funding for all providers of 16 to 19 education, including school sixth forms and sixth-form colleges, for the first time since the current funding system was introduced in 2013, from £4,000 in each academic year up to 2019/20, to £4,188 in academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22, as well as to make further funding increases targeted on high value and high cost programmes. We are continuing to increase our investment in T Levels and will allocate up to an extra half a billion pounds a year to deliver these new programmes once they are fully rolled out. The Government has also committed £83 million capital funding in the 2021-22 financial year to ensure that eligible post-16 providers can accommodate the expected demographic increase in 16 to 19-year-olds. More details about this funding and eligibility for the funding will be announced in due course and we will keep the policy under review.

■ Students: Hearing Impairment**Sarah Olney:****[152603]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance he has issued to universities on the effect of face coverings on deaf students during the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

The government expects all higher education (HE) providers to fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to be making reasonable adjustments for all disabled HE students. Wherever possible, disabled students should expect to have their needs met through inclusive learning practices and individual reasonable adjustments made by their HE providers.

On 22 February 2021, we published updated guidance on Students returning to, and starting higher education in Spring Term 2021, available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963446/HE_guidance_spring_term_220221_FINAL.pdf.

This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity. Face coverings do not need to be worn when outdoors on the premises.

Transparent face coverings, which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate, can also be worn. There is currently very limited evidence regarding the effectiveness or safety of transparent face coverings.

Those who rely on visual signals for communication, or communicate with or provide support to such individuals, are currently exempt from any requirement to wear face coverings.

Face visors or shields should not be worn as an alternative to face coverings. They may protect against droplet spread in specific circumstances but are

unlikely to be effective in reducing aerosol transmission when used without an additional face covering. They should only be used after carrying out a risk assessment for the specific situation and should always be cleaned appropriately.

We are now advising providers that they can resume in-person teaching and learning for students who are studying practical or practice-based subjects (including creative arts) and require specialist equipment and facilities from 8 March 2021. Providers should not ask students to return if their course can reasonably be continued online. The government will review, by the end of the Easter holidays, the options for timing of the return of remaining students. This review will take account of the latest data and will be a key part of the wider roadmap steps.

■ Students: Migrants

Darren Jones:

[\[155312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason the Student Loans Company is not permitted to support young people who have Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK with access to student finance for the purposes of undertaking higher education courses.

Michelle Donelan:

Generally, to be eligible for student support a student must be resident in England and have 'settled' status or a recognised connection with the UK on the first day of the first academic year of the course and must have been resident in the UK and Islands (Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) for the 3 years prior to that date.

Student finance is, therefore, available to those persons who have indefinite leave to enter or remain in the UK provided they meet the relevant residence and other requirements.

The Student Loans Company relies on information from the Home Office in relation to immigration matters when assessing eligibility.

■ Turing Scheme

Emma Hardy:

[\[155341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what comparative assessment he has made of the potential merits of the (a) Turing Scheme and (b) Erasmus+ for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Emma Hardy:

[\[155342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the absence of reciprocal funding for incoming students in the Turing Scheme compared to Erasmus+.

Emma Hardy:

[\[155343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Turing Scheme provides more opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds than Erasmus+.

Michelle Donelan:

The Turing Scheme will be backed by £110 million, providing funding for around 35,000 students in universities, colleges and schools to go on study and work placements overseas, starting in September 2021. Further details are available on the new Turing Scheme website.

The Turing Scheme is an outward mobility scheme funding UK students to travel abroad. The UK is a world-leading destination for study and research, with four universities in the world's top 10 and 18 in the top 100. The UK is currently second only to the USA as a destination for international higher education students with approximately 560,000 students from abroad and has been one of the most popular destinations within Erasmus+. It is clear that we have considerable appeal as a destination and partner in international mobilities and exchanges.

Under previous arrangements for student mobility, of which Erasmus+ was a prominent part, UK undergraduates from more advantaged backgrounds have been 1.7 times more likely to participate in mobility schemes compared to disadvantaged students.

Through the Turing Scheme, we will look to target those parts of the country with historically low levels of take-up with a view to boosting social mobility and support disadvantaged students with additional grants for living costs and travel expenses, making life-changing opportunities accessible to everyone across the country.

In order to increase the participation of disadvantaged groups we plan the following measures, which will maintain parity with or exceed the support provided by Erasmus+:

- When bidding, providers will need to demonstrate how their project will support widening access. The assessment criteria will be heavily weighted towards this criterion.
- Maintaining parity with Erasmus+ grant rates and existing student finance support but provide additional financial support for those from disadvantaged backgrounds by reimbursing travel-related costs.
- We will actively target and promote the scheme in those geographical areas of disadvantage to help level up the country.
- We have reduced the minimum higher education duration of outward mobilities from a minimum of one term to 4 weeks enabling a wider group of students to participate than was the case under current Erasmus+ programme.

■ Vocational Education**Dan Jarvis:****[R] [156402]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to include (a) Mayoral Combined Authorities and (b) Local Enterprise Partnerships in the implementation of the reforms set out in the Skills for Jobs White Paper.

Gillian Keegan:

The Skills for Jobs White Paper sets out a number of reforms that will support people to get the skills our economy needs throughout their lives, wherever they live in the country. This is an aim shared by Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships for their communities.

Our reforms, including the introduction of new Local Skills Improvement Plans, will build on the work that Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships have done through their establishment of Skills Advisory Panels. We will work closely with all local areas when developing and trailblazing our reforms. In the case of Mayoral Combined Authorities, their responsibilities for delivering adult education functions will continue without change.

Dan Jarvis:[\[156403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions his Department has had with the (a) Department for Work and Pensions and (b) Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the effect of the Skills for Jobs white paper reforms on future employment.

Gillian Keegan:

Officials in the department have met regularly with other departments before and after the publication of the Skills for Jobs White Paper, including officials at the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Further engagement is also planned in order to oversee implementation and ensure the proposals in the white paper deliver productivity growth and improved future employment outcomes.

■ Vocational Education: Qualifications**Dan Carden:**[\[156535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether 16 to 19 year olds are to continue to have the opportunity to study for BTECs and other applied general qualifications.

Gillian Keegan:

The department has consulted in two stages on proposals for reforming post-16 qualifications at level 3. Our aim is to ensure that every qualification approved for public funding has a distinct purpose, is high quality and supports progression to positive outcomes.

The second stage of consultation ran from 23 October 2020 to 31 January 2021 and asked for views on the range of qualifications that will sit alongside A levels and T Levels in future. These proposals build on feedback from the first consultation and include a small number of groups of academic qualifications that can be taken alongside or as an alternative to A levels, where there is a clear need for skills and knowledge that A levels alone cannot deliver, and where they meet our new quality criteria.

No decisions have been made yet. The responses to the consultation are informing our thinking and we intend to publish a full response in due course.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Animal Welfare****Bill Esterson:****[156365]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the financial sustainability of animal rescue organisations.

Victoria Prentis:

Animal rescue organisations do excellent work, often on a voluntary basis, protecting animals against cruelty and ensuring that unwanted and abandoned animals in the UK are offered the opportunity of a forever home. I am acutely aware that the coronavirus pandemic, and specifically the measures put in place to control the spread of the virus, continue to affect individuals, businesses and charities caring for animals.

The sector has kept us regularly updated of the developing situation, sharing their surveys particularly with respect to the rescue and rehoming of companion animals, and sharing information on cruelty investigations.

The latest figures from a survey by the Association of Dogs and Cats Homes (ADCH) show that although the animal rescue sector has seen a drop in income during the pandemic the financial sustainability in the sector appears to be improving. This suggests that rescues have adapted to the new situation either through fundraising in different ways or taking advantage of grants made available by the ADCH and other sources. More rescues are now taking in dogs and cats and more are rehoming. In Quarter 4 of 2020 there was a 24% year on year reduction of cat intake and a 32% reduction in dogs entering rescues. 68% of rescues have reported more people wish to foster dogs or cats and 58% wish to rehome a dog or cat.

National equine welfare charities have also kept us closely informed of the status of the Covid-19 Equine Rescues Emergency Fund established by the Pet Plan Charitable Trust together with World Horse Welfare and the National Equine Welfare Council. The current picture of equine welfare is better than feared, but we continue to keep things under review.

Defra remains committed to continued engagement with the sector to understand the longer-term impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, monitor the animal welfare implications of this and offer appropriate advice.

■ Bats: Housing**Sir Christopher Chope:****[156250]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it Government policy to remove protection from bats occupying residential space where householders have an anxiety about bats being vectors of disease; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

While bats can carry disease, the risk of transmissions to humans is very low especially if the animals are not handled. COVID-19 has not been detected in

any of the UK's 17 resident breeding bat species and no coronaviruses have been found in UK bats that are harmful to humans.

Bats provide a range of benefits in ecosystems including pollination, seed dispersal and pest control. UK bat populations are thought to have reduced substantially in the middle years of the last century due to intensive farming, use of pesticides and the loss of roost sites in woodland and buildings. Given this and our 25 Year Environment Plan commitments toward protecting and recovering nature, we see no reason to remove their protected status.

Individuals should contact the national bat helpline (<https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/national-bat-helpline>) if they have any concerns about bats roosts. The helpline will provide advice and where appropriate can arrange for one of Natural England's volunteer bat roost visitors to inspect a property.

■ Exports: Pesticides

Margaret Ferrier:

[152550]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the Government's policy is on the export of pesticides banned in the UK to other countries; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

Pesticides which are not approved or severely restricted in GB are regulated under the Prior Informed Consent Regulation (PIC). Companies intending to export these chemicals from the UK must notify the importing country via the exporter's Designated National Authority.

For GB the Designated National Authority is the Health and Safety Executive. Some pesticides additionally require the explicit consent of the importing country before export can take place. The exchange of information that GB PIC provides allows the importing countries to make informed decisions on the import of those chemicals and how to handle and use them safely.

■ Fishing Vessels: Decommissioning

Luke Pollard:

[152633]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has plans for some of the £100 million investment fund for fishing to be used to decommission fishing boats.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has committed to providing £100 million of investment to rejuvenate the industry and coastal communities across the UK.

There are no plans to have a decommissioning scheme. Previous schemes have been fraught with difficulties and have created unintended consequences.

Luke Pollard:

[\[152634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of fishing boats that will be decommissioned in 2021 as a result of the UK-EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement.

Victoria Prentis:

The decision to decommission a fishing vessel is one for the owner.

There are no plans for a publicly funded decommissioning scheme in England.

■ **Flood Control: Maghull**

Bill Esterson:

[\[156364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will meet with the hon. Member for Sefton Central to discuss the shortfall in grant-in-aid funding for flood defences at Dover's Brook in Maghull.

Rebecca Pow:

As the Minister responsible for flooding, I would welcome the opportunity to meet the hon. Member and discuss flood risk in Maghull.

■ **Genetic Engineering**

John Spellar:

[\[156253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's policy is on gene editing.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra's view is that gene-edited organisms should not be regulated as genetically modified organisms if the end product could have been produced naturally, or by traditional breeding methods. Such gene-edited organisms would not contain DNA from other species. Defra is currently consulting on a proposal to amend the definition of a genetically modified organism as it applies in England.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mr John Baron:

[\[156268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of (a) 8 December 2020, (b) 7 January 2021 and (c) 9 February 2021 from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay, constituency case reference JB30306 MC2021/03746.

Victoria Prentis:

I sincerely apologise for the delay in replying. I can now confirm that the response to the correspondence has been prepared and sent.

■ **Nappies**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[156490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress her Department has made on updating the Environment Bill's

explanatory notes to clarify that the legislation contains primary powers which will allow the Secretary of State to establish a definition of environmental standards for nappies.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Bill's explanatory notes have been updated with relevant examples to clarify that the legislation will enable us to work towards reducing the environmental impact of nappies. The notes set out that the resource efficiency powers in the Bill would enable us to make the provision of information about the environmental impact of nappies mandatory, which would be subject to conditions on assessing impact and consultation.

The explanatory notes will be published when the Bill is introduced into the Lords in the next Parliamentary session.

■ **Recycling**

Theresa Villiers:

[\[156287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's 2018 publication *Our Waste, Our Resources: A strategy for England*, when he plans to implement the proposals mandating a consistent approach between local authorities in England on kerbside collection of waste for recycling.

Rebecca Pow:

We consulted on recycling consistency reforms in 2019 and following support for these measures, the Environment Bill states that waste collection authorities in England must arrange for the collection of a core set of materials (glass; metal; plastic; paper and card; food waste; and garden waste) from households for recycling.

We will be seeking further views in an upcoming second consultation on recycling consistency, which will be published in spring 2021 and will include detail on transition timelines for local authorities. We want to implement recycling consistency as soon as is practically possible, taking into account factors including lead-in times for local authorities to procure vehicles and other capital goods and any existing contractual arrangements.

■ **Tree Planting**

Dan Jarvis:

[\[156400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Department on the England Tree Strategy and its role in achieving the net zero target ahead of COP26.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Secretary attends the Climate Action Implementation Committee chaired by the COP President. The Secretary of State also attends the Climate Action Strategy Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister.

These committees consider matters relating to the delivery of COP26, net zero and building the UK's resilience to climate impacts and ensure the credibility and delivery of these plans. Trees are a key nature-based solution

to climate change and biodiversity loss and are integral to our economy-wide net zero plans.

We committed in our manifesto to increasing planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025. To achieve this, we announced a £640 million Nature for Climate Fund to increase planting in England and will soon publish plans for how we will increase tree planting for nature, people, the economy and net zero.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Training

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[156501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his article in the Financial Times, published on 25 November 2020, what recent steps he has taken to build greater in-house project management expertise.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary recently approved a pilot to inform decisions to bring services in-house where this will deliver improved outcomes and cost savings for HMG, drawing on the HM Treasury and Cabinet Office Outsourcing Playbook. My officials are working with HMT to establish an operating cost framework for future years which delivers value for money for the UK taxpayer and builds in-house capability. FCDO will introduce a new approach to programme management from April, building on previous experience in DFID and FCO and best practice from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority, with accompanying training to support staff in implementing the new approach.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Stephen Timms:

[\[156243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken since 2018 to press for an end to the practice of holding Palestinian children in Israeli military detention.

James Cleverly:

We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention and regularly raise this with the Israeli Ministry of Justice, most recently on 23 February 2021. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv will continue to have a regular dialogue with Israel on this issue. We also fund projects providing legal aid to assist children with legal representation and capacity building assistance to local lawyers. We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law.

■ Saudi Arabia: Capital Punishment

Andy Slaughter:

[\[156289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (a) not to proceed with the imminent execution of Nawaf al-Osaimi for a crime allegedly committed as a teenager and (b) to halt all executions pending a review of the death row population to identify those convicted of crimes allegedly committed as children and resentence them in line with the 2020 Royal Decree.

James Cleverly:

The UK strongly opposes the death penalty in all countries and in all circumstances, as a matter of principle. This is especially the case for juveniles. This is in line with the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Arab Charter on Human Rights. We reiterated our opposition to the death penalty in Saudi Arabia in a joint statement at the UN Human Rights Council on 15 September.

We regularly raise our concerns about the use of the death penalty, including individual cases with the Saudi Arabian authorities and we will continue to do so. In August, our Chargé d'affaires in Riyadh raised the issue of the death penalty with Minister of State Al Jubeir. I raised the death penalty with Dr Awwad al Awwad, President of Saudi Arabia's Human Rights Commission during his virtual visit in July.

■ Selahattin Demirtaş

Sarah Olney:

[\[156498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Turkey complies with the European Court of Human Rights judgment on the release of Selahattin Demirtaş.

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.

■ Tanveer Ahmed Rafique**Sarah Owen:**[\[156589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2020 to Question 111640, if he will publish an update on support provided to Tanveer Ahmed Rafique.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO continues to speak to Mr Rafique about any health and welfare concerns through telephone calls as visits are still suspended due to the pandemic. Officials are in regular contact with the prison authorities to check on his welfare and his family are being kept informed of all developments. We regularly raise at a senior level our concerns about the human rights situation with the Government of Pakistan. On 20 February, Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, discussed our human rights concerns with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Alzheimer's Disease****Sajid Javid:**[\[154958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve (a) the level of medical research into Alzheimer's disease and (b) care for people with Alzheimer's disease.

Helen Whately:

We have been implementing the Challenge on Dementia 2020 to transform care, support, awareness and research for dementia, including Alzheimer's disease by 2020. The Challenge contained the commitment to spend £300 million on dementia research over the five years to March 2020. This commitment was delivered a year early with £344 million spent on dementia research over four years. Much of this investment is in research to better understand the nature of dementia, in order to inform development of future treatments and ways to prevent the onset of the condition.

The Department, through the National Institute for Health Research, has also commissioned major research on dementia care and living well with dementia. We are currently working on ways to significantly boost further research on dementia at all stages on the translation pathway including medical and care interventions.

■ Antidepressants**Neil O'Brien:**[\[155377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the rate of antidepressant prescriptions was in each local authority in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland in the most recent year for which data is available.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: The information is not held in the format requested. Data on all prescribed items is not routinely collected at English local authority level. Information is not held for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales as this is a devolved matter.

■ Asylum: Napier Barracks**Holly Lynch:**[\[149794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 4 February 2021 to Question 146935, what advice Public Health England provided in respect of the removal of residents from Napier Barracks.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Following initial investigations, Public Health England advised moving those who are clinically vulnerable and those who have testing negative off-site. If it was not possible to relocate all negative individuals off site, then they should be accommodated separately on-site, with numbers in groups kept as small as possible to reduce the risk of ongoing transmission. This has remained the advice since.

■ Carcinogens: Regulation**Colum Eastwood:**[\[156628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will give the National Institute for Health Protection responsibility to monitor, research and propose restrictions on potentially harmful chemicals suspected as risk factors in causing cancer.

Jo Churchill:

The Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards (CRCE) in Public Health England supports the Government's policy on chemicals by providing advice on harmful effects. 'The future of public health: the National Institute for Health Protection and other public health functions' published on 15 September 2020 confirmed that the responsibilities of the National Institute for Health Protection will include the functions of the CRCE.

Colum Eastwood:[\[156629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will adopt a cross departmental and cross governmental approach to the management of harmful chemicals identified as risk factors in causing cancer and include the devolved Administrations in that approach.

Jo Churchill:

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Public Health England regularly engage with other government departments, including the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the devolved administrations, on the management of harmful chemicals. A cross governmental approach to the management of harmful chemicals, which includes chemicals identified as risk factors for cancer, is adopted to protect public health and the environment.

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan commits to a new strategy to tackle chemicals of national concern. Following EU exit, the Government is developing an ambitious Chemicals Framework which will set out immediate priorities, alongside any actions needed to take to achieve safer and more environmentally sustainable management of chemicals for present and future generations. Defra hold the policy lead for chemicals. DHSC will continue to liaise with on the development of a Chemicals Framework to ensure the safe use and management of chemicals in the UK. Government aims to publish the Framework in 2021/22.

■ **Care Homes: Coronavirus**

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[149252]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of staff working in elderly care homes in England; and how many of those staff have had a covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: The vaccination strategy, published on 13 January 2021, estimated that there are 0.4 million staff working in care homes for older adults in England.

We are working with the vaccination programme in NHS England to monitor progress on the vaccination of care home staff. NHS England now publish weekly data on the vaccination of care home staff, which is available at the following link:

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

■ **Care Homes: Harlow**

Robert Halfon:

[120850]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that care homes in Harlow will receive rapid covid-19 tests.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 30 November 2020]: All care homes, including those in Harlow, have access to lateral flow device kits and received deliveries in December and January and can now order their own kits.

■ **Care Homes: Visits**

Anne Marie Morris:

[151720]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide an update on implementing the recommendations from the Joint Committee on Human Rights report, The Government's Response to covid-19: Human rights implications, regarding care care home visits.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: From 8 th March care homes will be supported to allow residents more meaningful visits. We will enable care homes to identify a single named repeat visitor for residents, and facilitate indoor visits with lateral flow testing and PPE.

We have acted to protect those most at risk in care homes and ensure visits can go ahead safely in some form. 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 allowed. Visits in exceptional circumstances including end of life should always be supported and enabled.

We will be looking to ensure that a wider range of visiting arrangements are made available when it is safe to do so and publish updated guidance as this period of national lockdown ends.

