



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 26 February 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:44 P.M., 26 February 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	5	DEFENCE	13
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	5	■ Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations	13
■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme: Insolvency	5	■ Navy: Coronavirus	14
■ Click and Collect Services and Retail Trade: Coronavirus	5	DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	14
■ Click and Collect Services: Coronavirus	5	■ Cinemas and Entertainments: Coronavirus	14
■ Clothing: UK Trade with EU	6	■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Coronavirus	15
■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme	6	■ Electronic Programme Guides: Public Service Broadcasting	16
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	7	■ Gaming: Coronavirus	16
■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Coronavirus	8	■ Music: Coronavirus	18
■ Electric Vehicles: Production	9	■ Rugby: Coronavirus	18
■ Leave	9	■ Social Media: Labelling	19
■ Personal Care Services: Coronavirus	10	■ Television Licences: Non-payment	20
■ Research: Finance	10	■ Video on Demand	20
■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus	10	EDUCATION	21
■ Satellites: Innovation	11	■ Apprentices: Coronavirus	21
■ Space Technology	11	■ Ellen Townsend	21
■ Space Technology: Buckinghamshire	12	■ English Language: Education	22
■ Weddings: Coronavirus	13	■ NHS: Apprentices	22
		■ Special Educational Needs	23
		■ Students: Coronavirus	24

■ Universities: Greater London	25	■ Cancer: Surgery	41
■ Universities: Remote Education	26	■ Care Homes: Coronavirus	41
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	27	■ Care Homes: Government Assistance	42
■ Animal Welfare	27	■ Care Homes: Visits	42
■ Animal Welfare: Officers	28	■ Carers	43
■ Bees: Imports	28	■ Cervical Cancer: Screening	43
■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Coronavirus	29	■ China: Coronavirus	44
■ Game: Birds	31	■ Coronavirus	44
■ Land Drainage	32	■ Coronavirus: Clinics	44
■ Obesity	34	■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing	45
■ Peat Bogs: Environmental Protection	34	■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	45
■ Sanitary Protection	35	■ Coronavirus: Health Services	46
■ Waste Management: Local Government	35	■ Coronavirus: Liverpool	46
■ Zoo Animals Fund	35	■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing	47
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	36	■ Coronavirus: Screening	48
■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	36	■ Coronavirus: Speech and Language Disorders	49
■ Cyprus: Politics and Government	37	■ Coronavirus: Young People	50
■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus	37	■ Cystic Fibrosis: Transplant Surgery	50
■ Israel: Embassies	38	■ Department of Health and Social Care: Crime and Justice Task Force	50
■ Israel: Judiciary	38	■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions	51
■ Overseas Aid	38	■ DNACPR Decisions: Coronavirus	51
■ Overseas Aid: Education	39	■ DNACPR Decisions: Learning Disability	51
■ Palestinians: Children	39	■ Eating Disorders: Mental Health Services	53
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	40	■ Euthanasia	53
■ Alcoholic Drinks: Marketing	40	■ Food: Marketing	53
■ Autism and Learning Disability	40	■ Food: Regulation	54
■ Breast Cancer: Screening	40		