■ Contact Tracing: Contracts**Helen Hayes:**[\[96964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the reliability of (a) Ring Central, (b) Amazon Workspaces, (c) Contact Tracing Advice Service, and (d) Synergy 2 software systems at meeting their contractual obligations under the test, trace and isolate contracts.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: The Department contracts with Sitel for the provision of end-to-end contact centre services in relation to contact tracing. Ring Central, Amazon Workspaces and Synergy are suppliers who deliver parts of the overall infrastructure for the service. As the prime supplier, Sitel is responsible and accountable to the Department for the reliability and performance of Ring Central, Amazon Workspaces, and Synergy. In addition, there are robust operational and commercial contract management procedures associated with Sitel's performance, reliability and their supply chain.

■ Coronavirus: Aviation**Chi Onwurah:**[\[149758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the proportion of transmissions of covid-19 which took place during (a) international and (b) national flights.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 10 February 2021]: It is not possible to systematically identify where infection occurs in individual positive cases of COVID-19. Where someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 has recently travelled on a flight, contact tracing will be carried out by a public health specialist. Priority is given to contact-tracing close contacts and co-travellers, since these persons face a higher risk than other passengers. This is the case for both international and national flights.

■ Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups**Apsana Begum:** [\[108295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) BAME people and (b) people of a Bangladeshi background who been tested for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

We do not publish data in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Learning Disability**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[149737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on people with learning disabilities.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 February 2021]: Research has also been commissioned by the Department from the University of Warwick and Manchester Metropolitan University to look at the impacts of COVID-19 and of the measures taken in response of the pandemic on the wellbeing and lives of people with learning disabilities. The results of this research will be published shortly.

■ Coronavirus: Medical Treatments**Chris Grayling:** [\[154803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using Ivermectin to treat covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: The Department has monitored a collection of small studies which have now completed and provided some positive signals on the use of ivermectin as a treatment for COVID-19. However, larger scale studies are still needed to confirm the effectiveness and safety of this treatment. The Therapeutics Taskforce is aware that several more studies into ivermectin are set to conclude in the next few months and will continue to monitor these ongoing trials to assess the evidence available on whether ivermectin is an effective treatment for COVID-19.

■ Coronavirus: Northern Ireland**Jim Shannon:** [\[154574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to support the Health and Care Service in Northern Ireland during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The United Kingdom Government is working closely with the Northern Ireland Executive and the other devolved administrations to support their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Engagement at Ministerial level between the

Government and the Northern Ireland Executive has occurred weekly over the course of the pandemic. Significant collaboration and engagement at official level has also taken place across key areas, including deployment of the COVID-19 and flu vaccines, testing programme, non-pharmaceutical interventions and supply of personal protective equipment.

■ **Coronavirus: Quarantine**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[152436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the hotel capacity available for quarantine purposes.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: Contracts have been signed for more than adequate capacity for current arrival numbers. We are keeping demand for managed quarantine facilities under close review and are ready to put in place arrangements for additional capacity should it be required.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[152438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that hotel staff in the hotels used for covid-19 quarantine measures are kept safe.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: All staff have been fully trained in COVID-19 secure practices and all contractors have been instructed to ensure their facilities and services are provided in a COVID-19 secure way, including plastic shields and personal protective equipment where necessary. Staff will be trained on how to handle medical emergencies that may involve close contact with guests and take appropriate COVID-19 safety steps.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Emma Hardy:

[\[107729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 test kits have been provided to higher education institutions in the 2020-21 academic year to date.

Helen Whately:

We do not publish data in the format requested.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[154639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the covid-19 lateral flow tests (LFTs) provided to local authorities as part of the Community Testing Programme can be used by local employees to test at home; what discussions he has had with directors of public health on the potential merits of permitting local authorities to enable those employees to access LFTs at home to take account of different working patterns; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

Lateral flow devices are currently deployed in supervised settings by trained staff involved in processing tests using the devices and reading the results. Once the approvals and technology are in place, we can allow tests to be taken home from the workplace or school and ultimately for tests delivered to the home or collected locally.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Caroline Nokes:****[132873]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many days on average it is taking NHS professionals to process an application from a retired nurse wishing to volunteer for the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Helen Whately:

NHS Professionals is recruiting to paid positions to support the COVID-19 national vaccination programme operated by NHS England, with the process for national vaccination volunteers being co-ordinated by St John Ambulance and the Royal Voluntary Service.

For previously registered workers who have not maintained an active registration, including retired nurses, the average time to complete the application process to be vaccinators is 26.8 days.

For registered workers who have maintained an active registration, including retired nurses, the average time to complete the application process to be vaccinators is 16.4 days.

Dr Matthew Offord:**[150771]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of care home (a) residents and (b) staff have (i) been offered and (ii) refused a covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We are working with the vaccination programme in NHS England to monitor progress. NHS England now publishes weekly data on the vaccination of residents and staff in older adult care homes which is available at the following link:

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

Data on the number of refusals is not collected.

Sir Desmond Swayne:**[152399]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of prioritising jurors for the covid-19 vaccine in advance of scheduled jury service.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: Jurors who are eligible for a vaccine because of their age or clinical factors, will have access to a vaccine in the first phase. Prioritisation decisions for the second phase of delivery are

subject to the surveillance and monitoring of data and information from phase one, as well as further input from independent scientific experts such as the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Phase two will focus on further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services.

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[152405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of placing food processing staff in same priority group for the covid-19 vaccine as those aged 65 to 69 years old; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: Food processing staff who are eligible for a vaccine, because of their age or clinical factors, will be prioritised for a vaccine in phase one. Prioritisation decisions for the second phase of delivery are subject to the surveillance and monitoring of data and information from phase one, as well as further input from independent scientific experts such as the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Phase two will focus on further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[155400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation made of the risk of long-covid to asthma patients in determining the prioritisation of the covid-19 vaccine rollout.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) identified severe asthma as one of the conditions associated with an increased risk of mortality and was included in the phase one prioritisation list for vaccination in group four. Evidence on the risk of hospitalisation in persons with asthma is being reviewed by the JCVI as part of phase two of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

The JCVI is monitoring the emerging evidence on 'long' COVID-19 and will review this as part of its considerations for the COVID-19 immunisation programme when robust evidence is available.

Helen Hayes:

[\[156477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department made of the number of (a) home carers, (b) domiciliary carers and (c) personal assistants who have been offered a covid-19 vaccination; and what steps he is taking to ensure that domiciliary carers can access covid-19 vaccinations.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government's target to offer a vaccine to everyone within the top four priority groups as set out by the Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisation by 15 February 2021 was met. This includes home carers,

domiciliary carers and personal assistants. We are working with NHS England to publish data on the vaccination of these groups.

We continue to open more vaccination centres across the United Kingdom, with 2,000 vaccination sites available. A programme of work is underway to help boost uptake in all communities, including social care workers.

Helen Hayes: [156478]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of (a) care home and (b) home care staff in London have been vaccinated against covid-19 to date.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England now publish weekly data on the vaccination of care home residents and staff, including those in London, which is available at the following link:

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

We are working with NHS England to publish data on the vaccination of home care staff.

Dan Carden: [156537]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people who are not formally registered as housebound but have significant (a) mobility impairments and (b) other physical limitations are offered (i) support to travel to and attend their vaccination appointment safely and (ii) a home vaccination if they are unable to travel to and attend their appointment safely.

Nadhim Zahawi:

For these individual patients, general practitioners will determine the best approach to vaccination, alongside the community teams, based on their knowledge of the patient and circumstances. Some of these patients may be able to attend Primary Care Network (PCN) designated sites with assistance and discussion should be held with the family and /or carer to facilitate this process.

We recognise that there will be a cohort of patient who are completely housebound and unable to travel to a PCN designated site for immunisation even with assistance. PCNs have established roving vaccination teams, which are aimed at those who cannot leave their homes. These teams have already been used for care homes and will also focus on people who are housebound, with additional funding of £10 per patient being provided to help them do this.

■ Cyclosporin

Drew Hendry: [155180]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of supplies of 25mg Cyclosporin capsules in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: We are not aware of any issues affecting ciclosporin 25 milligram capsules in the United Kingdom and supplies remain available.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**Helen Hayes:**[\[156476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to answer Question 141545 tabled by the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood on 21 January 2021.

Edward Argar:

We take parliamentary scrutiny incredibly seriously and it is fundamentally important that hon. Members are provided with accurate and timely information to enable them to hold the Government to account. We are working rapidly to provide all Members with accurate answers to their questions, as well as supporting the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Caroline Lucas:[\[157067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 133773 on Coronavirus: Screening, tabled on 6 January 2021 by the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion.

Caroline Lucas:[\[157071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 149740 on Care Homes: Coronavirus tabled on 5 February 2021 by the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion.

Caroline Lucas:[\[157078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 140770 on Coronavirus: Vaccination tabled on 20 January 2021 by the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion.

Edward Argar:

We take parliamentary scrutiny incredibly seriously and it is fundamentally important that hon. Members are provided with accurate and timely information to enable them to hold the Government to account. We are working rapidly to provide all Members with accurate answers to their questions, as well as supporting the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

■ Electroconvulsive Therapy**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[155287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2021 to Question 109529 on Electroconvulsive Therapy, who has

overall responsibility for regulating electroconvulsive therapy; and what enforcement powers they have when breaches in guidance occurs.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is responsible for assessing whether service providers are following the current standards and guidelines on electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), including those developed by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

If the CQC becomes aware of concerns about the use of ECT which may lead to potential regulatory breaches, the CQC may its enforcement powers derived from the Health and Social Care Act 2008. The CQC's inspectors would review the risk and decide on the appropriate regulatory response, which may include enforcement action.

In addition, the professional regulators set the standards of conduct and performance that regulated professionals must meet to safely practise. Professional regulators have a duty to investigate whether someone on their register is fit to practice if an allegation is made that they do not meet the required standards. Where necessary, the regulator will take action to ensure public safety including restricting or removing a professionals' right to practise.

■ **Health Centres: Sefton**

Bill Esterson:

[\[156363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide funding for a new health centre in Maghull in Sefton.

Edward Argar:

Following the November 2020 Spending Review, we are carefully considering how the next round of projects are prioritised within the Department's settlement. Trusts, including Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust and North West Boroughs Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, should continue discussing their plans with NHS England and NHS Improvement to help consider the priority of their schemes and whether they should be further developed at this time.

Local health systems will shortly be receiving confirmation of their capital envelopes for 2021-22, and the settlement from HM Treasury has enabled us to protect the level of capital funding for trusts. This enables them to progress priority investments agreed with local health partners.

■ **Health Services**

Darren Henry:

[\[155434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the provision of non-covid-19 healthcare treatment during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

We have provided £63 billion of extra funding to the National Health Service in 2020-21 and £20.3 billion in 2021-22 to help manage ongoing COVID-19 pressures alongside non-COVID-19 activity levels. We are providing an

additional £3 billion next year on top of the long-term settlement, to support recovery from COVID-19.

The Spending Review allocated £1 billion to help tackle the elective backlog and support hospitals to cut long waits for treatment by carrying up to one million extra checks, scans and additional operations or procedures. We have also provided funding for enhanced Infection Prevention and Control measures, including £450 million to expand and upgrade accident and emergency departments to reduce overcrowding and improve infection control so we can continue to treat all patients safely.

■ Hospices: Coronavirus

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[88806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to include hospice staff within the same covid-19 testing regime as NHS and care home staff; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 September 2020]: From 2 December all registered hospices have access to regular weekly asymptomatic COVID-19 testing for staff and patients.

■ Hospitals: Construction

Hilary Benn:

[\[154766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the press release of 2 October 2020, PM confirms £3.7 billion for 40 hospitals in biggest hospital building programme in a generation, whether the funding that has been announced to date as part of the New Hospitals Programme is sufficient to meet the target of delivering 40 new hospitals.

Edward Argar:

The Health Infrastructure Plan (HIP) sets out our strategy for long-term rolling investment in health infrastructure with further funding to be confirmed through future Spending Reviews. Individual allocations for trusts will be determined once the respective final business cases have been reviewed and agreed.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Chris Grayling:

[\[122589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the average time between covid-19 infection and hospital admission for cases that require hospital treatment.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: A large observational research study conducted by NHS Digital using data from Public Health England's dataset published in November 2020, found that the average time from onset of COVID-19 symptoms to hospital admission was 4.6 days.

■ Infant Foods

Alison Thewliss: [\[156451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Government's preparedness for infant feeding provision in emergencies.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has made no such assessment.

■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Diagnosis

Bob Blackman: [\[141963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information (a) NHS England and (b) his Department holds on the average time for a patient with (a) Crohn's disease or (b) ulcerative colitis to be diagnosed in Harrow East constituency, compared to the national average in the last 12 months.

Edward Argar:

The information is not held in the format requested.

■ Knowsley Clinical Commissioning Group: Surveys

Rosie Cooper: [\[154871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether Knowsley NHS Clinical Commissioning Group took part in the 2020 NHS Staff Survey.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: The NHS Knowsley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) did not take part in the 2020 NHS Staff Survey. Since March 2020, all staff in the CCG have worked from home due to the pandemic. In 2020 the CCG followed good practice guidance and carried out a Staff Health and Wellbeing Survey. The content was derived from other best practice examples and was completed anonymously. Feedback was given to staff and the survey and outputs were reported to the governing body. In addition, the CCG carried out a risk assessment with every member of staff to further support them in their individual home working circumstances and to determine deployment options where relevant - for example, supporting the vaccination programme.

■ Liver Diseases: Diagnosis

Alex Norris: [\[141590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the early diagnosis of liver disease.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: The NHS Health Check and NHS Standard Contract support early diagnosis of liver disease by assessing the alcohol consumption of service users using a validated tool such as the alcohol use disorders identification test and where appropriate, offering brief advice or interventions.

Alcohol care teams in the areas with the highest rates of alcohol dependence-related admissions have been set up to improve the care pathway, including the use of appropriate diagnostics, for patients and their families who have issues with alcohol dependence. NHS England is supporting a programme to identify people with hepatitis C infection at an early stage to avoid subsequent liver disease.

In 2019 to 2020, Public Health England awarded £6 million capital funding to 23 local authorities to support nine areas to purchase Fibroscan machines to increase early detection of fibrosis/cirrhosis and access to treatment for those with alcohol-related liver disease.

■ Liver Diseases: Health Services

Alex Norris:

[141593]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the support available for patients with non-alcoholic fatty liver disease; and what plans his Department has to (a) prevent non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and (b) increase support for patients with non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: No such assessment has been made.

The prevention of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and support for patients with this condition to reduce their risk falls under the Government's strategy to reduce obesity, which is a risk factor for liver disease. To help prevent non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, the Government is working to expand weight management services available through the National Health Service, so more people get the support they need to lose weight.

■ Meller Group: Coronavirus

Jack Dromey:

[154590]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total value of contracts awarded to Meller Designs was in 2020 to help the Government's response to covid-19.

Jack Dromey:

[154923]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the attendees at negotiations for the contracts awarded to Meller Designs to help deliver the Government's covid-19 response.

Jo Churchill:

Six contracts with a total value of £163.6 million have been awarded to Meller Designs for the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE). The Contract Award Notices and contracts have been published at the following link:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/6ab193f8-1126-462d-b527-9f0847a26ed3?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/d75c9b0a-da7e-48a4-8144-08b1f7bc6230?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/c9aa5f29-f5b9-47ce-9253-f2fe215808e4>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/3f7b52f6-cb0c-49fd-a7df-1efecca43365>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/4c3aae51-8916-4a19-b1f1-8496af12b72a>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/aec7a74a-2f63-4bb6-9731-3219d208dc1b>

All offers of PPE from suppliers received the same eight stage assurance process which selected suppliers based on the product type, clinical acceptability, price, forecasted delivery dates, volume and financial standing. This was all managed by a team of around 450 officials from a number of Government departments, who conducted the negotiations.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

John Penrose:

[154912]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 8 December 2020 and 15 January 2021 on behalf of constituent, Ian Flather, on the effect of covid-19 on disabled people.

Edward Argar:

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

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

John Penrose:

[154914]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 16 December 2020 and 15 January 2021 on behalf of constituent, Jean Chamberlain, on private medical patients.

Edward Argar:

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

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

Mr John Baron:

[156265]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 14 December 2020, 18 January 2021 and 8 February 2021 on a constituency case, reference JB30357.

Edward Argar:

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

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

Mr John Baron:[\[156267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 9 December 2020, 12 January 2021 and 9 February 2021 on a constituency case, reference JB30320.

Edward Argar:

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

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

■ Mental Health Services: Coronavirus**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[154867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the additional support required by mental health services during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]:

We know that there is the potential for an increase in demand for mental health services. We are continuing to support the delivery of NHS mental health services to ensure support is available for those who need it.

■ Mental Health Services: Standards**Mr Laurence Robertson:**[\[154734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress he has made on improving mental health services; what plans he has for making further such improvements; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: During the pandemic, we have seen a shift to remote delivery of talking therapies delivered by the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme. Remote delivery has ensured that people can continue to access help from the safety of their own home and access IAPT services from anywhere in England. For those with severe needs or in crisis, all National Health Service mental health providers have established 24 hours a day, seven days a week urgent mental health helplines

We are increasing investment in community mental health care for adults year-on-year, up to almost £1 billion extra by 2023/24. To improve eating disorder services, we recently announced additional early intervention services for young people aged 16-25 years old, to be rolled out in 18 sites across the country. We remain committed to the ambitions in the NHS Long Term Plan to expand and transform mental health services in England and to investing an additional £2.3 billion a year in mental health services by 2023/24.

■ Multiple Sclerosis: Medical Treatments

Chris Stephens:

[\[155176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to increase access to cannabis based medicines for people with multiple sclerosis.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: The licensed cannabis-based medicine Sativex, for the treatment of spasticity in people with multiple sclerosis, is available for prescribing on the National Health Service in England, where clinically appropriate. This follows clear demonstrated evidence of safety and clinical and cost effectiveness.

We continue to work hard with the health system, industry and researchers to improve the evidence base for other cannabis-based medicines and to implement the recommendations of NHS England and NHS Improvement's review on barriers to accessing unlicensed cannabis based medicinal products. This includes the design of clinical trials and the establishment of a national patient registry.

■ NHS: Private Sector

Chi Onwurah:

[\[156389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much the NHS has spent on providing treatments via private hospitals to reduce waiting times since April 2020; and how many NHS patients have received treatments via private hospitals in each month since April 2020.

Edward Argar:

Total actual costs relating to the national contracts with independent sector providers will not be known until the reconciliation of the contracts in 2021.

Information on the number of National Health Service patients have received treatments via private hospitals since April 2020 is not held in the format requested. However, since the beginning of the pandemic the independent sector has delivered over 2.7 million episodes of treatment and care.

■ NHS: Research

Kerry McCarthy:

[156285]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the need to expand the NHS's capacity to conduct life-saving research in the context of the covid-19 pandemic.

Edward Argar:

The Department's National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is supporting the National Health Service to deliver life-saving research through the Clinical Research Network (CRN) which provides the infrastructure that allows high-quality clinical research funded by charities, the life sciences industry and the public sector to be undertaken throughout the health and care system. There are currently 6,354 active studies on the NIHR CRN portfolio. As of 16 February 2020, 1,279,053 participants had been recruited to research studies in 2020/21, including 877,723 to urgent COVID-19 studies.

■ Ocean Footprint: Coronavirus

Jack Dromey:

[154588]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total value of contracts awarded to Ocean Footprint in 2020 was to help the Government's response to covid-19.

Jack Dromey:

[154922]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the attendees at negotiations for the contracts awarded to Ocean Footprint to help deliver the Government's covid-19 response.

Jo Churchill:

One contract with a value of £5.9 million has been awarded to Ocean Footprint for the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE). The Contract Award Notice and contract has been published at the following link:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/147fb5a3-3d6e-41ca-842b-60c72a0bb2bb?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

All offers of PPE from suppliers received the same eight stage assurance process which selected suppliers based on the product type, clinical acceptability, price, forecasted delivery dates, volume and financial standing. This was managed by a team of around 450 officials from Government departments, who conducted the negotiations.

■ Out-patients: Young People

Andrea Jenkyns:

[154601]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that parents and caregivers can be present with young people at hospital appointments in all NHS Trusts.

Edward Argar:

We understand the need for young people to be accompanied by their parents and caregivers at appointments and recommend that patients be accompanied where appropriate and necessary. The current guidance, published on 13 October 2020, allows visiting in outpatient and diagnostic settings in a COVID-19 secure way. This guidance was developed by NHS England and NHS Improvement's clinical cell, overseen by a multidisciplinary group including colleagues from children and young people's teams.

Ozanimod**Dr Philippa Whitford:**[\[154626\]](#)

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 decision to approve ozanimod for people with active relapsing remitting multiple sclerosis (RRMS); and what plans he has for MS patients in other parts of the UK having the same access to new oral treatment options.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 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 is currently developing guidance for the NHS in England on the use of ozanimod for treating relapsing remitting multiple sclerosis. NICE recently consulted stakeholders on its initial draft recommendations on ozanimod and NICE will carefully consider the comments received in developing its final recommendations.

Prescriptions: Fees and Charges**Justin Madders:**[\[155117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of including long-term mental health conditions in the prescription charge medical exemptions list.

Justin Madders:[\[155118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of prescription charges on people with mental health conditions.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has no current plans to extend the prescription charge medical exemptions list. Around 89% of prescriptions are dispensed free of charge and extensive arrangements are already in place to help people, including those with mental health conditions to access National Health Service prescriptions, including a broad range of prescription charge exemptions. To support those with the greatest need who do not qualify for an exemption, they can spread the cost of their prescriptions by purchasing

prescription pre-payment certificates. A holder of a 12-month certificate can get all the prescriptions they need for just over £2 per week.

■ **Protective Clothing: Coronavirus**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[156598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many FFP3 masks there are in his Department's four-month personal protective equipment stockpile; and what proportion of NHS staff has access to those masks.

Jo Churchill:

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

■ **Secure Psychiatric Units**

Derek Twigg:

[\[145740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to his Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 136450, what information his Department holds on suicides of patients in NHS care; and if he will publish that information.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 3 February 2021]: The National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health at the Manchester University, commissioned by NHS England and NHS Improvement, is the official source of data on suicides for people in contact with mental health services. The most recent published report is the 'National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health (2019). Annual Report: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales'. The 2020 report will be published soon.

■ **Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust: Finance**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[156312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will urgently allocate funding to the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust to develop a strategic business case for the FutureFit Programme once the trust has submitted a request for that funding and subject to the necessary approvals.

Edward Argar:

We remain committed to supporting Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust's Future Fit scheme and have previously confirmed approval in principle of £6 million of early funding to continue to develop the sustainability and transformation partnership scheme. Once approval is granted, this funding will be provided to the Trust in the usual way.

■ **Spondyloarthritis**

Tom Randall:

[\[155465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to implement NICE Quality Standard 170 on spondyloarthritis.

Edward Argar:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) promotes quality standards and other guidance via its website, newsletters and other media. Whilst providers and commissioners must have regard to NICE quality standards in planning and delivering services, they do not provide a comprehensive service specification and are not mandatory.

■ **Travel: Quarantine****Rebecca Long Bailey:****[151737]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his policy is on UK citizens studying for their degree as full time students abroad during the covid-19 pandemic; whether students who return home to the UK from countries on the red list will be exempt from hotel quarantine charges; and which (a) individuals and (b) groups will be exempt from hotel quarantine.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: Students who return to the United Kingdom who have been in a 'red list' country in the last 10 days will be required to quarantine in a managed quarantine facility and will not be exempt from charges. There are limited exemptions which are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules>

This is to maximise the public health benefits of the measures.

Sir Mark Hendrick:**[152410]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of permitting covid-19 vaccinated (a) UK citizens and (b) international travellers returning from other countries into the UK without the requirement to quarantine.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Those entering the country internationally are required to quarantine in a hotel or at home. Further research and vigilance is needed to understand how effectively the current range of vaccines stop transmission of the virus and we must also monitor the potential emergence of further new variants. We will continue to keep options under review as more evidence emerges on the impact vaccines have on case rates, transmissions, hospitalisations and deaths.

Sir Mark Hendrick:**[152411]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what financial support is available to Britons returning from high-risk countries who cannot afford the cost of a mandatory hotel quarantine.

Jo Churchill:

For those facing significant financial hardship as a result of the managed quarantine charge, there will be an opportunity to apply for a deferred

repayment plan when booking. This is available for individuals who already receive income-related benefits and they will be required to pay in 12 monthly instalments.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[153232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to introduce a sunset clause for the international travel covid-19 quarantine rules, enforcement and testing measures announced on 9 February 2021.

Jo Churchill:

The managed quarantine and testing measures have been introduced in Regulations that have a 'sunset' date of 8 June 2021.

■ UK Lighthouse Labs Network

Olivia Blake:

[\[155483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason Lighthouse Laboratories are not required to report covid-19 testing cases and data directly to Public Health England.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: Individual laboratories do not report to Public Health England as they operate without any personally identifiable information and could not complete the reporting process as they do not have the data required.

Laboratories connect to the National Pathology Exchange (NPEx) as a mechanism to return test outcomes to the Test and Trace programme. NPEx interfaces with the digital platform, NHS Business Service Authority and other systems or platforms as necessary to complete the notification of patients and all statutory reporting processes.

■ Veterinary Medicine: Contracts for Services

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[156334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions Ministers and officials in his Department have had with (a) the Food Standards Agency and (b) other Departments on the (i) award and (ii) operation of the current three-year contract for the provision of Official Veterinarians and Meat Hygiene Inspectors in England and Wales.

Jo Churchill:

No recent discussions have taken place between Departmental Ministers and the Food Standards Agency on either the award or the operation of the current contract for the provision of Official Veterinarians and Meat Hygiene Inspectors in England and Wales.

As a non-ministerial Government Department, Food Standards Agency discusses a range of issues with the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury directly.

HOME OFFICE■ **Business: Coronavirus****Ms Harriet Harman:**[\[156234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department holds on the number of fixed penalty notices that have been issued by people designated by local authorities in relation to businesses breaching covid-19 restrictions.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not hold this data.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination****John Spellar:**[\[156254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on prioritising frontline police officers and firefighters for covid-19 vaccination.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office is in regular contact with the Department for Health and Social Care on vaccination prioritisation issues. Decisions are guided by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). The first phase of prioritisation is split across nine sequential groups, including those considered clinically vulnerable and those over the age of 50. Police and Fire and Rescue personnel falling into these categories will be offered the vaccine as part of the roll out. In addition, PCSOs, Special Constables and Volunteers will also be captured within the phase 1 prioritisation as will any personnel involved in direct patient care, such as driving ambulances.

■ **Drug Dealing Telecommunications Restriction Orders****Sarah Jones:**[\[156514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of Drug Dealing Telecommunications Restriction Orders.

Sarah Jones:[\[156515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many times Drug Dealing Telecommunications Restriction Orders have been issued since those orders came into force.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not collect data on the number of DDTROs issued nationally. However, through our County Lines programme we are supporting targeted operational activity against county lines which includes the use of DDTROs. Through this programme, the West Midlands ROCU, have issued 91 DDTROs to date since November 2019.

In addition, through the County Lines programme, we are also funding the National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC) to co-ordinate the

national law enforcement response which includes establishing a civil and criminal orders team to ensure effectiveness and maximise the use of the range of civil orders to tackle county lines, with a particular focus on DDTROs. This includes working with forces and Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) to develop and disseminate best practice to raise awareness of these orders and their potential for disruption of county lines gangs.

■ **Drugs: Organised Crime**

Sarah Jones: [\[156516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many children in each police force area have a county lines flag as at 22 February 2021.

Sarah Jones: [\[156517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many children on the PNC database have a county lines flag as at 22 February 2021.

Sarah Jones: [\[156523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many children flagged with county lines markers on the police national computer have social care status.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not hold the information requested which is operational and owned by police forces.

Through our County Lines programme we are funding the National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC) to improve the intelligence picture and to co-ordinate the national law enforcement response.

Since it was established, the NCLCC has coordinated five weeks of intensive action against county lines gangs and the most recent week, in September 2020, which included all forces, including Police Scotland resulted in over 1,000 arrests, drugs worth more than £1m seized and over 1,500 vulnerable individuals safeguarded.

■ **Electric Scooters: Pedestrian Areas**

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[156491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with police forces in England and Wales on the use of e-scooters on pavements; and what recent (a) estimate she has made of the incidence of e-scooters being used on pavements and (b) assessment she has made of the effect of e-scooter use on pavements on the safety of people with sight loss.

Kit Malthouse:

It is illegal to use privately owned e-scooters on the roads and the pavements. How the police enforce road traffic laws is an operational matter for individual Chief Officers who will decide how to deploy available resources, taking into account any specific local problems and demands.

■ Emergency Services Network

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[156413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to ensure that Extended Area Service sites are ready for commercial use by mobile networks (a) as quickly as possible and (b) ahead the move from the airwave network to the Emergency Services Network in 2025.

Kit Malthouse:

We are striving to deliver the EAS component of ESN for emergency services' use, as quickly as possible. 4G commercial mobile phone coverage will generally be available to EE customers as soon as these masts are activated for ESN. As part of the DCMS Shared Rural Network Programme, these masts will also be made available for commercial mobile customers of other Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) wherever possible.

The EAS sites have been designed and built primarily to support the delivery of the Emergency Services Network (ESN). The Home Office, working together with DCMS as part of the Shared Rural Network (SRN) programme are upgrading as many of the EAS sites as possible to enable all operators provide 4G commercial coverage from those sites.

EE would be able to provide 4G commercial coverage (alongside ESN) from those sites at the point those sites are fully activated.

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[156414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason her Department not supported activation of a commercial 4G service on the majority of built extended area service sites.

Kit Malthouse:

Wherever possible, we have chosen a future-proofed design for EAS mast structures, meaning that they can be easily upgraded to be part of the Shared Rural Network (SRN) which is being delivered by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). SRN is a partnership between Government and industry to deliver on the manifesto commitment of increasing mobile coverage to 95% of the UK landmass by 2026. Through the SRN programme, Government will fund upgrades to the Home Office EAS sites, to enable Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to provide commercial mobile coverage from these sites.

The HO is making as many of the EAS sites available to the Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), working with DCMS under the SRN programme. This includes physical upgrades to the sites to enable MNOs place their equipment onto the sites. Activation and timing of the site for 4G commercial services is a responsibility of the individual operators. The role of the HO is to provide physical access to MNOs which it is enabling.

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[156415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to extended area service sites that require a backhaul link to the main telecoms communications network to be commissioned but are otherwise ready for use, for

what reason her Department has not provided (a) that backhaul link or (b) other maintenance solution that would provide access to the 4G mobile network for residents.

Kit Malthouse:

The contract for connecting all 292 EAS masts to the network (backhaul link) is currently in the process of being awarded to a supplier, we expect this to be completed in Autumn 2021. After the award of this contract, we will complete the physical work to connect the mast to the network and, separately, activate the mast. Contract award for maintenance is currently at the procurement phase, we expect this to be in place when sites are ready for activation.

The installation of the backhaul link (transmission) takes place once a site has been built. The contract for transmission connections is currently in the process of being awarded to a supplier, we expect this to be completed in Autumn 2021. After the award of this contract, we will complete the physical work to install the transmission and connect the mast to the network and, separately, activate the mast.

The contract for transmission will include installation and maintenance services and is scheduled to awarded in Autumn 2021 as above.

The ordering of transmission circuits (over which the 4G services run) remain the responsibility of each commercial operator.

■ **Emergency Services Network: Argyll and Bute**

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[156412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Extended Area Service programme, for what reason only six sites in Argyll and Bute are suitable for use by a commercial 4G service.

Kit Malthouse:

We have chosen a future-proofed design for all mast structures in Bute and Argyll, meaning that they can be easily upgraded to allow access by the UK's commercial mobile operators to improve coverage to communities.

A number of EAS sites are not currently able to support commercial services for technical or financial reasons. The HO is working with DCMS under the SRN programme to provide significant investment in many of these sites to enable 4G coverage to be possible from as many of the EAS sites as possible.

■ **Extradition Act 2003: Arrests**

Meg Hillier:

[\[156290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many arrests there have been in the UK under Part 1 of the Extradition Act 2003 on and after 1 January 2021.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not hold the information requested.

The National Crime Agency manages requests made under Part 1 of the Extradition Act 2003.

■ Hate Crime

Dr Julian Lewis:

[156232]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the definition of hate crime as any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic is compatible with the principles of the (a) objective application of justice, (b) equal treatment under the law and (c) presumption of innocence unless proved guilty; what (i) internal and (ii) cross-departmental assessments have recently been carried out of the operation of (A) legislation and (B) guidelines defining crimes in terms of people's perceptions; and if she will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

The police and Crown Prosecution Service define and record hate crime as "any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; disability or perceived disability and any crime motivated by hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender."

Part of the purpose of this definition is to encourage victims of hate crime to come forward to report, reflecting the recommendations from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. It is the responsibility of the police to investigate allegations of criminal activity and decide whether or not a specific incident should be treated as a hate crime.

In 2018 the Government asked the Law Commission to undertake a full review of the coverage and approach of current hate crime legislation. That review is due to conclude this year.

■ Mother and Baby Units: Glasgow

Alison Thewliss:

[156449]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the assessment criteria is for transferring mothers and children to the Mears operated mother and baby unit at 100 Pollokshaws Road, Glasgow.

Chris Philp:

The mother and baby unit is a new dedicated facility in Glasgow to support mothers and babies, providing accommodation, along with access to healthcare and other support services, that is purpose designed to best meet their needs.

The facility can accommodate 38 young mothers, though currently it is operating at half capacity. The building is used to accommodate new service users where appropriate, or where there are referrals from social workers, the health team or the third sector.

The current residents were moved on the basis that they would have improved privacy and wrap around support as mothers and children. Consideration for transfer included a safeguarding assessment and appraisal of the suitability of their previous accommodation.

There is a dedicated Resident Welfare Manager on site, and they are in close contact with each resident. If the Welfare Manager considers a move out of the dedicated centre is appropriate a move to alternative accommodation can be arranged.

■ Offences against Children: Children in Care

Sarah Jones:

[\[156521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what work streams there are in her Department and the Department of Education to coordinate both Departments' response to tackling grooming in care homes.

Sarah Jones:

[\[156522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what activity her Department has participated in to prevent county lines gangs connecting with looked after children in children's homes.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office is working closely with colleagues across government, including with the Department for Education, to ensure children in care homes are kept safe from grooming and exploitation.

The Government wants to make sure that all homes are providing high quality care that meets each child's individual needs, keeps them safe and enables them to fulfil their full potential. Ofsted inspects all children's homes at least once per year and at present, 80% of homes are rated good or outstanding. In April 2015, DfE introduced the Children's Homes Regulations (England) which included Quality Standards for children's homes, specifying the outcomes that children must be supported to achieve while living in children's homes.

We are currently supporting the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, which is taking a fundamental look at what is needed to make a real difference to the needs, experiences and outcomes of the children supported by children's social care, including those in children's homes.

Through our county lines programme the Home Office has provided up to £860,000 to provide specialist one-to-one support in London, the West Midlands and Merseyside to under 25's and their families who are criminally exploited through county lines. Through this investment we are also delivering awareness sessions to care home staff to increase their understanding of criminally exploited children and young people.

We have also funded the Prevention Programme to deliver targeted virtual training sessions focussing on child sexual abuse and exploitation to children's homes in the North East and North West and have worked alongside the British Transport Police to provide intelligence-led interventions

to children's homes to ensure appropriate safeguarding actions are taken in response.

The Department for Education is also funding the Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme to help safeguarding partners in local areas develop a strategic response to child exploitation and risk of harm from outside the family home, in particular child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation, including county lines drug trafficking and modern slavery.

■ Violence Reduction Units

Sarah Jones:

[156518]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether all Violence Reduction Units have complete interoperability of data.

Kit Malthouse:

Over two financial years the Home Office has invested a total of £70m into the development of 18 Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) in the areas worst affected by serious violence. VRUs bring together local partners to identify the drivers of serious violence and agree a multi-agency response to them, including sharing data to strengthen their understanding. On the 8 February the Home Office announced a further £35.5m investment into VRUs for 21/22.

Our independent evaluation found that in their first year of delivery (19/20) VRUs have made positive progress in embedding a local multi-agency approach including their use and access to data. You can read more of their first year of progress here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/910822/process-evaluation-of-the-violence-reduction-units-horr116.pdf?mc_cid=ec12552fcc&mc_eid=25c35f94a1

Over the past year VRUs have made further progress in gaining access to partners' data, establishing Memoranda of Understanding and improving the quality of the data collected. We are working closely with VRUs to support further data sharing and have established a VRU data sharing and analysis network to further share best practice.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund

Shabana Mahmood:

[153170]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many applications to the Building Safety Fund have (a) been approved, (b) been declined and (c) have a decision outstanding; and what the average length of time was before a decision was made in each of the last three years.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department published registration statistics for the Building Safety Fund on 11 February 2021, which includes information on the number of eligible and ineligible registrations to the fund and allocations made, and can be found

at: www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-registration-statistics . It covers the period between the Fund's opening for registrations in June 2020 to present.

Dr Matthew Offord: [153210]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Building Safety Fund will cover non-cladding fire defects.

Dr Matthew Offord: [153214]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Building Safety Fund will cover the cost of (a) cavity walls, (b) external balconies, (c) waking watches and (d) other remedial work.

Christopher Pincher:

The eligibility criteria for the Building Safety Fund can be found in Prospectus Annex A: Technical Information of the Building Safety Fund Prospectus. It is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#prospectus---outlining-eligibility-for-the-fund>.

Dr Matthew Offord: [153219]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the formula is for determining whether a residential property is above or below 18m.

Christopher Pincher:

The method of determining a building's height for the Building Safety Fund can be found in Prospectus Annex A: Technical Information of the Building Safety Fund Prospectus. It is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#prospectus---outlining-eligibility-for-the-fund>

Thangam Debbonaire: [153287]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to reopen applications to the Building Safety Fund for buildings which did not submit an application by the deadline of 31 July 2020; and whether building managers can apply to the fund in the event that they missed that deadline.

Christopher Pincher:

The additional £3.5 billion of funding we have announced, along with the funding we have already committed for ACM remediation and the Building Safety Fund for non-ACM remediation, is intended to fully fund the cost of replacing unsafe cladding for all leaseholders in residential buildings 18 metres and over in England. We will publish more details on how the additional funding will work alongside the existing funds soon.

Daisy Cooper: [156575]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to reopen registration for the Building Safety Fund for those buildings that were not able to conduct EWS1 assessments before July 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

The EWS1 process is an industry led process to assess financial risk to inform valuation and is not linked to the Building Safety Fund registration process. We will be publishing more details on how the additional funding for the removal of unsafe cladding announced on 10 February will work alongside the Building Safety Fund.

■ Building Safety Fund: Appeals**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[153220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what right of appeal a leaseholder of a residential property will have to challenge the Department's assessment of the height of their property.

Christopher Pincher:

It is for the applicant to demonstrate that the building meets the published definitions of eligibility for the Building Safety Fund, including the required height. An appeal process is open for responsible entities which have applied for the Fund if they feel that a decision is not in line with the published criteria.

■ Business Improvement Districts: Audit**Sir Greg Knight:**[\[156257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what (a) guidelines and (b) processes are in place to ensure that local authorities in Business Improvement Districts carry out a periodic audit or value for money review into the (i) scope of work undertaken by BID management companies and (ii) their overall cost effectiveness.

Luke Hall:

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are a proven and effective vehicle for leveraging private investment and have a significant role to play in high street regeneration.

In 2019, 259 BIDs across England raised over £106.7 million through levy payments to invest back into their respective towns and cities. Their role will be even more important in the recovery phase from the current crisis.

BIDs are vehicles for businesses to effect collective local action to manage and improve the high streets and town centres where they exist and trade. They are created under a democratic process which requires their mandate to be renewed every five years. They are also subject to the usual rules under the Companies Acts, such as standard accounting practices and audit and disclosure requirements, that apply to the corporate structure that they chose to adopt, such as companies limited by guarantee or limited liability partnerships. BIDs are also subject to The Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004.

Although many BIDs work closely and effectively with the local authorities in their area, they are independent of both local and central government. The work that they do must be approved in a ballot by their member organisations and the levy that they charge is similarly approved through the ballot process.

If BID members are dissatisfied with the work that their BID is doing, or if there is any irregularity in the way the BID operates, the usual statutory remedies apply. BID members can also decline to vote for its continuation when a renewal ballot is held.

■ **Duchy of Cornwall: Leasehold**

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[152551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on leasehold which will apply to tenants of the Duchy of Cornwall.

Afzal Khan:

[\[152630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that tenants on land owned by the Duchy of Cornwall have the same rights as other leaseholders in England.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service. We are taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market, and last month we announced reforms to the valuation process and length of lease extensions, in response to Law Commission recommendations.

The Law Commission's report on enfranchisement includes recommendations relating to the qualifying criteria for enfranchisement and lease extensions, including the applicability of these to leaseholders of the Crown. We will bring forward a response to these and the other remaining Law Commission recommendations.