■ Genito-urinary Medicine: Staff	54	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	68
■ Health Services and Social Services: Coronavirus	55	■ Building Safety Fund	68
■ Heart Diseases: Surgery	56	■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	70
■ Hospitals: Disease Control	56	■ High Rise Flats: Tenants	71
■ Medical Detection Dogs: Coronavirus	56	■ Housing: Insulation	71
■ Mental Health Services: Finance	57	■ Local Government: Meetings	72
■ Mental Health: Coronavirus	57	■ Members: Correspondence	73
■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Coronavirus	58	■ Planning Permission	74
■ Nurses: Birmingham	58	■ Surveying: Training	74
■ Nurses: Students	59	■ Wigan Council: Coronavirus	74
■ Respite Care	59	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	76
■ Test and Trace Support Payment	60	■ Trade: G7	76
HOME OFFICE	60	TRANSPORT	76
■ Airguns: Children	60	■ Bus Services: Disability	76
■ British National (Overseas): Hong Kong	60	■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Swansea	76
■ Crime: Harlow	61	■ Driving Licences	77
■ Drugs: Smuggling	61	■ Driving: Sanitation	77
■ Home Office: Coronavirus	62	■ Infrastructure: Planning	78
■ Members: Correspondence	62	■ Railways: North of England	79
■ Offences against Children: Convictions	63	TREASURY	79
■ Personation	64	■ Advertising: Tax Allowances	79
■ Police: Demonstrations	64	■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	79
■ Travellers: Caravan Sites	65	■ Debts: Advisory Services	80
■ VFS Global	65	■ Financial Markets: Computer Software	81
■ Visas: China	66	■ Members: Correspondence	82
■ Windrush Generation: Compensation	66	■ Protective Clothing: VAT Zero Rating	82
		■ Research: Tax Allowances	82
		■ Sanitary Protection: Vat Zero Rating	83
		WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	83
		■ Sexuality	83

WORK AND PENSIONS	84	■ Funeral Payments	86
■ Department for Work and Pensions: Crime and Justice Taskforce	84	■ National Insurance	87
■ Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessment	84	■ Personal Independence Payment	87
■ Employment: Coronavirus	85	■ Personal Independence Payment: Epilepsy	88
		■ Universal Credit: Housing	89

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

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme: Insolvency

Carla Lockhart: [\[153424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many firms who received a Bounce Back Loan since the introduction of that scheme, have filed for insolvency.

Paul Scully:

The Department does not currently hold this data. Borrowers under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme are not required to make repayments for the first 12 months of their loan term.

When repayments begin, we will be able to monitor the rates of business failure among borrowers through assessing the number of claims by lenders under the guarantee agreement.

■ Click and Collect Services and Retail Trade: Coronavirus

Esther McVey: [\[153238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what comparative assessment he has had made of the difference in covid-19 transmission rates for in-store shopping and click and collect services.

Paul Scully:

Throughout the national restrictions, we have sought to keep as much of the retail sector open as possible, whilst balancing the need to reduce our day-to-day contact. All along we have taken evidence from SAGE into account when making decisions.

Click-and-collect services allow goods to be pre-ordered and collected without customers entering the premises. Customers thus remain in well ventilated spaces - which are, by definition, safer environments and where transmission is less likely to occur.

■ Click and Collect Services: Coronavirus

Esther McVey: [\[153236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will (a) list the types of business that are eligible to operate a click-and-collect delivery policy during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021 and (b) provide the risk assessment for covid-19 transmission for each of those business types.

Paul Scully:

All retailers, both essential and non-essential, can offer click-and-collect services during the current national restrictions.

We have published safer workplace [guidance](#) which provides information to help employers make their workplaces COVID-Secure for their employees, visitors, and customers. The guidance does not replace existing employment, health and safety or equalities legislation. It provides information to employers on how best to meet these responsibilities in the context of COVID-19.

Each individual business should complete a [risk assessment](#) which should be shared with their employees.

■ Clothing: UK Trade with EU

John McNally: [\[152554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will meet with representatives of (a) garment manufacturers, (b) fashion creatives, (c) retailers, (d) and brands to discuss the effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the UK fashion industry.

Paul Scully:

I regularly meet with representatives from those industries, as part of my frequent engagement with stakeholders from across the retail and consumer goods sectors. The last such meeting took place on 9 February where both the economic recovery from Covid-19 and the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement were discussed.

The Government recognises the significant contribution of the UK's world-leading fashion and textiles sector to the UK economy, and is committed to supporting it .

John McNally: [\[152555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the UK fashion industry on the effect on that industry of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Paul Scully:

I last spoke with various representatives from the UK fashion industry, including the UK Fashion and Textiles Association (UKFT), on the effect of the Trade and Cooperation agreement on 9 February.