■ **Housing: Insulation**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[153106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many section 20 notices have been issued to leaseholders in each of the last 12 months for remediation works identified as part of the EWS1 process or to address other fire safety defects; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department does not hold this data.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[153107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the number of EWS1 certificates being required by mortgage lenders for buildings which either do not have cladding or are primarily finished in brick; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The EWS1 process is not a Government form or regulatory requirement, and the Department does not hold data on its use. However, following the Government announcement in November 2020, leaseholders living in blocks

with no cladding should not be asked to produce an EWS1 form to sell or re-mortgage their flat.

Mr Philip Hollobone:

[153167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his oral contribution on Building Safety on 10 February 2021, Official report, column 329, whether cladding on residential buildings of less than 11 metres in height by default does not require remedial work; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

Longstanding safety advice from the independent expert advisory panel established by Government following the Grenfell tragedy is that height is a central factor in assessing risk, and it is right we prioritise action on higher rise buildings where risk to multiple households is greater when fire spreads. For lower and medium-rise blocks of flats, the risks are significantly lower and the remediation of cladding is less likely to be needed - in many cases, it will not be needed at all. Government funding does not absolve building owners of their responsibility to ensure their buildings are safe. They should consider all routes to meet costs, protecting leaseholders where they can – for example through warranties and recovering costs from contractors for incorrect or poor work.

Stephen Doughty:

[153256]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 146897 on Buildings: Insulation, whether the additional trained assessors will be working across the UK or England only.

Christopher Pincher:

To speed up valuations where EWS1 forms are justified, the Government is providing nearly £700,000 funding to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors to train up to 2,000 more assessors in 2021. The training is available to relevant professionals across the United Kingdom.

Daisy Cooper:

[156582]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether it is his policy that cladding remediation costs will not be withheld pending the (a) completion or (b) confirmed funding of separate fire safety projects.

Christopher Pincher:

We must ensure that the remediation of unsafe cladding systems is not delayed by funding shortfalls. This is why when Government funding is being used for cladding remediation, the applicant must ensure they have funds for ineligible works, if these are being performed as part of the same project. If the applicant chooses to perform other fire safety works as separate projects, this will not affect the payment of funding for cladding remediation.

■ Local Government Finance

Colleen Fletcher:

[156418]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the total available spend was of each local authority in each of the last 10 years.

Luke Hall:

The Government publishes Core Spending Power (CSP) as a measure of the resources available to local authorities to fund service delivery. This year's Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS), including a breakdown of CSP for each local authority going back to 2015/16 can be found in the supporting information document here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/core-spending-power-final-local-government-finance-settlement-2021-to-2022>

We are committed to putting funding where there is relative need, irrespective of the location. For 2021/22, councils in the most deprived areas of the country (the upper decile of the Index of Multiple Deprivation) receive 16 per cent more in CSP than the least deprived areas.

Core Spending Power was introduced in 2015. Comparisons before that date do not apply, because the system of local government finance changed, councils' responsibilities changed and because grants have been incorporated into the annual Settlement over time.

CSP shows the funding provided through the Settlement, but councils will have access to a number of other grants provided by Government departments as well as other sources of income not in CSP such as from Sales, Fees, and Charges and commercial income.

Please find relevant links to previous LGFSs below:

YEA

R LINK

2014 <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/final-local-government-finance-settlement-england-2014-to-2015>
/15

2013 <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140505104701/http://www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/1314/settle.htm>
/14

2012 <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140505110056/http://www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/1213/grant.htm>
/13

2011 <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140505110052/http://www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/1112/grant.htm#set>
/12

■ Natural Gas: Safety

Chi Onwurah:

[156392]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing targeted

enforcement measures for the compulsory inclusion of a Unique Property Reference Number for (a) gas safety certificates and (b) mortgage lenders; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of introducing such measures on the ability of rogue landlords to be profiled.

Christopher Pincher:

Unique Property Reference Numbers (UPRNs) hold significant value in allowing different data-sets associated with buildings to be linked together. My Department will seek to utilise this where possible, enabling all data users to have a well-rounded view on information that relates to each building

However, local authorities already have a range of tools available to them to take the most appropriate enforcement action including placing landlords on to the Database of Rogue Landlords and Property Agents where the landlord meets the criteria. Where a landlord has received a Banning order the local authority must place them on the database, where the landlord has received a conviction for a banning order offence or 2 or more civil penalties for housing related offences then the local authority has discretion to make an entry

For properties that require an annual gas safety check (under regulation 36 of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations), there is already a requirement to include details of the property address on the associated records. There are no plans to extend the requirements to include the UPRN on the safety check record and there has been no assessment of the potential merits of introducing targeted enforcement measures for the compulsory inclusion of a UPRN for gas safety certificates. At this time, we are not making an assessment of a connection between UPRNs and mortgages.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Pets**

Bill Esterson:

[\[156366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support pet owners in the private rented sector following recent revisions to the Model Tenancy Agreement.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has revised the Model Tenancy Agreement, the Government's recommended contract for assured shorthold tenancies in the private rented sector, to remove restrictions on responsible tenants with pets, encouraging landlords who use the Model Tenancy Agreement to offer greater flexibility in their approach to pet ownership. It provides that a landlord should accept a request from a tenant to keep a pet where they are satisfied the tenant is a responsible pet-owner and the pet is of a kind that is suitable in relation to the nature of the premises at which it will be kept. The revision aims to strike the balance between protecting private landlords from situations where their properties are damaged by badly behaved pets whilst ensuring responsible pet owning tenants are not unfairly penalised.

■ Town Councils: Infrastructure

Greg Smith:

[\[153394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect of the construction of (a) HS2, (b) East West Rail and (c) other national infrastructure projects on the resources of parish and town councils who cover areas affected by those projects.

Christopher Pincher:

Nationally significant infrastructure projects are defined by thresholds in the Planning Act 2008. Decisions on nationally significant infrastructure projects are for the relevant Secretary of State following examination of those proposals by the Planning Inspectorate, in which all relevant issues, which can include effects of construction, are considered. Decisions on transport nationally significant infrastructure projects are for the Secretary of State for Transport.

For nationally significant infrastructure projects, relevant parish councils are statutory consultees and can raise their views, including on implications of construction, before the proposed project is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration and during its subsequent examination.

Construction of phase 1 and phase 2a of HS2 was authorised through Hybrid Bills where Royal Assent was granted on 23 February 2017 and 11 February 2021 respectively. A Transport and Works Act Order for the Bicester to Bletchley section of East-West Rail was made by the Secretary of State for Transport on 29 January 2020 and came into force on 25 February 2020.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia

Kate Osamor:

[\[156484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether arms sales granted an export license by the Government have been used by Saudi Arabia and their coalition partners in combat missions which have resulted in civilian casualties.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom has a robust export controls regime. All export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the "Consolidated Criteria").

We have been clear that equipment manufactured in the United Kingdom is used all over the world, and we are equally clear that a licence will not be granted if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

■ Department for International Trade: Coronavirus

Liam Byrne:

[\[153137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what (a) policies and (b) grant and funding programmes her Department has introduced to provide support to individuals and organisations in response to the covid-19 outbreak; and what

funding has been allocated to each of those programmes in the 2020-21 financial year.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Through Project DEFEND, my Department has led cross-Whitehall efforts on securing critical supply chains, working alongside industry to ensure diversification of supply for the most critical of goods that are imported into the United Kingdom.

This has led to great successes, such as sourcing almost 31 billion items of PPE internationally, which were then procured by the Department of Health and Social Care and have been crucial to the country's Covid-19 response.

Our network of International Trade Advisors has stepped up and supported business with advice throughout the pandemic too. Through Britain's export credit agency, UK Export Finance, we have guaranteed bank loans, improving access to working capital and helping businesses to cope with temporary disruption to payments or in their supply chain.

■ **Fairtrade Initiative: Trade Agreements**

Virginia Crosbie:

[912447]

What steps her Department is taking to ensure that fair trade goods continue to have access to UK markets in new trade agreements.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Britain's Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) support emerging markets around the world to export agricultural products – and more – to these shores. We have secured EPAs with 29 African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries, covering £18bn of trade. We plan to deepen our EPAs – and expand them to new markets in the future. From working in Ghana to ensure cocoa farmers and their families are resilient to the pandemic, and accelerating diversification through climate-smart farming, to Ethiopia where we are supporting people to help sell their unique wild coffee at a fair price and build resilience to climate change at the same time, Global Britain is delivering.

■ **Overseas Trade: Agriculture**

Chris Loder:

[R] [912446]

What recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of her Department's trade policies on UK farmers.

Graham Stuart:

Our trade policies will open global markets for UK farmers and lower their input costs. We have successfully rolled over EU FTAs but now want to give farmers enhanced access to countries with whom the EU could not or would not do a deal. We are giving farmers a stronger voice in trade policy, putting the Trade and Agriculture Commission on a statutory footing and we have just launched a major promotion campaign for the industry.

■ Overseas Trade: India

Stephen Metcalfe:

[\[912444\]](#)

What steps she is taking to strengthen the UK's trade relationship with India.

Elizabeth Truss:

Earlier this month I visited India to deepen trade ties and agree a pathway towards a future FTA with the world's biggest democracy. A closer partnership with India will help us lead the world in areas like science, tech and the green economy, driving jobs and growth across the UK.

■ Pesticides: India

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[155264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the effect of pesticides such as Paraquat, which are banned in the UK, being exported to India in the context of ongoing farmers' protests in that country.

Graham Stuart:

The export of paraquat is regulated under the Great Britain Prior Informed Consent (PIC) regulatory regime for the export and import of certain hazardous chemicals. Companies intending to export any of these chemicals from Great Britain must notify the importing country via the exporter's Designated National Authority. For Great Britain the Designated National Authority is The Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Paraquat additionally requires the explicit consent of the importing country before export can take place. India allows the import of Paraquat and the exchange of information that PIC provides allows all countries to make informed decisions on the import of those chemicals and on how to handle and use them safely.

The farmers' protests in India are a domestic matter for the Government of India.

■ Trade Agreements: Australia

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[152420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent progress she has made towards securing a free trade agreement with Australia.

Greg Hands:

Strengthening and enhancing our bilateral trading relationship with Australia is a key priority for the Government. The third round of negotiations for a UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) took place between 23rd November and 4th December where negotiators completed around 50 discussions, spanning the breadth of the FTA.

Both sides exchanged their initial tariffs offers – this early milestone reflects the momentum behind these negotiations. Negotiators are in the process of consolidating texts in several chapter areas.

The fourth round of negotiations will start on 22nd February 2021.

■ Trade Agreements: Ghana**Gareth Thomas:** [\[156245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the reimbursement or the implementation of a tariff rebate scheme for UK Businesses who have suffered losses as a result of tariffs paid on imported goods from Ghana between the period of the UK leaving the EU and the implementation of the Ghana-UK Trade Partnership Agreement announced on the 4 February 2021; and if she will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas: [\[156246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when tariff free trade with Ghana will resume; and steps her Department has taken to facilitate provisional implementation of the recent interim Ghana-UK Trade Partnership Agreement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

I refer the Hon. Gentleman for Harrow West to the answers I gave him on 26th January (UIN: [138852](#)) and 11th February (UIN: [149722](#)).

■ Trade Agreements: India**Bob Stewart:** [\[152448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether Gibraltar will be included in a future trade agreement with India.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

In all trade deals, HM Government will be seeking trade outcomes that support British Overseas Territories' economic interests, and which reflect their unique characteristics.

Trade and investment between the United Kingdom and India was worth £48 billion in 2019 and we are developing an even more ambitious relationship. We have committed to an Enhanced Trade Partnership with India, through which both sides are working to bring down trade barriers, open up opportunities for trade and investment, and chart the roadmap towards a potential Free Trade Agreement.

Bob Blackman: [\[912455\]](#)

What steps she is taking to strengthen the UK's trade relationship with India.

Elizabeth Truss:

Earlier this month I visited India to deepen trade ties and agree a pathway towards a future FTA with the world's biggest democracy. A closer partnership with India will help us lead the world in areas like science, tech and the green economy, driving jobs and growth across the UK.

■ Trade Agreements: Parliamentary Scrutiny**Munira Wilson:** [\[912451\]](#)

What steps she is taking to ensure parliamentary scrutiny of UK trade deals.

Greg Hands:

The Government applies appropriate transparency and scrutiny procedures. For new free trade agreements with the United States, Australia, New Zealand and UK's proposed accession to CPTTP, the Government applies enhanced transparency and scrutiny arrangements. Parliament can prevent ratification of any free trade agreement through the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act procedure, and by rejecting any necessary implementing legislation.

■ TRIPS Agreement**Clive Lewis:**[\[152588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the Government's policy is on the proposed WTO TRIPS Waiver and the use of that waiver by foreign Governments.

Greg Hands:

I refer the Hon. Member for Norwich South to the answer I gave to the Hon. Member for North East Fife on 25 November 2020, UIN: 115822.

■ UK Export Finance: Cooperation**Emily Thornberry:**[\[156298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the titles and dates are of all memoranda of understanding agreed by UK Export Finance with other domestic and overseas bodies since the start of 2016.

Graham Stuart:

UK Export Finance (UKEF) has agreed the attached list of memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with domestic and overseas bodies since the start of 2016.

There are seven further MoUs whose details are being withheld for reasons of commercial sensitivity.

Attachments:

1. List of MoUs [MoUs.docx]

■ UK Trade with EU**Mark Tami:**[\[154793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2021 to Question 144942, on UK Trade with EU, how many businesses in (a) Alyn and Deeside and (b) the UK have been advised by her Department to transfer some operations to the EU in order to facilitate exports following the UK's departure from the EU regardless of whether or not this is her Department's policy.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for International Trade's (DIT) Customer Relationship Management System currently has over 200,000 active company records, and our advisers have many interactions with UK businesses every day. Whilst it is not possible to determine what was discussed in each of those interactions,

DIT guidance to its staff is clear. Any decision to set up an operation in the EU is a commercial decision for the business, and it is not the role of DIT staff to advise companies on such decisions.

Of the interactions recorded since 1 December 2020, only one was with a company located in Alyn and Deeside, and that interaction related to a virtual trade mission to Canada. This reflects the fact the companies based in Wales receive local support on international matters from the Welsh Government, in line with their devolved responsibilities.

■ **UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: Employment and Environment Protection**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[912452\]](#)

What plans she has to maintain employment and environmental protections in the UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Greg Hands:

There is no Government plan to reduce workers' rights or environmental protections, and the UK's high standards have never been dependent on EU membership. The Trade and Cooperation Agreement meets the Government's fundamental objective of ensuring that the EU has no control over our rules, while meeting our manifesto commitments to get a Free Trade Agreement with the EU, and to make no compromises to our high labour, environment and climate standards provided by our laws and regulations.

■ **UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: Fisheries**

Angela Crawley: [\[912453\]](#)

What assessment she has made of the effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the (a) shellfish and (b) fishing industries.

Greg Hands:

The TCA is a good deal for British fishermen, it recognises UK sovereignty over our fishing waters, delivers an immediate uplift in quota for the UK fleet and ensures there are zero tariffs on trade in UK and EU goods. We continue to support the industry through the unique circumstances created by the COVID pandemic and adjusting to the new requirements.

JUSTICE

■ **Courts and Tribunals: Interpreters**

Alex Cunningham: [\[156382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what guidance his Department provides to courts and tribunals on the employment of interpreters.

Alex Cunningham: [\[156383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of use of unregistered interpreters in courts and tribunals.

Alex Cunningham:

[156384]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what safeguards his Department has put in place to ensure that interpreters used in court and tribunal hearings are qualified to undertake the role.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is committed to ensuring the justice system is supported by a suite of high-quality language service contracts, that meet the needs of all those that require them.

The MoJ does not directly employ interpreters. We commission the services of suitably qualified interpreters through contracted service providers, thebigword and Clarion Interpreting.

Detailed guidance and training modules are provided to courts and tribunals staff responsible for booking interpreters through the MoJ's Language Services to ensure they follow the correct processes and book suitably qualified interpreters.

Interpreters provided by our contracted language service providers are sourced from the MoJ's register. Only interpreters that meet the department's contractual requirements are included on the register, which is managed and audited by an independent language service provider.

The MoJ regularly reviews the level of unfulfilled bookings, which may result in the use of interpreters not sourced from the departmental register, to identify trends and to require remedial action to be taken where appropriate.

Fulfilment of bookings remains consistent at circa 97%, with the main reason for unfulfillment being short notice bookings of a rare language requirement.

The contract has a clearly defined list of qualifications, skills, experience and vetting requirements interpreters must meet, which have been designed to meet the needs of the justice system. All interpreters are also required to complete a justice system specific training course before they are permitted to join the MoJ's interpreter register.

The contract sets out the minimum level of qualification and experience a language professional is required to have in order to work on each complexity level of booking. Details of these qualifications can be found at:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/975cb99e-fec6-430f-8f31-fd532a907137>

The MoJ's contracted service provider is required to hold evidence of these credentials, which are subject to an additional safeguard in the form of an annual audit conducted by the department's contracted provider of independent language service quality assurance, The Language Shop (part of the London Borough of Newham).

The Language Shop make regular and independent assessments of interpreters carrying out assignments via the MoJ's language services contracts. This includes a check of the qualifications held by the interpreter to ensure they meet the requirements of the contract between the department and the supplier.

Complaints about the quality of interpreting or professional conduct are referred to The Language Shop for independent assessment. Interpreters are suspended from the MoJ register pending the outcome and are not reinstated unless The Language Shop confirms that the requisite standards have been met.

The complaint rate is monitored closely as part of robust contract governance processes. The rate remains low at less than 1%, which suggests there is no systemic issue with the quality of interpreting provided.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Paul Maynard: [\[152461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to reply to the letter of 13 November 2020 from the hon. Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys on prison conditions.

Lucy Frazer:

A response was sent to the hon. Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys on 10 December 2020. A further copy has been sent.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Appeals**

Colleen Fletcher: [\[156416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average length of time was for the Tribunals Service to administer a First-tier Tribunal-Social Security and Child Support appeal for personal independence payment in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in the most recent period for which figures are available; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on average waiting times for personal independence payment appeals over the same period in those areas.

Colleen Fletcher: [\[156417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many appellants are waiting for the Tribunals Service to list their First Tier Tribunal Social Security and Child Support appeal in relation to personal independence payment in (a) Coventry, (b) West Midlands and (c) England.

Chris Philp:

The latest period for which data about the First-tier Tribunal (Social Security and Child Support) (SSCS) are available is January to March 2020. The most recent tribunal statistics publications covering the period April to September 2020 do not include SSCS data due to issues identified as the tribunal was being migrated to a new operational system. The data will be made available as soon as this is resolved and the data quality assured.

(1) Information about clearance times for appeals to SSCS is published at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics

Waiting times are calculated from receipt of an appeal to its final disposal. An appeal is not necessarily disposed of at its first hearing. The final disposal decision on the appeal may be reached after an earlier hearing had been

adjourned (which may be directed by the judge for a variety of reasons, such as to seek further evidence), or after an earlier hearing date had been postponed (again, for a variety of reasons, often at the request of the appellant). An appeal may also have been decided at an earlier date by the First-tier Tribunal, only for the case to have gone on to the Upper Tribunal, to be returned once again to the First-tier, for its final disposal.

Throughout the pandemic, appeals have continued to be decided on the papers, or heard using telephone and other remote technology. Additionally, HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) has introduced safety measures so that face to face hearings can be held for any cases which cannot be decided on the papers or heard remotely. The decision as to how a hearing is conducted is a matter for the judge, who will determine how best to uphold the interests of justice.

(2) As at March 2020, there were a total of 440 Personal Independence Payment (PIP) ¹ appeals waiting to be listed in the Coventry venue; 2,466 in the West Midlands ² ; and 21,005 in England ³ .

SSCS data are usually registered to the venue nearest to the appellant's home address. We cannot retrieve data based on the appellant's actual address but can produce reports detailing the number of cases dealt with at one of our Regional centres or heard at a specific venue.

1. PIP (New Claim Appeals) which replaces Disability Living Allowance was introduced on 8 April 2013, also includes PIP Claims (Reassessments)

2. West Midlands includes the venues: Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Coventry, Nuneaton, Stoke, Shrewsbury, Hereford and Worcester.

3. Data exclude SSCS Scotland Region and Wales Region.

■ **Prison Officers: Pay**

Rachel Hopkins:

[156652]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Minister of State for Justice on 2 February 2021, Official Report, column 824, if he will publish his Department's assessment of the impact on (a) recruitment, (b) retention, and (c) staff morale of the decision to reject the Prison Service Pay Review Body's recommendation 3.

Rachel Hopkins:

[156653]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the oral Answer of the Minister of State on 2 February 2021, Official Report, column 824, what criteria his Department used to measure the (a) affordability and (b) value for money for the taxpayer of the Prison Service Pay Review Body's recommendation 3.

Rachel Hopkins:

[156656]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to his oral Answer on 2 February 2021, Official Report, column 829, what effect his assessment of the times in which we live has had on the level of his support for the Prison Service Pay Review Body's recommendation 3.

Lucy Frazer:

The 20/21 PSPRB report was received on 5 June 2020 and included a recommendation to uplift the pay of Band 3 prison staff on modernised terms and conditions by £3,000, 'recommendation 3'. This represented a substantial increase for our largest staffing group and was ultimately not accepted by the government, on the basis of the exceptional costs associated with implementing the recommendation, the impact on the overall prison service pay structure, and the changing labour market conditions due to the exceptional economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes in the labour market as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unpredictable changing state of the economy means that the assumptions made by the PSPRB upon which they based their recommendations have also changed. The decision to reject this recommendation was announced on 10 December 2020. Prison officers did however benefit from awards of between 2.5% and 7.5% for the current financial year (2020/21). This delivered an above inflation increase and is the third year in a row that prison staff have benefitted from an award of at least 2%.

The estimated cost of recommendation 3 is £46.8m per year. This includes the cost required to apply the uplift to non-operational prison service colleagues paid within the same band. The total annual cost of recommendation 3 alone represents a higher cost than that of the entire proposals made by HMPPS for the 2020/21 pay round, so presented clear challenges to affordability.

Affordability considerations took into account value for money for the taxpayer, as well as competing funding priorities, such as key investments in prison safety and security, leadership and professionalisation, and staff wellbeing which all impact significantly upon staff.

Prior to the decision to reject 'recommendation 3', the Ministry of Justice considered the possible impacts on recruitment, retention and morale of doing so. However, recruitment, retention and staff morale levels are all driven by a range of factors and an increase in pay alone cannot be assumed to be a fix for these issues. These issues are continually under review by the department, as fundamental issues in our policy. There are no plans to publish further analysis on recommendation 3.

We are currently finalising the evidence to the Prison Service Pay Review Body for the 2021/22 pay round, in line with the pay policy set out by the Chancellor in November last year. This will be published and submitted to the PSPRB in due course.

Rachel Hopkins:[\[156654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to his oral Answer on 2 February 2021, Official Report, column 829, how many and what proportion of prison officers are planned to receive the £250 rise next year, by grade.

Rachel Hopkins:[\[156655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to his oral Answer on 2 February 2021, Official Report, column 829, whether he has placed any

restrictions on future recommendations by the Prison Service Pay Review Body; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:

It was announced by the Chancellor on 25 November 2020 that, in the interest of fairness, pay rises in the public sector will be restrained and targeted for the coming year (2021/22), whilst also ensuring an uplift for lower earning staff who need it most. This announcement reflects the substantial and unprecedented impact of Covid-19 on the economy, labour market, and fiscal position, which combined, have suppressed earnings growth and increased redundancies in the private sector.

As such, the remit of the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) and other public sector pay review bodies for the 2021/22 pay round has been restricted. The PSPRB will be gathering and considering a range of evidence in the usual way in order to develop recommendations which fall in line with the public sector pay policy

The pay policy involves a pause to any headline uplifts for all public sector workforces outside of the NHS who earn £24,000 or above. Anyone earning less than £24,000 will be protected and will receive a minimum uplift of £250, or the National Living Wage (whichever is the higher) should they qualify. The Departments proposals on how the uplift should apply to prison staff will be published and submitted to the PSPRB shortly.

The pay pause allows Government to protect public sector jobs and investment in public services as Covid-19 continues to have an impact. The position will be reassessed ahead of pay round 2022/23.

■ **Residential Women's Centres**

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[156286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Questions 151640, 151641, 151642, 151643 and 152427 on Residential Women's Centres (RWC), whether it is his policy that RWCs will be for women sentenced to a community sentence with time in a RWC as an additional requirement or for women being resettled after a prison sentence.

Lucy Frazer:

The residential women's centre (RWC) will be for women sentenced to a community order or suspended sentence order with a residence requirement to reside at the RWC.

The RWC will provide holistic support for women to address the underlying causes of their offending and will enable us to develop an evidence base about what could be effective, sustainable and scalable models.

NORTHERN IRELAND■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Claire Hanna:****[912484]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps the Government is taking to develop an inward investment strategy for Northern Ireland businesses under the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Mr Robin Walker:

The UK Government wants to see the Northern Ireland economy grow and thrive. While inward investment to Northern Ireland is formally a devolved matter, the UK Government will do everything we can to help Northern Ireland succeed. We share the ambitions of the Northern Ireland Executive in promoting Northern Ireland as a great place to invest, visit and do business. This is why my officials are working closely with the Northern Ireland Executive on a broad range of interventions as part of the Government's vision to level up the Northern Ireland economy with the rest of the UK and to seize the opportunities ahead.

We have been working to ensure that Northern Ireland benefits from its unique position following our departure from the EU. Through the £400m New Deal for Northern Ireland, the UK Government will target key growth sectors of the Northern Ireland economy, supporting business development and boosting the skills programme. This substantial financial package will open up exciting new opportunities that will enable Northern Ireland's businesses and its people to innovate, invest and succeed, and will support initiatives to promote Northern Ireland's goods and services to export markets from GB and Ireland to the rest of the world.

We have also committed to progressing a comprehensive and ambitious set of City and Growth Deals across Northern Ireland, committing more than £600m to this programme. This week we signed the Heads of Terms on the Derry/Londonderry and Strabane City Deal, which will support a range of projects in the North West region, including the Centre for Industry Digitalisation Robotics and Automation, the Cognitive Analytics Research Laboratory and the Graduate Entry Medical School at Ulster University.

We will also be promoting Northern Ireland during the upcoming UK Government 2021 Centenary celebrations for Northern Ireland and look forward to championing Northern Ireland to overseas markets and investors as soon as the Covid restrictions are lifted.

■ **Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund****Carla Lockhart:****[153425]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his Answer of 3 September 2020 to Question 78927, on Broadcasting: Northern Ireland, what progress has been made on discussions with NI Screen on broadening the remit of the Ulster Scots Broadcasting Fund.

Mr Robin Walker:

We have been discussing broadening the remit of both the Ulster Scots Broadcasting Fund and the Irish Language Broadcasting Fund with Northern Ireland Screen for several months. We hope to be in a position to announce the funding in the coming weeks.

TRANSPORT**■ Air Routes: Europe****Mr Ben Bradshaw:**[\[154721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of the loss of air routes in Europe on the UK's ability to trade with Europe.

Robert Courts:

The new UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) does not place any restriction on air services between points in the UK and points in the EU, ensuring that UK-EU trade can continue to travel freely by air. Furthermore, the TCA recognises that, at their discretion, EU Member states may permit UK airlines to operate non-scheduled air services within and beyond the EU. The TCA also allows the UK and individual EU Member States to negotiate and agree a bilateral exchange of additional "5th Freedom" all-cargo rights. My officials are engaging closely with EU Member States and with industry on these matters.

Margaret Ferrier:[\[155082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the loss of air routes in Europe on the UK's ability to trade with Europe.

Robert Courts:

The new UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) does not place any restriction on air services between points in the UK and points in the EU, ensuring that UK-EU trade can continue to travel freely by air. Furthermore, the TCA recognises that, at their discretion, EU Member states may permit UK airlines to operate non-scheduled air services within and beyond the EU. The TCA also allows the UK and individual EU Member States to negotiate and agree a bilateral exchange of additional "5th Freedom" all-cargo rights. My officials are engaging closely with EU Member States and with industry on these matters.

Gavin Newlands:[\[155131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the loss of air routes in Europe on the UK's ability to trade with Europe.

Robert Courts:

The new UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) does not place any restriction on air services between points in the UK and points in the EU,

ensuring that UK-EU trade can continue to travel freely by air. Furthermore, the TCA recognises that, at their discretion, EU Member states may permit UK airlines to operate non-scheduled air services within and beyond the EU. The TCA also allows the UK and individual EU Member States to negotiate and agree a bilateral exchange of additional “5th Freedom” all-cargo rights. My officials are engaging closely with EU Member States and with industry on these matters.

■ **Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme**

Chris Grayling:

[154804]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will allow ground handlers eligible for support under the Airport and Ground Operations Support scheme to use the grant for fixed costs as well as business rates relief; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

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 or COVID-19 losses – whichever is lower – 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. Payments are not limited to use on business rates cost only.

■ **Aviation: Coronavirus**

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[154723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to support the aviation sector to increase connectivity to pre-covid-19 pandemic levels.

Robert Courts:

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

In addition, through the Global Travel Taskforce, the Government will work closely with the industry to find ways to safely and gradually ease restrictions on international travel. We will set out more detail on this soon.

Margaret Ferrier:

[155084]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to support the aviation sector to increase connectivity to pre-covid-19 pandemic levels.

Robert Courts:

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

In addition, through the Global Travel Taskforce, the Government will work closely with the industry to find ways to safely and gradually ease restrictions on international travel. We will set out more detail on this soon.

Margaret Ferrier:[\[155090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to recent ONS figures showing that air transport companies have contracted by up to 89 per cent in GDP terms since February 2020, what assessment he has made of the potential economic effect of an aviation recovery package.

Robert Courts:

Before Covid-19, aviation directly contributed at least £22 billion GDP to the UK economy and supported around half a million jobs. This included the air transport and aerospace sectors, as well as the wider supply chain. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the aviation sector has been one of the worst affected sectors in the UK. Passenger numbers at UK airports fell by 99% at the height of the pandemic. Overall volumes of flight traffic in the UK is currently around 80% below equivalent 2019 levels. The air transport sector's contribution to the UK economy dropped by 75% in 2020 compared to 2019.

The Department recognises the severe impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

In addition, through the Global Travel Taskforce, the Government will work closely with the industry to find ways to safely and gradually ease restrictions on international travel. We will set out more detail on this soon.

Justin Madders:[\[155112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of consumer protections for flight-only transactions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Robert Courts:

The Civil Aviation Authority reviewed the airlines' compliance on refunds during Summer 2020. This led to improved performance on refunds from most airlines. In addition, in December 2020 the Competition and Markets Authority launched an investigation that is underway on the issuing of refunds by airlines to customers affected by the travel restrictions.

Gavin Newlands:**[155133]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to support the aviation sector to increase connectivity to pre-covid-19 pandemic levels.

Robert Courts:

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

In addition, through the Global Travel Taskforce, the Government will work closely with the industry to find ways to safely and gradually ease restrictions on international travel. We will set out more detail on this soon.

■ Aviation: Employment**Justin Madders:****[155115]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made on the effect of the (a) UK leaving the EU and (b) covid-19 pandemic on employment opportunities for UK pilots.

Robert Courts:

The UK and EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, including agreements on aviation safety and air services, will support opportunities for the UK aviation sector and for UK pilots.

There are existing processes for aviation professionals to transfer licenses to secure employment opportunities. For example, UK licence holders wishing to continue operating EU-registered aircraft may seek a licence validation from any of the EASA Competent Authorities, which would be valid for aircraft registered in any EASA Member State. The Civil Aviation Authority's website <https://info.caa.co.uk/uk-regulations/> has information for people affected by EU Exit.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the aviation sector and workers. The Department is working with industry on maximising use of the existing support measures such as DWP's Flexible Support Fund and Rapid Response Service to support aviation workers, including pilots, at risk of redundancy to stay in employment. Government also launched the Aviation Skills Retention Platform 10th February 2021. This platform allows former and current aviation sector workers who are out of work to register their skills, so they can be notified of relevant jobs opportunities, advice and upskilling opportunities. More broadly, the government has set out a Roadmap for easing Covid-19 measures, that will help support people and businesses as part of the recovery.

■ Aviation: Licensing

Justin Madders:

[\[154582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the cost of a commercial pilot licence from 1 April 2021.

Robert Courts:

The Civil Aviation Authority has just completed statutory consultation on their charges for 2021-22, including the cost of a commercial pilot licence. I expect the CAA to review its proposals in the light of the consultation responses and then to consult the Secretary of State on the charging schemes. I can assure the Honourable Member that we will scrutinise the schemes carefully when they come to us to ensure that they are fair, justified and proportionate, especially at this unprecedentedly challenging time. We will also have regard to the consultation responses.

Justin Madders:

[\[155114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward the date of 1 April 2021 that the UK Commercial Pilot Licence can be applied for via the Civil Aviation Authority.

Robert Courts:

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is currently developing a process to enable pilots who have previously held a UK issued EASA Part-Flight Crew Licence (FCL), but now hold a licence that was issued by an EASA member state prior to 31 December 2020, to apply for the issue of a UK Part-FCL licence. The CAA aim to make this process as simple and efficient as possible. This will be available from 1 April 2021.

Pilots holding licences issued by EASA member states will not immediately require a UK Part-FCL licence to enable them to fly UK registered aircraft, as pilots holding licences issued by EASA member states prior to 31 December 2020 will be able to continue to operate UK registered aircraft for a period of up to two years from the end of the Transition Period, or until the expiry date, whichever is sooner.

Given this, we believe the 1 April 2021 date to be sufficient.

■ Bypasses: Shipley

Philip Davies:

[\[154884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the feasibility study for the Shipley Eastern Bypass will be completed.

Rachel Maclean:

The feasibility study for the proposed Shipley Eastern Bypass is being produced by Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council. I understand Bradford MBC are due to submit the study to my Department for consideration shortly.

■ Cycling and Walking: Urban Areas

Lilian Greenwood:

[156346]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the implications for road and public transport use of his target to increase cycling and walking to 50 per cent of short journeys in towns and cities by 2030; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of that target on (a) carbon dioxide emissions, (b) pollutant emissions, (c) urban congestion, (d) road safety and (e) ill-health due to physical inactivity.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department has not yet made a detailed assessment of the wider impacts of meeting the 2030 vision set out in Gear Change. These and other matters will be considered as part of the development of the next Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) in due course. The impacts will depend on what journeys are replaced by cycling and walking journeys, which is likely to vary from one place to another. The Department's existing CWIS active travel investment models explore different scenarios for increasing cycling and walking and their impacts, including those related to carbon dioxide emissions, urban congestion, road safety and health. These are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy-active-travel-investment-models>.

Lilian Greenwood:

[156347]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to revise his Department's Road Traffic Forecasts to take account of the Government's commitment to increase cycling and walking to 50 per cent of short journeys in towns and cities by 2030.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department regularly updates its Road Traffic Forecasts to provide a strategic view of how road travel demand may develop in future, with a focus on exploring the uncertainty around key drivers of demand. In planning future forecasts, consideration is given to relevant transport policies that may impact on road travel demand. The impact of the government's walking and cycling commitments on motorised road traffic will be considered when the forecasts are next updated.

The forecasts are produced using the Department's National Transport Model (NTM). To produce the forecasts, the NTM takes account of the travel choice between walking, cycling, rail and bus as well as car. However, the NTM is not designed to forecast cycling levels, which will be influenced by a range of factors not included in the model.

■ Driving Instruction: Training

Sir Christopher Chope:

[156251]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to extend the time limit between passing Part 1 of the driving instructors' training and applying for Part 3 of the test beyond twenty four months due to the inability of potential driving instructors to train during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The requirements for the validity period of the part one pass and the wider approved driving instructor (ADI) qualification process are set in legislation and the Government has no current plans to lay further legislation to amend them. The two-year limit is in place to ensure applicants have the most up-to-date road safety knowledge and hazard perception skills during the subsequent qualifying tests and at the point they join the Register of ADIs and are allowed to deliver instruction to learner drivers.

The legislation requires that a part three test is booked, not taken, before the expiry of the part one. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency has put measures in place to support candidates whose part one pass is due to expire by allowing them to book a part three test online, or if no tests are available they can book a test to hold. Both of these options meet the regulatory requirements.

■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus**Fay Jones:**[\[154603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 January 2021 to Question 140276 on Driving Tests: Coronavirus, if he provide details of the research suggesting an extension to the expiry dates of driving theory certificates would negatively impact on hazard perception skills.

Rachel Maclean:

Research studies in the UK, notably those conducted by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), have separately proven that both on-road experience and hazard perception skills reduce crash risk. They also evidence that hazard perception is related to experience.

Other TRL research on independent driving also highlights the assumption that the learner driver is exposed to tasks that are typical of post-test driving as part of their pre-test learning.

Those with theory test certificates expiring may have taken their test in early 2019. Since then, their on road practical experience will have been significantly curtailed during recent lockdowns. Therefore, whilst a short extension would allow more on-road experience it does not ensure that the learner will have had sufficient experience, or been sufficiently exposed to driving tasks, to be able to drive safely at the critical point that they drive independently for the first time.

■ Electric Scooters: Regulation**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[156492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he had has with the Welsh Government on the adequacy of regulations on the use of e-scooters.

Rachel Maclean:

Department of Transport officials have met with their Welsh Government counterparts on several occasions to discuss e-scooter regulations, both prior

to national trials commencing and subsequently. Meetings at a Ministerial level have not taken place.

■ **Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Coronavirus**

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[\[155499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to improve access by haulage workers to (a) toilet facilities, (b) drive-throughs and (c) other essential services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The Secretary of State has written to all English Motorway Service Area operators stressing the importance of providing as many facilities as possible to Heavy Good Vehicles (HGV) drivers including food and washing facilities, while adhering to public health guidelines.

In addition, we have published a signed letter with Sarah Albon, CEO of the Health and Safety Executive, to remind businesses of their obligations under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, to provide suitable toilet and hand washing facilities to drivers visiting their premises.

We have also launched a number of pilots of rapid workplace testing for transport operators to lay the groundwork for a wider roll-out of testing across the transport sector. The criteria for joining the workplace testing programme has now been expanded to businesses with more than 50 employees, boosting the availability of rapid testing further.

■ **M1: Accidents**

Sarah Champion:

[\[155050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many serious collisions occurred involving a vehicle in the hard shoulder between junctions 32 and 35A of the M1 in the three years prior to March 2017.

Rachel Maclean:

There were no serious or fatal reported road accidents involving a vehicle on, entering, or leaving a lay-by or hard shoulder between junctions 32 and 35A of the M1 between March 2014 and February 2017.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties**

Jane Hunt:

[\[154653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the feasibility of introducing part month vehicle tax refunds.

Rachel Maclean:

It has been a long-standing feature that vehicle excise duty is issued from the first of the month and refunds are issued for complete months remaining. Issuing vehicle excise duty from a date other than the first of the month and refunding for part months would add a large amount of administrative complexity to the vehicle excise duty system. There are no plans to change the current arrangements.

■ Motorcycles: Driving Instruction

Darren Jones:

[\[155313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to ensure that Compulsory Basic Training certificates can be renewed or extended during the covid-19 national lockdown.

Rachel Maclean:

The two-year validity period of a compulsory basic training (CBT) certificate is set out in legislation. It is in place to ensure learner moped and motorcycle riders can ride safely on their own, with L-plates, while they practise for a full moped or motorcycle test. The Government has no plans, on road safety grounds, to waive that two-year validity period.

■ Railways and Rapid Transit Systems: Finance

James Grundy:

[\[155464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what funding opportunities he plans to make available for investment in rail and light rail improvements.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As part of the Spending Round in 2020 over £2 billion of funding has been confirmed in 2021-22 for rail services, which builds on the estimated £12.8 billion of support for transport services that the government has already committed to provide in 2020-21.

As part of the levelling-up agenda, the Government announced in January 2020 that it has pledged £500 million for the Restoring Your Railway Programme to start reopening lines and stations, regenerating local economies and improving access to jobs, homes and education.

Between 2019 and 2024, approximately £38 billion has been allocated for investment in operations, maintenance and renewals of the rail network, of which around £20 billion is for Network Rail's renewals programme.

To date, the Government has announced over £150 million of emergency grant funding to support the Light Rail sector. This funding has ensured that light rail services continue to run throughout the pandemic, enabling essential journeys such as those made by NHS staff and other key workers.

As announced in the 2020 Budget and confirmed in the Spending Review, the government is investing £4.2 billion in the transport networks of eight city regions across England from 2022, including Greater Manchester. These intra-city transport settlements will be based on plans put forward by city regions and could be used to fund light rail improvements.

In addition, the Transforming Cities Fund is a £2.5 billion fund focused on public and sustainable transport infrastructure. It is currently providing funding for light rail improvements in some cities, including Greater Manchester.

■ Regional Airports: Coronavirus**Mr Ben Bradshaw:****[154728]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the disproportionate effect of the covid-19 outbreak on regional airports as part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda.