Across Government, we have recently held specific workshops for Retail & Consumer Goods stakeholders as well as a webinar with the British Fashion Council (BFC) on key Trade and Cooperation Agreement issues including Rules of Origin.

We are also working closely with UKFT on guidance and case study examples for businesses to help them understand and adapt to new requirements.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

Carla Lockhart: [\[153423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much has been lent to firms in Northern Ireland under the Coronavirus Business Interruption

Loan Scheme (CBILS); and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the repayment terms of CBILS borrowings.

Paul Scully:

As of 10th January 2021, businesses in Northern Ireland have been offered 1,501 Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) facilities, with a value of £496,806,683.

Lenders are able to extend the repayment period for CBILS facilities beyond 6 years (up to a maximum of 10 years) where this is needed in connection with the provision of forbearance. CBILS term extensions are offered at the discretion of lenders.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[152468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2020 to Question 116678 on Astra Zeneca: Oxford University, and the Answer of 3 August 2020 to Question 73084 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, if the Government will publish the terms of the agreement between the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We are unable to disclose the terms of the agreement between the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca as this would be for the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca to comment on.

Henry Smith:

[\[152472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to (a) conduct and (b) provide funding for external organisations to conduct research into the effectiveness of covid-19 vaccinations for (a) people with blood cancer and (b) other immunocompromised people.

Amanda Solloway:

UKRI is currently funding one study of direct relevance to these areas. UKRI has allocated an initial £1.8 million to the OCTAVE study, led by Professor Iain McInnes, University of Glasgow, for a twelve-month period, and is considering a case for additional funding beyond this. OCTAVE is supporting research on vaccine responses in groups of immune-suppressed individuals, including those with inflammatory disorders, high risk cancer patient groups, and patients with severe kidney and liver disease. Cancer patient groups include chronic lymphocytic leukaemia, myeloma, acute leukaemia, and bone marrow transplants. As the OCTAVE study is being managed as a single project it is not possible to give costs for the individual groups.

In addition, there are proposals on vaccine responses in high-risk clinical groups under consideration as part of the UKRI COVID-19 Agile call, with announcements to be made shortly. Furthermore, UKRI continues to accept applications for COVID-19

related research, including on this topic, through its active calls, which can be found on the UKRI website.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Coronavirus

Liam Byrne:

[\[153128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what (a) policies and (b) grant and funding programmes his 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.

Paul Scully:

The Government has provided an unprecedented support package totalling over £280 billion for individuals, businesses and organisations. This includes billions in loans, grants, and business rates relief. We have also published Safer Workplaces guidance for a number of sectors, supporting businesses and employees to operate in a Covid-secure way. Businesses can also access tailored advice through the Business Support Helpline, the Business Support website or through local Growth Hubs in England.

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme are all delegated schemes introduced by BEIS and overseen in conjunction with the British Business Bank.

As of 24 January 2021:

- 1,471,001 loans have been approved under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, with a total value of £44.74 billion.
- 87,529 loans have been approved under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, with a total value of £20.84 billion.
- 696 loans have been approved under the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme, with a total value of £5.14 billion.

Between March and September last year, over £11.68 billion was paid out to over a million business premises under the Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF), the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund (RHLGF) and the Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund (LADGF). Grant funding has also been made available via Local Authorities to help businesses forced to close due to national and localised restrictions, and for businesses severely impacted by restrictions even if not required to close. This includes the Closed Businesses Lockdown Payment (CBLP), the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), and the different Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) schemes.

■ Electric Vehicles: Production

Chi Onwurah:

[\[153244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress the Government has made in the development of UK supply chains for large scale production of electric vehicles.