Robert Courts:

The Government recognises the challenges faced by the aviation sector at this time. The Government is committed to maintaining critical connectivity and through policies like Public Service Obligations the Department for Transport subsidises routes into London.

We have also taken action to support airports through the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS). This 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 or COVID-19 losses – whichever is lower – in the 2020/21 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £8m.

The Government is keen to find ways to work closely with the industry to ease restrictions on international travel gradually and sustainably. The Secretary of State for Transport will lead a successor to the Global Travel Taskforce to develop a framework that can facilitate greater travel when the time is right, while still managing the risk from imported cases and variants.

Margaret Ferrier:**[155088]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the economic effect of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) regional airports compared with other airports and (b) the Government's levelling up agenda.

Robert Courts:

The Government recognises the challenges faced by the aviation sector at this time. The Government is committed to maintaining critical connectivity and through policies like Public Service Obligations the Department for Transport subsidises routes into London.

We have also taken action to support airports through the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS). This 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 or COVID-19 losses – whichever is lower – in the 2020/21 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £8m.

The Government is keen to find ways to work closely with the industry to ease restrictions on international travel gradually and sustainably. The Secretary of State for Transport will lead a successor to the Global Travel Taskforce to develop a framework that can facilitate greater travel when the time is right, while still managing the risk from imported cases and variants.

Gavin Newlands:[\[155132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department plans to take to mitigate the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on regional airports.

Robert Courts:

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time.

Aviation businesses have access to the unprecedented economic support package that the Chancellor has put in place to help businesses to manage the challenges they are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Firms can continue to draw upon the package of measures announced by the Chancellor, including a Bank of England scheme for firms to raise capital, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Time to Pay flexibilities with tax bills, financial support for employees including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and VAT deferrals.

In addition to this, 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 or COVID-19 losses – whichever is lower – in the 2020/21 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £8m.

Through the Global Travel Taskforce, the Government will work closely with the industry to find ways to safely and gradually ease restrictions on international travel. We will set out more detail on this soon.

Road Traffic Control: Schools**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[156505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November 2020 to Question 91850, on School Streets Initiative, when he plans to enact Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 to enable local authorities outside London to enforce school streets schemes.

Rachel Maclean:

Further to the previous answer, work is underway on drafting the regulations needed to bring the Part 6 powers into force, which will take several months to complete. It is not possible at this stage to say exactly when in 2021 the powers will be available to local authorities.

Roads: Accidents**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[154756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has any plans to introduce a financial support scheme for victims of road traffic accidents that result in (a) serious injury or (b) death, as a result of an involuntary actions, where legal liability cannot be established.

Rachel Maclean:

We have some of the safest roads in the world, but the Government is not complacent about road safety and recognises the trauma associated with the deaths and serious injuries arising from road traffic collisions. Road deaths and injuries can cause suffering, economic loss and life-changing misfortune, and reducing this on our roads is a key priority.

In those cases where a motorist is insured, the provision of compensation should be met by the insurer. Where a driver is either uninsured or untraced, there is provision in place for compensation to be claimed from the Motor Insurers' Bureau. Since there are existing provisions for financial compensation no other direct financial support for victims is currently being considered.

However, the Department recognises that road crash victims or their relatives may need additional support to pursue claims, or in dealing with bereavement or other emotional and psychological trauma. The Department has previously made a contribution to the funding of the National Road Victim Service provided by the charity Brake. Additionally, the Department is funding the roads policing review. One of the concerns that the review is exploring is post collision victim care, the services available to victims and their families, and how they are funded. We await the findings of the review which we hope to have by the end of this year.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance**Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[155221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what financial and other support he is providing to local authorities to improve the condition of roads.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department has allocated over £2.6 billion for local highways maintenance for the period 2020/21 to 2021/22 to local highways authorities in England, outside London.

■ Taxis: Licensing**Sam Tarry:**[\[154663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has been made on implementing the recommendations in the 2018 report of the task and finish group on Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government will continue to engage with the sector on our plans for reforming the regulation of taxis and private hire vehicles, including options to introduce new legislation. The Department is supporting licensing authorities to make use of their extensive existing powers through the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards issued last year and will consult on updated best practice guidance later this year.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[154727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what economic forecasts his Department has made for the recovery and growth of (a) air transport and (b) the travel sector after the covid-19 outbreak.

Robert Courts:

DfT has not produced economic forecasts of recovery and growth in the air transport or travel sectors. DfT maintain a capability to produce a range of passenger demand *scenarios*, reflecting the uncertainty surrounding the potential shape of recovery, for internal use.

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

Aviation businesses have access to the unprecedented economic support package that the Chancellor has put in place to help businesses to manage the challenges they are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to this, 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.

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[155087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what economic forecasts his Department has made of recovery and growth in the (a) air transport and (b) travel sectors.

Robert Courts:

DfT has not produced economic forecasts of recovery and growth in the air transport or travel sectors. DfT maintain a capability to produce a range of passenger demand *scenarios*, reflecting the uncertainty surrounding the potential shape of recovery, for internal use.

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

Aviation businesses have access to the unprecedented economic support package that the Chancellor has put in place to help businesses to manage the challenges they are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to this, 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.

Gavin Newlands:[\[155137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his forecasts are for recovery and growth in the air transport and travel sector.

Robert Courts:

DfT has not produced economic forecasts of recovery and growth in the air transport or travel sectors. DfT maintain a capability to produce a range of passenger demand *scenarios*, reflecting the uncertainty surrounding the potential shape of recovery, for internal use.

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

Aviation businesses have access to the unprecedented economic support package that the Chancellor has put in place to help businesses to manage the challenges they are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to this, 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.

■ Travel: Quarantine**Theresa Villiers:**[\[154851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of whether (a) Madeira and (b) other similar island locations pose a lower covid-19 risk than other locations on the UK's red list of countries for which hotel quarantine is required.

Robert Courts:

The government introduced a travel ban for Madeira, along with mainland Portugal and the Azores, on 15 January 2021 and since 15 February individuals who have been in Madeira in the 10 days before they arrive in the UK must quarantine in a government approved hotel.

The decision to introduce additional measures for arrivals who have been in Madeira and other countries on the red list in the 10 days before they arrive in the UK, is in direct response to scientific and medical data, which represents an increased risk to UK public health and an increased risk of community transmission of the new COVID-19 variants identified in other countries.

The government has made it consistently clear that it will take decisive action to contain the virus, including imposing travel bans if the public health risk of people returning from a particular country without self-isolating becomes too high.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Railways

Caroline Lucas:

[\[154944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking with the COP26 President to facilitate access for (a) delegates, (b) media and (c) civil society to COP26 by rail.

Rachel Maclean:

A multifaceted transport plan is being developed to support the delegate experience at COP26 with rail travel a key element of the plan. The plan will encourage delegates, media, and civil society travelling from Europe to consider low-carbon travel options such as rail as a way of entering the UK.

The Department for Transport is working closely with Rail Operators and Network Rail to ensure appropriate provision of rail services on the key routes to Glasgow over the period the conference is taking place. Rail will be a key sustainable mode of travel to COP26 and will certainly be encouraged.

■ Union Connectivity Review

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[156569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the interim report of the Union Connectivity Review.

Rachel Maclean:

The Union Connectivity Review is an independent review led by Sir Peter Hendy. The Interim Report will be published shortly with final recommendations expected in summer 2021.

TREASURY

■ Banks: Environment Protection

Caroline Lucas:

[\[156326\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking ahead of COP26 to ensure that the Bank of England has the ability to use macroprudential policy to align UK bank lending with the Government's climate objectives.

John Glen:

The Financial Policy Committee (FPC) of the Bank of England acts as the UK's macroprudential authority. It identifies, monitors and acts to remove or reduce systemic risks to the UK financial system.

In March 2020, as part of the Remit and Recommendations letter for the FPC, the Chancellor recommended that the Committee should regard the risks from climate change as relevant to both its primary objective (to maintain and enhance financial stability) and secondary objective (to support the Government's economic policy).

Significant work is already being undertaken in this space. In November 2020, the Bank announced it would be restarting the Climate Biennial Exploratory Scenario (CBES). The Bank will use the CBES to explore the financial risks

posed by climate change. The exercise will test the resilience of the current business models of the largest banks, insurers and the financial system to climate related risks and therefore the scale of adjustment that will need to be undertaken in coming decades for the system to remain resilient.

The CBES will also help develop banks and insurers' climate risk management capabilities. In addition, the Prudential Regulation Authority and Financial Conduct Authority jointly convene The Climate Financial Risk Forum (CFRF), an industry forum for building capacity and sharing best practice.

■ **Beer: Excise Duties**

Olivia Blake: [\[156642\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to (a) reduce beer duty and (b) financially support pubs.

Kemi Badenoch:

Alcohol duties are kept under review and the merits of a change to beer duty are considered at each fiscal event. The Government will outline the next stages of its plan to support UK businesses at the upcoming Budget.

■ **Business: Coronavirus**

Sarah Olney: [\[156500\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the proportion of furloughed workers who work in the supply chain for retail, leisure and hospitality; and what steps he is taking to support those businesses through the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC publish monthly experimental statistics that provide estimates of the number and value of claims made to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, broken down by employer size, sector of the economy, geography, and employee age and gender. For example, as at 31 December, statistics show that there were 714,400 employments furloughed in the wholesale and retail and repair of motor vehicles sectors, and 1,115,700 furloughed in the accommodation and food services sector. Based on the number of employments eligible for furlough, this represents 16% and 55% of eligible staff, respectively.

The Government has put in place an economic package of support designed to provide businesses with more certainty over the coming months. In addition to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, this package has also included billions in loans, tax deferrals, and business rates relief. Local authorities have also been provided with £1.6 billion of discretionary funding through the Additional Restrictions Grant, that can be used at their discretion to support businesses which supply the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors.

■ Coronavirus: Bolton

Yasmin Qureshi:

[156319]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what level of financial support he has allocated to Bolton in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

Throughout this crisis, the government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK, including in Bolton. To do this, the government has put in place an economic package of support which will provide businesses and individuals with certainty over the coming months, even as measures to prevent further spread of the virus change. The government has spent over £280 billion this year to provide this support.

Businesses in Bolton which are forced to close can claim grants of up to £3,000 per month, based on their rateable value, through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed). They can also claim a one-off grant of up to £9,000, in addition to the monthly grant. Businesses in Bolton which are not able to receive these grants for closed businesses may be able to benefit from the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). We recently increased the funding available under this scheme to £1.6 billion across England. It is up to each local authority to determine eligibility for this scheme based on their assessment of local economic need; however, we encourage local authorities to support businesses which have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, but which are ineligible for the other grant schemes.

In addition to funding for these grant schemes, local authorities in Bolton which were subject to enhanced restrictions on socialising (such as a ban on indoor household mixing) between 1 August and 5 November, and between 2 December and 5 January, will have received funding from the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) scheme to enable them to make backdated grants to hospitality, leisure, and accommodation businesses worth 70% of the monthly grants for closed businesses.

Businesses are also able to access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which was introduced to help employers whose operations have been affected by COVID-19 retain their employees and protect the UK economy. All businesses across the UK can access the scheme, which will run until the end of April 2021, with employees receiving 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to £2,500 per month. As at 31 December, provisional statistics show that there were about 15,300 employments furloughed in Bolton North East, Bolton South East, and Bolton West, representing a roughly 12% takeup rate among eligible employments.

Businesses across the UK have also received billions in loans, tax deferrals, Business Rates relief, and general and sector-specific grants. Individuals and families have benefited from increased welfare payments, enhanced Statutory Sick Pay, a stay on repossession proceedings and mortgage holidays.

■ Non-domestic Rates: Social Distancing

Sarah Olney:

[\[156499\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he will take to ensure that suppliers whose revenue has been affected by social distancing restrictions receive business rates relief.

Jesse Norman:

This year, due to the direct adverse effects of COVID-19, the Government has provided an unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties worth over £10 billion. The Government has also frozen the business rates multiplier for all businesses for 2021-22.

The Government has provided various schemes to support firms, including businesses in the supply chain, 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.

■ Overseas Loans: Republic of Ireland

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[156272\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Republic of Ireland is due to conclude the repayment of its loan under the Loans to Ireland Act 2010 by March 2021; and how much in interest will have been paid from the outset to full repayment.

John Glen:

Ireland is due to repay the final tranche of its bilateral loan from the UK in March 2021. The Government continues to expect the loan to be repaid in full and on time. The next report under section 2 of the Loans to Ireland Act 2010, which the Government will publish in April 2021, will disclose all interest payments from the outset to full repayment.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Finance

Colum Eastwood:

[\[156630\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to announce details of how MPs can apply for up to £20 million under his proposed levelling up plan.

Colum Eastwood:

[\[156631\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how he plans to allocate the proposed £800 million for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales as part of his levelling up fund.

Kemi Badenoch:

The £4 billion Levelling Up Fund announced at the Spending Review is being extended to directly support communities in all regions and nations of the UK. The £4 billion Fund announced at the Spending Review will now be made £4.8 billion to operate UK-wide. The Fund will invest at least £800m in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Fund will be allocated

competitively and be open to all local areas across the UK to boost growth and spread opportunity. Further details on how the Fund will operate will be published in the prospectus shortly – including who can bid, the types of projects eligible for funding, and the criteria for assessing proposals.

■ **Regional Planning and Development: Northern Ireland**

Colum Eastwood:

[\[156632\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with local authorities in Northern Ireland on his proposed £4.8 billion levelling up fund.

Kemi Badenoch:

HM Treasury is committed to levelling up the UK and is working closely with the Northern Ireland Office to ensure the Levelling Up Fund benefits all parts of the UK, including Northern Ireland. The Levelling Up Fund will allow UKG to invest directly in communities and level up across the UK. The Levelling Up Fund will be open to all local areas across the UK.

UKG will work directly with local areas across the UK to take a holistic approach to their needs. This will extend the benefits of previous England-only local growth programmes, which the devolved administrations have not replicated in SW&NI (such as the Towns Fund), to all parts of the UK.

■ **Revenue and Customs: Staff**

Ben Lake:

[\[156510\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many staff work as part of the Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight email response team.

Jesse Norman:

There are 36 staff working as part of Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight email response team. Complicated queries may need additional investigation or referral for technical advice, meaning they cannot be answered straight away. In order to help with this, there are an additional 51 staff supporting this team in resolving these complicated queries.

■ **Santander Group: Debit Cards**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[156581\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to letters received by Santander customers advising that their debit cards will not be renewed due to not being used at a cash machine or physical point of sale, if he will make representations to high street banks on the irresponsibility of requiring sometimes vulnerable customers to use their cards in that way during a national lockdown.

John Glen:

There is an increased risk of fraud when banking customers use their debit cards infrequently, as some people may not notice if it has been lost or stolen. Therefore, banking providers often have processes to check whether customers still need a debit card if it hasn't been used after a certain amount of time or ahead of the card renewal date. These processes are in line with

the requirements of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) that banks should maintain effective systems and controls to prevent the risk that they might be used to further financial crime. This includes controls to prevent fraud. Sometimes banks will require customers to complete a certain transaction to activate a new card. If customers are unable to do this (e.g. if they are vulnerable or shielding) then they are encouraged to speak to their provider who can help find an alternative solution.

■ Social Enterprises: Tax Allowances

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[156568\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will maintain the Social Investment Tax Relief; and if he will take steps to reform that relief so that enterprises in community energy and tackling climate change qualify for investment.

Jesse Norman:

The Social Investment Tax Relief (SITR) was introduced in 2014 to incentivise risk finance investments in qualifying social enterprises and charities. In order to target SITR towards the highest-risk social enterprises, certain activities are excluded from the scheme, including community energy.

HMRC statistics show that up to 2018-19, about 110 enterprises have used the scheme to raise £11.2 million.

The Government keeps all taxes and reliefs under review in order to ensure they continue to meet policy objectives in a way that is fair and effective. The Government previously published a Call for Evidence in 2019 on SITR's use to date. A response to the consultation will be published in due course and a decision on SITR's future will be announced at the Budget.

■ Social Enterprises: Wales

Hywel Williams:

[\[156270\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Social Investment Tax Relief in Wales.

Hywel Williams:

[\[156271\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the Social Investment Tax Relief in Wales.

Jesse Norman:

The Social Investment Tax Relief (SITR) was introduced in 2014 to encourage risk finance investments in qualifying social enterprises and charities. Social enterprises anywhere in the UK can benefit from SITR, provided that they meet certain qualifying conditions.

HMRC statistics show that up to 2018-19, about 110 enterprises have used the scheme to raise £11.2 million.

The Government keeps all taxes and reliefs under review in order to ensure they continue to meet policy objectives in a way that is fair and effective. The Government previously published a Call for Evidence in 2019 on SITR's use

to date. A response to the consultation will be published in due course and a decision on Sitr's future will be announced at the Budget.

■ **Tax Evasion: VAT**

James Murray:

[\[156612\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the revenue lost to the public purse as a result of VAT evasion by overseas sellers on online platforms in each of the tax years (a) 2015-16, (b) 2016-17, (c) 2017-18, (d) 2018-19, (e) 2019-20 and (f) 2020-21 to date.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested is not held. HMRC estimate the tax gap, which includes VAT evasion, and publish this in the 'Measuring tax gaps' publication. However, HMRC do not specifically hold estimates for VAT evasion by overseas sellers on online marketplaces for the periods requested. HMRC estimate that the tax loss from VAT fraud and error on online marketplaces was between £1 billion and £1.5 billion in 2016/17. The department estimates that overseas sellers contributed to approximately 60% of that VAT loss.

From 1 January 2021, the Government introduced changes to the VAT treatment of overseas goods making online marketplaces directly liable for UK VAT on many of the sales they facilitate - ensuring that overseas online marketplace sellers cannot outcompete UK High Street stores and UK online retailers by evading their VAT liabilities.

James Murray:

[\[156613\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the amount of VAT evaded by overseas sellers on online platforms that has been recouped following individual data requests by the his Department in each of the tax years (a) 2015-16, (b) 2016-17, (c) 2017-18, (d) 2018-19, (e) 2019-20 and (f) 2020-21 to date.

James Murray:

[\[156614\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many individual data requests his Department has sent to online platforms on sellers using their service in each of the tax years (a) 2015-16, (b) 2016-17, (c) 2017-18, (d) 2018-19, (e) 2019-20 and (f) 2020-21 to date.

James Murray:

[\[156615\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many FTE officials were working predominantly or entirely on VAT evasion by overseas sellers on online platforms in (a) February 2020 and (b) February 2021; and how many are planned to be working in that policy area in (c) February 2022.

Jesse Norman:

The Government takes the issue of VAT evasion by overseas sellers on online platforms very seriously. In September 2016 the Government introduced new legal powers allowing HMRC to hold online marketplaces jointly liable for future VAT liabilities of non-compliant overseas sellers on their platforms.

One of HMRC's methods for tackling this problem is to make both bulk and individual data requests of online marketplaces about the sellers on their platforms, to inform enquiries into any possible non-compliance.

HMRC began making such requests after the introduction of the new powers in September 2016. Over time, the quality of the bulk data being provided by online marketplace platforms has improved, significantly reducing the need for HMRC to make additional data requests on individual sellers.

As a result, the number of compliance enquiries HMRC have completed into overseas online sellers is not directly related to the number of individual data requests. In 2020-21, where there has been a significant reduction of individual data requests, the number of actual enquiries completed has increased from just under 7,000 in 2019-20 to more than 9,400 in 2020-21 so far.

Where, following compliance enquiries using bulk or individual data and other information, HMRC have made an online marketplace liable for the future VAT of a non-compliant seller, the marketplace has the option instead to remove that seller and prevent them from selling on their platform. This significantly disrupts the trade of that non-compliant seller.

Number of data requests

In order to inform enquiries about potential non-compliance by overseas sellers on online market places, HMRC send both bulk and individual data requests to online platforms. The number of bulk requests and individual requests on sellers using their service in each of the tax years specified are:

YEAR	BULK	INDIVIDUAL
2016-17	0	299
2017-18	9	1,556
2018-19	10	2,317
2019-20	7	2,684
2020-21 (to date)	7	80

HMRC did not make data requests prior to 2016, when new powers relating to online marketplaces were introduced. As explained above, with the quality of bulk data improving over time, HMRC have been able to improve their processes in 2020-21 and reduce their reliance on individual data requests while still completing more enquiries.

Revenue measured and sellers disrupted

Rather than 'VAT recouped', and in line with other compliance activity, revenue measured by HMRC when using their powers to tackle online marketplace sellers is tracked both in terms of the amount of revenue loss from the Exchequer that has been prevented (Revenue Loss Prevented, RLP) and the amount of VAT assessed and collected (Cash Collectable, CC). For

this compliance activity, HMRC also track the number of non-compliant overseas sellers disrupted following removal from an online marketplace platform.