Nadhim Zahawi:

As part of my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a green industrial revolution, nearly £500m of capital and R&D funding for the Automotive Transformation Fund will be made available in the next four years to build an internationally competitive electric vehicle supply chain in the UK. The funding is the first part of the up to £1 billion committed by the Government to ensure that the UK takes advantage of this once in a generation opportunity. Securing battery cell manufacturing (gigafactories) is a priority, with further targeted investment in motors, drives, power electronics and hydrogen fuel cells. This will not only improve the air quality in our towns and cities, but also help protect existing jobs in the automotive sector, including in our industrial heartlands.

Additionally, the Government and industry have committed around £1 billion over 10 years to 2023 through the Advanced Propulsion Centre to develop low and zero carbon vehicle technologies. The Government is also investing £318m through the Faraday Battery Challenge to develop the next generation of electric batteries, and nearly £80m through the cross-sector Driving the Electric Revolution programme to build the power electronics, motors, and drives supply chain.

■ Leave

Stuart Anderson:

[\[153370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to extend the range of roles that are eligible for the right to reasonable time off work to carry out public duties.

Paul Scully:

The Government is keen to see greater corporate responsibility on the part of employers and encourages the public sector, charities and businesses to consider their impact on society. Employer-supported volunteering can help to build stronger communities and a stronger economy, by helping charities and community groups to do more and by creating a more motivated and productive workforce.

Employees have the right to reasonable time off work to carry out specified public duties such as those of a magistrate or a local councillor. There are currently no plans to extend the range of roles.

■ Personal Care Services: Coronavirus**Matt Vickers:** [\[153418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether hair salons are permitted to open during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021 for the sole purpose of performing hair replacement system services.

Paul Scully:

The business closures [guidance](#) states that hair salons must close during the national lockdown. However, personal care services provided for essential medical and health needs, which cannot be deferred, may continue such as cosmetic treatments associated with cancer treatment. In that case, the safer working guidance on [close contact services](#) should be followed.

■ Research: Finance**Chi Onwurah:** [\[153240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2020 to Question 130729 on Research: Finance, what estimate his Department has made of the average proportion of private sector R&D investment from charities and not for profit organisations; and if he will provide a breakdown of inward R&D investment from overseas in the latest period for which figures are available.

Amanda Solloway:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes data on UK Gross domestic Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD), and the latest release for 2018 stated the private non-profit sector funded £1,860 million, amounting to 5% of total UK GERD of £37,072 million. The equivalent percentages over the previous decade were also about 5%.

The same ONS release gave a figure for GERD funding from overseas of £5,028m in 2018, with £3,250m of this being performed by UK businesses, £1,562m by Higher Education, £172m by Government and UKRI, and £84m by the private non-profit sector.

A more detailed breakdown of the overseas funding of UK business R&D by product group is available in table 12 of the separate ONS release on UK Business Enterprise Research and Development (BERD), while table 23 shows expenditure on R&D performed in overseas-owned UK businesses by product group.

■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus**Esther McVey:** [\[153237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what scientific evidence on the transmission of covid-19 was used to determine that essential retail should remain open whilst non-essential retail should close during lockdown periods.

Paul Scully:

Throughout the national restrictions, we have sought to keep as much of the retail sector open as possible, whilst balancing the need to reduce our day-to-day contact. Throughout this we have taken evidence from SAGE into account when making decisions.

It is also important that consumers have access to food and essential items that they need.

Restrictions have been brought in because we have to limit social contact. That is why the decision to close non-essential retail is part of a wider package of measures to make clear that people should stay at home except for a limited set of exemptions – allowing non-essential retail to remain open would run contrary to that aim.

■ Satellites: Innovation**Greg Smith:**[\[153389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to promote innovation within the small satellite manufacturing sector; and if he will make a statement.

Amanda Solloway:

Through the UK Space Agency, the Government continues to invest in supporting research & development. Increasingly, this is aimed at fostering innovation in the manufacture of small satellites and associated ground systems to support this growing market. Initiatives are underway to support Earth observation, satellite telecommunications, exploration and science, ranging from providing low cost access to space to enable a wider range of small and medium enterprises and academia to use space, to setting up a commercial lunar data relay service using small satellites.