HMRC began using the new powers introduced by the Government in September 2016 (and so no results are available for 2015-16). While HMRC started to disrupt non-compliant sellers in the first year the powers were introduced, results are primarily seen after compliance cases were concluded, starting in 2017-18. For the years requested, from 2016-17, the results are:

YEAR	CC (£M)	RLP (£M)	SELLERS DISRUPTED
2016-17	0	0	40
2017-18	106	10	2,019
2018-19	34	86	3,977
2019-20	13	40	4,780
2020-21 (to Jan)	21	51	4,000

Officials working on the activity

Rather than the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees deployed at a specific point in time on this compliance activity, HMRC track this using Staff Year Usage (SYU), which shows the resource used averaged out over a financial year.

In total in 2019-20, HMRC used 176 staff years on this activity. Year to date in 2020-21 (end of January 2021), HMRC have used 150 staff years on this activity.

HMRC expect to use the same level of staff years on this activity in 2021-22.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[154729\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish information on the effect on revenue to the public purse of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the travel sector.

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[155089\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish information on the revenue that has not accrued to the public purse as a result of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the travel sector.

Stephen Timms:

[\[156244\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the level of revenue lost to the public purse as a result of the effect of covid-19 pandemic on the travel sector.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the challenging circumstances facing the travel sector as a result of Covid-19, and firms experiencing difficulties can draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor, including schemes to raise capital, flexibilities with tax bills and the extended furlough scheme.

As set out in the Covid-19 Impact Assessment last November, the Government cannot forecast with confidence the precise impact of specific changes to restrictions, including those on the travel sector, as this will depend on a broad range of factors which are, in many cases, difficult to estimate. The Treasury does not prepare forecasts for the UK economy and public finances, these are the responsibility of the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR).

The economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the unprecedented fiscal support has caused significant but necessary increase in borrowing and debt. However, borrowing costs continue to be low, making the current costs of servicing this increase in debt affordable.

The Budget will set out the next phase of the plan to tackle the virus and protect jobs.

■ Unemployment**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[156295\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the Office for Budget Responsibility's forecast that unemployment would peak in the fourth quarter of 2020 -21 at 11.9 per cent is not realised.

John Glen:

In its November 2020 Economic and Fiscal Outlook, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecast unemployment to peak at 7.5% in Q2 2021, down from the forecast peak of 11.9% in Q4 2020 in its July Fiscal Sustainability Report.

During the pandemic, the Government has taken unprecedented action to protect jobs, most notably through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which was extended until the end of April 2021 for all parts of the UK. The OBR noted that the extension of CJRS, along with other new measures, was expected to reduce the level of unemployment by around 300,000 in the second quarter of this year, relative to what would have happened in the CJRS' absence. As at 31 December, 700,000 employers were using the scheme to furlough more than 3.8 million jobs.

While the Government has taken extensive action to protect jobs, a comprehensive package of support is in place to help those who have unfortunately lost their job, helping them find work and build the skills they need to get into work. This includes: doubling the number of work coaches in Jobcentre Plus by March 2021; the £2.9 billion Restart programme, which will provide intensive and tailored support to over 1 million unemployed people

and help them find work; and the £2 billion Kickstart Scheme which will create hundreds of thousands of new, fully subsidised jobs for young people across the country.

The Chancellor has always been clear that the Government would keep the situation under review, adapting its approach as the context evolved. The Budget on the 3 March will set out the next phase of the plan to tackle the virus and protect jobs.

■ **Weddings: Insurance**

Esther McVey:

[\[152520\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of establishing a Government-backed insurance scheme to support wedding (a) consumers and (b) businesses.

John Glen:

The Government recognises the essential role of the insurance industry in providing the cover businesses need to operate. We are working closely with the insurers, the trade bodies and regulators to understand what more the industry can do to help individuals and businesses in their time of need, and how the insurance market delivers the support firms need as the economy reopens.

Over the course of the pandemic the Government has worked closely with the weddings sector to understand the impact of COVID-19 on their businesses and has responded with a substantial package of business support, which we keep under regular review.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ **Children: Maintenance**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[156583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of ensuring that directors dividends are included in the initial calculation of child maintenance payments.

Guy Opperman:

The 2012 Child Maintenance Service (CMS) moved from an assessment on a net income basis, used by the former Child Support Agency (CSA), to a gross income basis in order to simplify the calculation process. CMS assessments are based initially on gross income information received directly from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). As dividend payments are issued from a company's annual profits after tax, they are not included in the initial child maintenance calculation.

For child support purposes, dividend payments are treated as unearned income, and can be taken into account via a variation application. Variations are specific types of changes which allow the CMS to look at some circumstances not covered by the basic maintenance calculation rules. If a

variation succeeds the maintenance calculation will be adjusted accordingly. CMS can check HMRC data for dividend payments to support an application for a variation.

Taking information directly from HMRC allows us to capture a wide range of income types received by paying parents. Basing the assessment on gross income data has enabled the CMS to significantly speed up the set-up of new cases which can be key to securing regular payments.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Social Security Benefits**

David Linden:

[153353]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the economic effect of the benefit cap on people supported by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Mims Davies:

Universal Credit households are exempt from the benefit cap if they have monthly earnings of at least £604, which can include earnings from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. In addition, claimants with a sustained work record may be entitled to a nine-month grace period where their benefits are not capped.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Industrial Health and Safety**

Chris Stephens:

[156461]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of her Department's compliance with the requirement in section 3.1.8 of the Civil Service Management Code that time off with pay for safety representatives will not be set against facility time allowed under existing arrangements.

Guy Opperman:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer given on 24 February to question number 155175 at <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-19/155175>.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Lost Working Days**

Chris Stephens:

[156462]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average number of working days lost (AWDL) was for (a) female and (b) male civil servants in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Guy Opperman:

The Department only holds information relating to its own staff. Average working days lost figures are calculated on rolling year to date basis, therefore the following data relate to the year to 31 December.

	FEMALE	MALE
Dec-19	8.91	6.89
Dec-20	6.24	4.88

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Overseas Aid**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[152452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much Official Development Assistance her Department was allocated in the financial years (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21; and what estimate her Department has made of the amount of Official Development Assistance her Department will be allocated for the financial year 2021-22.

Guy Opperman:

Official Development Assistance allocations are included in the settlement letter that the department receives from Her Majesties Treasury.

The annual amount allocated to the department was £4 million in 2019/20; £6.1 million in 2020/21 and; £6.1million for 2021/22.

■ **Employment and Support Allowance**

Paul Blomfield:

[\[156357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to provide increased support to employment and support allowance claimants awaiting face-to-face assessments for higher rate benefits.

Justin Tomlinson:

The health and safety of our claimants and staff is our key priority. We suspended all face-to-face assessments for sickness and disability benefits in March 2020. This temporary suspension, brought in to protect people from unnecessary risk of coronavirus at the outset of the pandemic, remains in place, and is being kept under review in line with the latest public health guidance. Any re-introduction of face-to-face assessments would involve stringent Covid-19 related safety measures, supported by guidance for claimants and assessment providers to ensure compliance with the relevant public health guidance.

Eligible Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants will receive the Assessment Rate of benefit for the first 13 weeks (this rate will increase by 0.5% in April in line with the Consumer Price Index). At present, claimants may stay on this rate for longer than usual.

However, throughout the pandemic we have continued to assess people on paper evidence, using this route whenever possible. We also introduced telephone assessments providing limited outcomes in June 2020, building capacity and capability since then which has enabled us to provide the full range of outcomes from the beginning of February. By doing this, we will ensure that claimants receive their correct benefit entitlement as quickly as

possible and reduce the time claimants who may be entitled to a higher award having to wait for their assessment.

Therefore, if a claimant qualifies for an additional amount following their Work Capability Assessment (WCA), it will be backdated to the 14th week to ensure no long-term loss.

Where an individual's contributory ESA ends, if they require further financial support, they may be able to claim Universal Credit, depending on their personal circumstances.

■ Flexible Support Fund: Day Care

David Linden: [\[153349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the answer of 1 May 2020 to Question 37734 on Flexible Support Fund, when her Department plans to publish a breakdown of Flexible Support Fund spend on upfront childcare costs.

Mims Davies:

We have submitted a breakdown of spend to the WPSC for 2019/20 as agreed. This covers spend by geographic area and includes overall spend on childcare. This information will be published on the WPSC correspondence page on Parliament UK in due course

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/164/work-and-pensions-committee/publications/3/correspondence/>

■ Kickstart Scheme

Alison McGovern: [\[156374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the number of young people employed under the Kickstart scheme in (a) the UK, (b) England, (c) Scotland, (d) Wales and (e) Northern Ireland.

Alison McGovern: [\[156375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the number of young people employed under the Kickstart scheme in each region of the UK.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to the answer given for PQ [147859](#).

We are not able to publish a breakdown of this data by nation or region at this time.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[156557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish a list of successful Kickstart Gateway applicants, associated employers and number of jobs created in time for the 2021 spring Budget.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to the answer given for PQ [148795](#).

■ National Insurance: Migrants

Christine Jardine:

[156524]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on what date people who have not entered the UK on a visa will be able to apply for a national insurance number.

Guy Opperman:

Prior to allocating a National Insurance Number, the applicants identity must be confirmed.

For the majority of applicants, who have already had their identity verified through another government department, primarily the Home Office, they are able to apply for a National Insurance Number. This includes visa holders, EU/EEA nationals who have been granted settled or pre-settled status through the EU Settlement Scheme and UK passport holders.

For applicants who have not had their identity verified, they will still be required to attend a face to face identity check. The reopening of our face to face service is linked to the recent government guidelines on Covid-19 restrictions and we are currently working on plans to reopen the service at the earliest opportunity in line with these guidelines.

■ Pension Credit

Chris Elmore:

[155286]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to increase pension credit uptake.

Guy Opperman:

DWP continues to use available channels to promote Pension Credit and reach potential recipients, and their family and friends. This includes using proactive press activity and planned social media posts to encourage older people to check if they are eligible by visiting the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website or calling the Freephone claim line 0800 99 1234.

The Department is currently sending letters to over 11 million pensioners informing them about the increase in their State Pension from April. In order to better promote Pension Credit and encourage eligible pensioners to make a claim, the accompanying leaflet includes specific information about Pension Credit, highlighting that an award of Pension Credit can mean being eligible for other benefits such as Housing Benefit or a free over-75 TV licence.

As part of an internal review of communication products, we have also identified improvements in our Pension Credit messaging at other key customer “touchpoints” and are updating the products used to claim Attendance Allowance and Carer’s Allowance accordingly.

We also continue to liaise regularly with stakeholders about ways to encourage take-up of Pension Credit, and working with the BBC on their messaging around free TV licences and Pension Credit.

■ Pensions: Poverty

Jim Shannon:

[\[153245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of guidance to people in receipt of a pension on avoiding poverty in retirement.

Guy Opperman:

Pension Wise and The Pensions Advisory Service provide free, impartial guidance to help inform individuals of their pension options. Supporting individuals to make considered decisions regarding their pension savings and income in retirement is of the utmost importance.

Pension Wise evaluates its service annually. In 2019/20, Pension Wise appointment customers were extremely satisfied with the service with 94% being very or fairly satisfied with their overall experience in 2019/20. Nine in ten appointment customers (91%) agree that Pension Wise helped them to consider their pension access options more thoroughly. A similar proportion (89%) felt they learned something new from using the service. These findings suggest that Pension Wise can help customers make better-informed decisions when accessing their pension pots, which is the key aim of the service.

The Government is committed to action that helps to alleviate levels of pensioner poverty. For current pensioners, this includes the contribution of the Triple Lock, the new State Pension and Pension Credit. As a result of the Triple Lock, the full yearly basic State Pension is now over £1,900 a year higher than in 2010, in cash terms. From this April, it will be £2,050 higher. In 2018/19 there were 100,000 fewer pensioners in absolute low income poverty than in 2009/10.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[155109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people under state pension age are subject to the PIP Light Touch Review.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[155110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people who are subject to the PIP Light Touch Review and have active epilepsy are (a) above and (b) below the state pension age.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

Patrick Grady:

[\[156453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the time taken by her Department to process applications for personal independence payments.

Justin Tomlinson:

Throughout the Covid-19 outbreak, we have been committed to ensuring that people can access financial support through Personal Independence Payment in a timely manner. We always aim to make an award decision as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to review all available evidence.

We are currently operating within expected levels. Average clearance times from initial claim to a decision being made for new claims are currently 16 weeks (October 2020).

Drew Hendry:[\[156465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the average waiting time for decisions to award personal independence payments (PIP) to people whose fixed term PIP awards ended after the 2 October 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

Table 1 below shows the median clearance time in working days from registration to initial clearance (end to end clearance time) of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) advanced claim awards made up to 31st October 2020 (the latest data available), following a fixed term award with no review that was due to end after 2nd October 2020. This is broken down by whether the advanced claim was awarded under Normal Rules or Special Rules for the Terminally Ill. This data excludes advanced Claims that were outstanding as of 31st October 2020.

Table 1: Median end to end Clearance time in working days of PIP advanced claims awarded following a fixed term award due to end after 2nd October 2020.

NORMAL RULES MEDIAN CLEARANCE TIME*	SPECIAL RULES FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL MEDIAN CLEARANCE TIME
-	7

*Please note that for Normal Rules advanced claims, there were 20 claimants who were awarded a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) fixed term award at initial decision due to end after 2nd October 2020 who have had their advanced Claim awarded up to 31st October 2020 (the latest data available).

Because of the small number of claims in this category we are unable to provide an average for the clearance time in this instance. Calculating averages for small populations has a risk of misrepresentative results skewed by non-typical values. This is in line with our practice for PIP statistical publications, where averages for populations of less than 50 are suppressed.

Notes

Source: PIP ADS

- The end dates here are recorded as of the initial decision for a New Claim or Reassessment from DLA. This data excludes instances where end dates have been updated following this initial decision.
- PIP data includes both new claims and reassessment claims from Disability Living Allowance.
- This is unpublished data. It should be used with caution and it may be subject to future revision.
- Data on the number of clearances has been rounded to the nearest 10. Medians are rounded to the nearest working day
- Data includes advanced claims registered following either a Normal Rules Short term award with no review or a claim registered following a Special Rules for Terminally Ill claimants that was due to end after 2 nd October 2020.
- Advanced claims are defined as a New Claim or Reassessment from DLA registration made by a claimant with an existing award either less than 6 months prior to the end date or any time after the end date of an existing award.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Coronavirus**

Christine Jardine:

[\[155327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, to what extent the covid-19 outbreak is causing delays to personal independence payment renewals; and what steps the Department is taking to reduce the backlog of assessments for those payments.

Justin Tomlinson:

Throughout the Covid-19 outbreak, we have been committed to ensuring that people can access financial support through Personal Independence Payment in a timely manner. We always aim to make an award decision as quickly as possible and are treating as a priority Advance Claims, where a person's previous Fixed Term Award has ended.

■ **Restart Programme**

Alison McGovern:

[\[156376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what expected start-date of the first recruits joining the Restart programme her Department is using for internal planning purposes.

Alison McGovern:

[\[156377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on what date her Department estimates the number of employees on the Restart programme will reach its peak number.

Mims Davies:

The delivery of the Restart programme is dependent on an ongoing commercial exercise, on a robust approval process and on intensive

readiness preparations. Should these prove successful, referrals to Restart should peak in winter 2021/22 and provider employment should track referral levels.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus**

David Linden:

[\[153352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what equality impact assessment she has made of the (a) eligibility criteria for and (b) length of the benefit cap grace period during the covid-19 pandemic.

Mims Davies:

Ministers continue to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and to monitor the current situation as it develops.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[155226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department has made in its discussions with representatives of (a) the Independent Assessment Service and (b) Capita on finding a suitable method of audio recording face-to-face assessments; and when those discussions will conclude.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[155230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department has made with the Independent Assessment Service and Capita on finding a suitable method of audio recording ahead of the reintroduction of face-to-face assessments.

Justin Tomlinson:

We have previously committed to developing a consistent approach for audio recording of assessments, by aligning to the Work Capability Assessment approach, however this work has been paused due to the impact of COVID-19. As face to face assessments are currently suspended, we continue to review our delivery options and plans, and updates can be provided once these have been finalised.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Post Office**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[154993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the value of the contract awarded to accept welfare payments to Post Office accounts is (a) in total and (b) per individual transaction.

Guy Opperman:

The value of the seven-year Post Office Card Account contract is £250.9 million.

The payment model for the Post Office card account is based on the number of customers who have live accounts. The payment model does not include a cost per transaction.

■ Social Security Benefits: Scotland

Patrick Grady:

[\[154638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending the Scottish Government's system of fast-track access to disability benefits for people who have terminal illnesses to (a) universal credit and (b) all other benefits administered by her Department.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department is committed to delivering an improved benefit system for claimants that are nearing the end of their lives and is working across Government to bring forward proposals following the evaluation. I remain committed to implementing the key areas identified in the evaluation; a consensus to change the six-month rule; improving consistency with other services used by people nearing the end of their lives; and raising awareness of the support that is available.

The Scottish Government are able to develop their own policies and procedures as they introduce their replacement benefits. My Department works closely with the Scottish Government to ensure we understand how the two systems interact.

■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[156640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department's review of the Special Rules for Terminal Illness will be published.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department is committed to delivering an improved benefit system for claimants that are nearing the end of their lives and is working across Government to bring forward proposals following the evaluation. I remain committed to implementing the key areas identified in the evaluation; a consensus to change the six-month rule; improving consistency with other services used by people nearing the end of their lives; and raising awareness of the support that is available.

■ Universal Credit

Karin Smyth:

[\[152568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the number of people in receipt of income based jobseekers' allowance who have not been migrated to universal credit and have not received the £20 uplift to their benefit payments since spring 2020.

Mims Davies:

138,000 people were on income-based JSA in 2019/20.

Legacy JSA claimants retain the option of claiming Universal Credit instead if they believe they will benefit from the temporary increase in the Universal Credit Standard Allowance.

■ Universal Credit: Deductions

Chris Stephens:

[156459]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of universal credit deductions on the (a) levels and (b) depth of child poverty.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

Tackling poverty will always be a priority for this Government. Our recent focus has rightly been on supporting people financially during these unprecedented times, with an injection of billions of pounds to strengthen the welfare system in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, including a temporary increase in the Universal Credit Standard Allowance to support those facing the most financial disruption. Through the Covid Winter Grant Scheme, announced on 9 November, we are extending that support with an additional £170m for local authorities in England so that they can support families with children and other vulnerable people with the cost of food and essential utilities this winter.

From October 2019, the overall maximum level for standard deductions is normally limited to 30% of a claimant's Standard Allowance except for last-resort deductions. From October 2021, this is being reduced to 25% of the claimant's standard allowance except for last-resort deductions. We recognise the importance of safeguarding the welfare of claimants who have incurred debt, so last resort deductions can be applied to protect vulnerable claimants from eviction and/or having their fuel supply disconnected, by providing an affordable repayment plan for arrears of these essential services.

Claimants can ask for New Claims and Change of Circumstances Advance repayments to be delayed for up to 3 months in exceptional circumstances.

■ Universal Credit: Disqualification

Apsana Begum:

[153402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claimants have (a) incurred sanctions and (b) incurred sanctions while waiting for a work capability assessment in (i) 2019 and (ii) since 14 January 2021.

Mims Davies:

Sanctions statistics on those people claiming Universal Credit are published quarterly and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/jobseekers-allowance-sanctions>

The latest statistics are to July 2020 and the statistics from November 2020 to January 2021 are expected to be published in May 2021.

The information requested on sanctions incurred whilst waiting for a work capability assessment is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Universal Credit: Kingston Upon Hull North**Dame Diana Johnson:****[156297]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect on the economy in (a) the UK and (b) Kingston upon Hull North constituency of removing the £20 uplift to universal credit.

Will Quince:

The £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit was announced by the Chancellor as a temporary measure in March 2020 to support those facing the most financial disruption as a result of the public health emergency. This measure remains in place until March 2021. As the Government has done throughout this pandemic, it will continue to assess how best to support low-income families, which is why we will look at the economic and health context before making any decisions.

■ Winter Fuel Payments**Carolyn Harris:****[155206]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of winter fuel payments are paid in November and December each year.

Guy Opperman:

For the 2020/21 exercise over 99% of these payments were made in November and December 2020.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Publication of the revised CPS guidance on reconsidering a prosecution decision

Attorney General (Suella Braverman):

[\[HCWS807\]](#)

There will be no statement today on the publication of the revised CPS guidance on reconsidering a prosecution decision.

Attorney General (Suella Braverman):

[\[HCWS808\]](#)

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has today published revised guidance to prosecutors on when they may institute or reinstitute criminal proceedings after a decision not to prosecute or to terminate proceedings has been communicated to a suspect or defendant.

The guidance sets out the framework for when this is possible as a matter of law and the governing principles that apply to the CPS decision. Victims of crime and the public have a legitimate expectation that those who commit offences will be brought to justice. Where it is legally possible to do so, and the evidential and public interest test provided for in the Code for Crown Prosecutors is met, there are two important protections for the suspect, to ensure that there is no injustice done. Firstly, the right of a defendant to revive proceedings in the magistrates' court (under section 23(7) Prosecution of Offences Act 1985). Secondly, the court's power to stay any proceedings which amount to an abuse of the court's process.

The guidance also provides a non-exhaustive list of eight examples to illustrate the types of situations where cases are discontinued and later reinstated. They include where a further review shows that the original decision was wrong, when further evidence is anticipated in the near future, where significant evidence is later discovered, when a case is reviewed further in light of the findings of an inquest and where there are outstanding lines of enquiry to be completed or relevant material to be obtained. The guidance clarifies the procedure to be adopted and establishes the level of seniority at which any decision must be made. The fundamental evidential and public interest considerations have not changed

A copy of the revised guidance has been placed in both the Library of the House of Commons and the Library of the House of Lords.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee: 24 February 2021**

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS806\]](#)

The European Union and the United Kingdom held the first meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee following the end of the transition period on 24 February.

The parties welcomed the progress made on citizens' rights in recent weeks in implementing the rights of UK nationals in the EU and EU citizens in the UK under the Withdrawal Agreement, and reiterated the importance of communication and support to the most vulnerable.

Further to the meeting of the Joint Committee co-chairs on 11 February 2021, the EU and the UK also took stock of the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland and of work to find pragmatic solutions. The parties acknowledged the importance of joint action to make the Protocol work for the benefit of everyone in Northern Ireland. In that spirit, the EU and UK reiterated their full commitment to the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement in all its dimensions, and to the proper implementation of the Protocol. Building on the recent outreach by the Joint Committee co-chairs, there would be further joint engagement with business groups and other stakeholders in Northern Ireland. The UK and the EU underlined their shared commitment to giving effect to those solutions agreed through the Joint Committee on 17 December 2020, without delay. The UK noted that it would provide a new operational plan with respect to supermarkets and their suppliers, alongside additional investment in digital solutions for traders in accordance with the Protocol.

Noting the need for ongoing engagement and the shared desire to act at pace, the UK and EU agreed that a further Joint Committee would be held to provide further steers and where appropriate approvals, and would liaise on timings.

DEFENCE■ **War Pensions Scheme Up-rating 2021**

Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Johnny Mercer): [\[HCWS798\]](#)

The new rates of war pensions and allowances proposed from 12 April 2021 are set out in the tables below. The annual uprating of war pensions and allowances for 2021 will take place from the week beginning 12 April. Rates for 2021 are increasing by 0.5 per cent in line with the September 2020 Consumer Price Index.

War Pensions Rates

	RATES	RATES
(Weekly rates unless otherwise shown)	2020	2021

	RATES	RATES
	£	£
WAR PENSIONS		
Disablement Pension (100% rates)		
officer (per annum)	10,071.00	10,123.00
other ranks (weekly amount)	193.00	194.00
Age allowances payable from age 65		
40%-50%	12.90	12.95
over 50% but not over 70%	19.90	20.00
over 70% but not over 90%	28.25	28.40
over 90%	39.80	40.00
DISABLEMENT GRATUITY (ONE-OFF PAYMENT)		
specified minor injury (min.)	1,230.00	1,236.00
specified minor injury (max.)	9,181.00	9,227.00
1 – 5% gratuity	3,070.00	3,085.00
6 – 14% gratuity	6,825.00	6,859.00
15 – 19% gratuity	11,937.00	11,997.00
SUPPLEMENTARY ALLOWANCES		
Unemployability allowance		
Personal	119.30	119.90
adult dependency increase	66.30	66.65
increase for first child	15.40	15.50
increase for subsequent children	18.10	18.20

 DISABLEMENT GRATUITY (ONE-OFF PAYMENT)

Invalidity allowance

higher rate	23.60	23.70
middle rate	15.40	15.50
lower rate	7.70	7.75

Constant attendance allowance

exceptional rate	145.60	146.40
intermediate rate	109.20	109.80
full day rate	72.80	73.20
Part-day rate	36.40	36.60

 COMFORTS ALLOWANCE

higher rate	31.30	31.50
lower rate	15.65	15.75
Mobility supplement	69.50	69.85
Allowance for lowered standard of occupation (maximum)	72.80	73.16
Therapeutic earnings limit (annual rate)	7,280.00	7,436.00
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	72.80	73.20
Severe disablement occupational allowance	36.40	36.60
Clothing allowance (per annum)	249.00	250.00
Education allowance (per	120.00	120.00

COMFORTS ALLOWANCE

 annum) (maximum)
WIDOW(ER)S BENEFITS

Widow(er)s' - other ranks (basic with children) (weekly amount)	146.40	147.15
Widow(er) - Officer higher rate both wars (basic with children) (per annum)	7,786.00	7,825.00
Childless widow(er)s' u-40 (other ranks) (weekly amount)	35.07	35.25
Widow(er) – Officer lower rate both wars (per annum)	2,704.00	2,718.00
Supplementary Pension	97.95	98.44
Age allowance		
(a) age 65 to 69	16.70	16.80
(b) age 70 to 79	32.10	32.25
(c) age 80 and over	47.60	47.85
Children's allowance		
Increase for first child	23.00	23.10
Increase for subsequent children	25.55	25.70
Orphan's pension		
Increase for first child	26.30	26.45
Increase for subsequent children	28.75	28.90
Unmarried dependant living as spouse (maximum)	144.05	144.80
Rent allowance (maximum)	55.10	55.40

COMFORTS ALLOWANCE

Adult orphan's pension (maximum)	112.55	113.10
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EDUCATION

■ Schools Capital Funding

The Minister of State for School Standards (Nick Gibb): [\[HCWS801\]](#)

Today, I am announcing £489 million of capital funding to support local authorities to create new school places needed for September 2023. This investment will support the Government's priority to ensure that every child has the opportunity of a place at a good school, whatever their background.

The funding announced today is on top of our commitment to invest £23 billion in the school estate between 2016 and 2021, and the £750 million to create places needed by September 2022 that we announced last year. These funding allocations will allow local authorities to plan ahead with confidence, and to invest strategically to ensure they deliver good school places for every child who needs one.

Full details of this announcement, including allocations broken down by local authority, will be published on the Department for Education section on the GOV.UK website here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/basic-need-allocations>.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Update on Myanmar

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Dominic Raab): [\[HCWS802\]](#)

The UK condemns the coup in Myanmar in the strongest possible terms and we stand with the people of Myanmar who were clear at the elections in November that they want a democratic future.

Since 01 February the UK has led a strong, co-ordinated international response to support the Myanmar people and put pressure on the military.

We have led statements by G7 Foreign Ministers on 03 February and 23 February; convened an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council and coordinated a statement from all members condemning the coup on 04 February and co-led a special Session of the Human Rights Council on 12 February.

Last week, alongside our Canadian counterparts, we also announced sanctions on three individuals responsible for serious human rights violations committed by the military and police.

Today I am announcing further measures to increase the pressure on the Myanmar military following the coup.

Firstly, the UK will impose sanctions on six military members of Myanmar's State Administration Council for their role in overseeing human rights violations. This includes the Commander-in-Chief, General Min Aung Hlaing, Secretary of the SAC, Lt Gen Aung Lin Dwe, Joint Secretary of the SAC, Lt Gen Ye Win Oo, General Tin Aung San, General Maung Maung Kyaw, and Lt Gen Moe Myint Tun. The measures prevent these individuals travelling to the United Kingdom and freeze any assets held in this country.

Secondly, the UK will temporarily suspend all trade promotion in Myanmar and launch a strategic review of the UK's trade and investment approach. We are clear that UK businesses should not be supporting the military or their businesses. The joint FCDO-DIT review will look at identifying sectors with limited exposure to the military, opportunities for responsible development and mitigating the risk to Myanmar's poorest.

Thirdly, I can confirm that following a review of all UK aid in Myanmar, the UK has suspended all support involving the Myanmar government directly or indirectly unless there are exceptional humanitarian reasons. Support for government led reforms has been stopped and planned programmes will close. Our remaining programmes will focus on reaching the poorest and most vulnerable in Myanmar.

The international community has sent a clear message to Myanmar. The military must hand back power to the democratically elected government and release all those detained arbitrarily.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health and Social Care Personnel

Minister of State for Care (Helen Whately):

[\[HCWS800\]](#)

I am announcing today the publication of the revised Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health and Social Care Personnel.

The new Code represents an important step forward in the UK's approach to ethical international recruitment. It takes account of the latest World Health Organisation advice on ethical international recruitment and promotes effective, fair and ethical international recruitment practices, which should be embedded across every part of the health and social care systems. This is an important step as the Government's Manifesto Commitment for 50,000 more nurses by 2024 will see a significant increase in the number of nurses who will come from overseas alongside the growth in UK-trained nurses.

The Code represents part of the UK's contribution to international health worker mobility that offers benefits to migrants, their country of origin and to the UK. With a projected 18 million more health workers needed to achieve universal health coverage in low and lower-middle income countries, the code sets out the UK's approach to supporting international health and social care systems, alongside

safeguards on active recruitment of staff from countries with the most pressing health and social care workforce needs.

The Code clearly sets out responsibilities for recruiters, employers and the Government on how to maintain ethical recruitment on an ongoing basis.

■ Revised advice on the safety of UK plasma for fractionation to make immunoglobulins

Minister of State for Care (Helen Whately):

[HCWS797]

I would like to inform the House that the Government has decided to allow the use of UK sourced plasma for the manufacture of immunoglobulins.

In the wake of the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) epidemic in the 1990s, a number of extra precautionary safety measures were introduced to protect patients from exposure to blood products that may increase their risk of developing Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD). This included the advice in 1998 of the then Committee on Safety of Medicines, that no UK plasma should be supplied for the manufacture of fractionated plasma-derived medicinal products. This has meant that over 250,000 litres of plasma are incinerated or not used for patient care each year.

Over the last 15 years, accrued scientific evidence has indicated that the risk of vCJD through the transfusion of UK plasma is much lower than initially thought; there have been no known transfusion transmissions of vCJD from any blood components since 1999. The Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SaBTO) evaluated the risk of transmission of vCJD and recommended that the current risk reduction measures be withdrawn.

In 2020, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) undertook a comprehensive review of the safety of UK plasma to make immunoglobulins. The Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) considered the evidence and recommended that UK-sourced plasma can be used for the manufacture of immunoglobulins subject to several risk-mitigation measures.

The CHM's recommendation is available online at:

<https://app.box.com/s/jv487awvqzzsrdql0o34h9gg350ceyd4/folder/109651850203>

Upon receiving this expert advice, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has approved these recommendations, as have the Ministers in the devolved nations. This means that for the first time in over 20 years, UK plasma can again be fractionated to increase the availability of immunoglobulin medicines for the benefit of NHS patients in the UK.

This also means that convalescent plasma could potentially be fractionated and used, as part of a clinical trial, to produce hyperimmune globulin to as potential treatment for COVID-19 patients.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has directed NHS England and Improvement, NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) and MHRA to begin preparations to appoint a fractionator(s) through a competitive process. The aim is to secure a domestic supply of immunoglobulins, starting with c250k litres of plasma that NHSBT is already collecting and not using for transfusion. We expect

the first UK-sourced immunoglobulin product to be available for NHS patients in 2022.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has also directed the MHRA to introduce a condition in new and existing authorisations granted to blood establishments, that plasma collected in the UK (including convalescent plasma) should be used for the benefit of UK patients, at least until domestic demand is met.

The Welsh and Scottish Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive have also directed their respective blood services to take forward work on this.

JUSTICE

■ Judicial update

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland):
[[HCWS805](#)]

Consultations on judicial pensions

I am today publishing the Government response to two consultation documents on judicial pensions which my department launched, and which I presented to this House, on 16 July 2020:

(i) in *Judicial pensions: proposed response to McCloud* we outlined our proposals for addressing the unlawful age discrimination identified in the *McCloud* litigation in respect of the 2015 reforms of the judicial pension scheme; and

(ii) in *Proposals for a reformed judicial pension scheme* we set out our plans for reforming the judicial pension scheme with the aim of addressing the serious problems of judicial recruitment and retention that had been identified by the Senior Salaries Review Body.

Both consultations closed to responses on 16 October 2020, and we have taken the time to give very careful thought to the responses we received. We are currently finalising our response to a further consultation on the judicial mandatory retirement age, which we will be publishing in due course.

Addressing the discrimination identified in the McCloud litigation

In our consultation on the *McCloud* litigation, we sought views on both the scope and shape of our proposals for addressing the discrimination identified in the case, in which it was held that the 2015 judicial pension reforms unlawfully discriminated against younger judges.

In light of the responses we received, the Government response to the consultation confirms that, subject to parliamentary time and approval of the necessary legislation, the Ministry of Justice will run an options exercise in 2022 for non-claimant judges in scope of *McCloud*. This will enable eligible judges to choose, retrospectively, whether to have accrued benefits in the 2015 pension scheme or the legacy scheme from 1 April 2015. Membership of the chosen scheme will end when the reformed judicial pension scheme comes into effect, following which all judges will join the new pension scheme.

The response document is available online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-the-proposed-response-to-mccloud>

Reforming the judicial pension scheme

The majority of responses we received to *Proposals for a reformed judicial pension scheme* were positive and acknowledged that our proposed reforms would make a significant contribution to resolving recruitment and retention issues.

In response to some concerns that were raised about our proposal to introduce a uniform member contribution rate, we have decided to give judges the temporary option of reducing their contributions to the scheme in return for a commensurate reduction in the accrual rate.

Save for the addition of this new feature, we will implement the reformed scheme in line with the proposals set out in the consultation document we published last July, subject to the necessary parliamentary approval.

The response document is available online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-a-reformed-judicial-pension-scheme>

Reform of the judicial pension scheme has been a personal priority of mine as Lord Chancellor, and I am pleased that we are in a position to progress a reform package that will resolve the serious recruitment and retention problems facing the judiciary. It is vital that we continue to attract and retain high-calibre judges, thereby securing the proper functioning of our justice system and supporting the UK's wider prosperity.

The aim, subject to parliamentary time allowing the necessary legislation to be passed, is to implement the reformed scheme in April 2022.

The two consultation response documents have been placed in the Library of the House.

■ **Statutory review of the “closed material procedure” provisions in the Justice and Security Act 2013**

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland): **[\[HCWS803\]](#)**

I am today announcing the establishment of the statutory review of the “closed material procedure” (CMP) provisions in the Justice and Security Act 2013 (the Act).

The use of CMP is set out in sections 6 to 11 of the Act, about the disclosure of sensitive material in civil proceedings. In particular, section 6 of the Act empowers senior courts (the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal and the High Court (including in Northern Ireland), and the Court of Session (in Scotland)) to make a declaration that the case is one in which a closed material application may be made in relation to specific pieces of material, the disclosure of which would be damaging to national security. An application for the declaration may be made by either the defendant or the claimant and a court can also make a CMP declaration

of its own motion. Information on the use of CMP under the Act is already publicly available and can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/use-of-closed-material-procedure-reports>

Section 13 of the Act contains a requirement to review the use of CMP under the Act, as soon as reasonably practicable, after 5 years from when the relevant section of the Act came into force. The review must therefore cover the period from 25 June 2013 to 24 June 2018.

These are the terms of the reference for the review, broadly mirroring the requirements set out in the Act and its Explanatory Notes:

“1. In accordance with s.13(1) and (2) of the Justice and Security Act 2013 (“the Act”), to review the operation of the following sections of the Act covering the period from 25 June 2013 to 24 June 2018:

- Section 6 (declaration permitting closed material applications in proceedings)
- Section 7 (review and revocation of declaration under section 6)
- Section 8 (determination by court of applications in section 6 proceedings)
- Section 9 (appointment of special advocate)
- Section 10 (saving for normal disclosure rules)
- Section 11 (general provision about section 6 proceedings)

2. In relation to the above, to review the operation of section 17(3)(e) (disclosure proceedings) of the Act, and of those procedure rules relevant to sections 6-11 of the Act.

3. To report to the Secretary of State for Justice.

In accordance with s.13(5) and (6) of the Act, the Secretary of State must lay a copy of the reviewer’s report before Parliament. Before doing so, the Secretary of State may, after consulting the reviewer, exclude from the copy any part of the report that would, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, be damaging to the interests of national security if it were included in the copy laid before Parliament.”

I am pleased to confirm that Sir Duncan Ouseley, retired High Court Judge, has accepted to conduct the review. He has been selected on the basis of his extensive judicial experience, including on national security cases, which will be an asset to complete the review promptly and effectively.

Sir Duncan Ouseley was called to the Bar (G) in 1973, took Silk in 1992, (NI) in 1997 and was elected a Bencher in 2000. He was appointed a Recorder in 1994, a Judge of the High Court (Queen’s Bench) in 2000 and Chairman of the Special Immigration Appeal Commission from 2003 to 2006. He was appointed President of the Immigration Appeal Tribunal from 2003 to 2005 and Lead Judge, Administrative Court from 2010 to 2015. The Honourable Sir Duncan Brian Walter Ouseley retired from the High Court (Queen’s Bench) with effect from 17 May 2019.

SCOTLAND

■ Contingencies Fund Advance

Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr Alister Jack): [\[HCWS804\]](#)

I hereby give notice of the Scotland Office's intention to seek an advance from the Contingencies Fund. The department requires an advance to meet an urgent cash requirement pending parliamentary approval of the Supplementary Estimates 2020-21.

The Scotland Office's net cash limit for 2020-21, approved in the main Supply Estimate, will be reached by the start of March 2021. This is a consequence of meeting in full the funding requirements of the Scottish Government. Significant additional consequential funding for the Scottish Government, arising from announcements made by the UK Government, will be provided in the Supplementary Supply Estimate. This will cover the increased costs incurred by the Scottish Government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Parliamentary approval for additional non-budget expenditure of £3,537,561,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Scotland Office. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £3,537,561,000 will be met by a repayable cash advance from the Contingencies Fund.

The advance will be repaid immediately following the Royal Assent of the Supply and Appropriation (Anticipation and Adjustments) Bill in March 2021.

TREASURY

■ Finance Bill 2021

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman): [\[HCWS799\]](#)

The Finance Bill will be published on 11 March. Explanatory Notes on the Bill will be available in the Vote Office and the Printed Paper Office and placed in the Libraries of both Houses on that day. Copies of the Explanatory Notes will also be available on GOV.UK.

As usual, a full copy of the Budget resolutions will be made available after the Chancellor's Budget statement on 3 March. This includes resolutions made under the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968 for those measures that are expected to come into effect ahead of Finance Bill Royal Assent.

In line with the approach to tax policy making set out in the Government's documents 'Tax Policy Making: a new approach', published in 2010, and 'The new Budget timetable and the tax policy making process', published in 2017, the Government published draft legislation for Finance Bill 2021 on 21 July 2020 and 12 November 2020, which is available on GOV.UK. The Government remains committed to legislating those measures published in July and November 2020, subject to confirmation at Budget in the usual way.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work (Justin Tomlinson):
[HCWS796]

The department has published the latest update on progress on making backdated payments to Personal Independence Payment claimants who are affected by the MH and RJ decisions of the Upper Tribunal. The release is published at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/pip-administrative-exercise-progress-on-cases-cleared>

The MH decision changed how overwhelming psychological distress is considered when assessing someone's ability to plan and follow a journey. The RJ decision changed how we decide whether someone can carry out an activity safely and if they need supervision. We started the administrative exercise on 25 June 2018 and a Frequently Asked Questions document is available in the House library at: [http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020-0061/FAQ - Implementation of legal decisions MH and RJ.pdf](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020-0061/FAQ_-_Implementation_of_legal_decisions_MH_and_RJ.pdf)

As at 17 January 2021, we have assessed 890,000 cases against the MH decision and 990,000 cases against the RJ decision. Around 6,600 arrears payments, totalling around £32 million, have been made.

It should be noted that in supporting the Government's response to the coronavirus pandemic, the exercise was paused from April to October 2020.

We will release a further update by the end of 2021.