The UK Space Agency has also supported UK small satellite manufacturers and their UK supply chains to industrialise production of their satellites to meet an increase in demand and exploit emerging technologies.

■ Space Technology**Greg Smith:**[\[153390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support the Government is providing to Local Enterprise Partnerships in order to stimulate industry growth in the space sector.

Amanda Solloway:

We wish to see growth of our world class space sector benefitting the whole of the UK. The UK Space Agency, working with partners including the Satellite Applications Catapult, is currently supporting three Centres of Excellence in Satellite Applications (in the North East, South West and the South Coast of England). In November 2020 we announced £0.5m funding to support the development of new space hubs, bringing together local partners, expertise and businesses to create strategies for

how their area can take maximum advantage of the commercial space race and align the space sector within their local industrial strategies.

We have also provided Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership with £7.7m from the Getting Building Fund, of which I understand they intend to invest £2m into the initial phase of their Westcott Disruptive Innovation Space Centre. In addition, specific work is currently being funded by the UK Space Agency to bring together the significant space interests across the Oxford to Cambridge Arc – including the exciting developments at Westcott - and to put together an action plan for the development of the Arc Space Sector.

■ **Space Technology: Buckinghamshire**

Greg Smith:

[\[153392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to support innovation in small satellite propulsion technologies in the context of the announcement of the UK Space Agency's planned National Propulsion Test Facility at Westcott.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government has invested £4.12m in the National Space Propulsion Test Facility to support innovation in small satellite propulsion technologies; building on significant existing facilities and expertise at Westcott, Buckinghamshire. This facility will enable leading edge research and promote the development of an innovation community across the UK around space propulsion that stimulates R&D, facilitates the transfer of ideas between the research community and industry, and develops a pool of skilled people appropriate to the future needs of the industry and the sector. The facility can then enable UK Space companies to maintain and grow their competitive edge internationally through a world-leading facility that is attractive to foreign direct investment and one that will also allow universities to take on cutting-edge propulsion research topics. This environment will promote effective work between the research community and the commercial sector which will accelerate: innovation, knowledge exchange and commercial exploitation of propulsion and engineering research.

These steps to support innovation will also help develop sovereign small satellite launch capability and the participation in international launcher R&D programmes.

Greg Smith:

[\[153393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential (a) merits and (b) commercial opportunities arising from the proposal to develop a new Disruptive Innovation in Space Centre at Westcott.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government believes that the Space Sector offers opportunities to drive economic growth across the country.

In order to better understand the pipeline of space research, development & innovation infrastructure proposals, which could be funded through a number of

routes, the UK Space Agency has initiated a space infrastructure road mapping exercise and has been in touch with Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership to seek further details of this proposal for a Disruptive Innovation in Space Centre.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus

Esther McVey: [\[152519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has in place for the gradual and safe reopening of the wedding industry to help the people who work in and support that sector.

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 gradually, starting with education. Across the four steps, the roadmap sets out the sequencing and indicative timing for easing restrictions, including those on the wedding sector.

Dr Luke Evans: [\[153395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress he has made in holding discussions with the wedding sector to respond to its needs during the covid-19 lockdown.

Paul Scully:

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

Dr Luke Evans: [\[153396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to develop a road map to support the wedding sector to open up in a safe and controlled manner following the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

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 gradually, starting with education. Across the four steps, the roadmap sets out the sequencing and indicative timing for easing restrictions, including those on the wedding sector.

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations

Mark Pritchard: [\[156313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with the recent escalation of Taliban activity, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of (a) the size of the UK's military

presence in Afghanistan as part of NATO's Resolute Support Mission and (b) its rules of engagement.

James Heappey:

The UK's contribution to the non-combat NATO Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan is kept under regular review to ensure it remains suited to the needs of the mission. For operational and personnel security reasons we do not comment on specific rules of engagement.

■ **Navy: Coronavirus**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[154824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to accelerate vaccination programmes for personnel involved with Carrier Strike Group deployment to ensure that deployment is not delayed.

James Heappey:

The priority for the administration of the COVID vaccine has been defined by the Department of Health and Social Care. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has determined the overarching priority order for administration of the vaccine. However, we are clear that Service personnel should not be disadvantaged by their operational deployments causing them to miss their turn for vaccinations.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Cinemas and Entertainments: Coronavirus**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[156293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to provide targeted support to (a) cinemas and (b) entertainment venues while they remain closed as a result covid-19 restrictions.

Caroline Dinenge:

Throughout the Covid pandemic the government has recognised the significant cultural and economic value of cinemas and entertainment venues.

On February 19 2020, DCMS announced that more than 200 independent cinemas had received £21 million in the first round of the Culture Recovery Fund for Independent Cinemas, part of the wider £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund (CRF). The CRF has also made over 690 awards to the music sector totalling £170 million, and within that over £54 million has been awarded to over 300 music venues. Funding was also allocated for a second round of support worth up to £14 million for cinemas, with other entertainment venues being able to apply for Arts Council England's second round fund of £250 million.

Together with pan-economy measures, including the VAT cut on tickets and concessions and a business rates holiday, these measures have supported the sector and we hope enabled it to reopen in line with the Government's roadmap.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Coronavirus**Liam Byrne:**[\[153127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what (a) policies and (b) grant and funding programmes his 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 John Whittingdale:

DCMS has provided a range of financial support schemes in response to the Covid-19 outbreak and the challenges it has presented. In July 2020 the Secretary of State announced the Culture Recovery Fund to support arts organisations, heritage sites and independent cinemas through £1.57 billion worth of loans and grants. So far over £1 billion of this has been allocated and a second round of funding including £300 million grants and £100 million in repayable finance was announced in December 2020, and launched in January. This scheme has supported more than 75,000 jobs and has assisted cultural institutions such as the National Theatre, and the Royal Albert Hall, as well as thousands of other organisations across England.

The Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support. On 19th November 2020, the government announced a £300 million Sport Winter Survival Package to provide a lifeline to organisations that would otherwise not survive the winter as a result of the restriction on spectators announced from 1 October. Beyond elite level sport, on the 22nd October 2020, the government announced a £100 million support fund for local authority leisure centres. Sport England are also providing £220million directly to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through this pandemic, including their £35 million Community Emergency Fund. Sport England's new strategy, 'Uniting the Movement', dedicated £50 million to support grassroots sports clubs and organisations.

In addition, DCMS has made available an unprecedented £750 million package of support, specifically for charities, social enterprises and the voluntary sector. This has ensured that charities and other civil society organisations, including those at risk of financial hardship, could continue their vital work during the Covid-19 outbreak. This includes the £7.5m Loneliness Covid-19 Winter Fund targeting loneliness and bringing people together through libraries, arts services and radio, as well as the £16.5m Youth Covid-19 Support fund for grassroots youth clubs, uniformed youth groups and national youth organisations. In order to increase the community support given to vulnerable people affected by Covid-19, we also delivered the £200m Coronavirus Community Support Fund. This funding has helped to maintain and enhance services for vulnerable people affected by the current Covid-19 crisis, where delivery organisations are experiencing income disruption and/or increased demand.

■ Electronic Programme Guides: Public Service Broadcasting**Chi Onwurah:** [\[152522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the Government plans to respond to Ofcom's recommendations in its Review of prominence for public service broadcasting, published on 4 July 2019.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Since publication of Ofcom's Prominence recommendations, the government and Ofcom have worked closely together and engaged with industry to fully understand the impact of Ofcom's proposals. This work is ongoing and the government remains committed to act on Ofcom's prominence recommendations, including through legislation.

It is important to ensure that prominence, and the balance of benefits and obligations, support a sustainable future for public service broadcasting (PSB). These issues are also being considered as part of the government's strategic review of PSB, where we will set out next steps later this year.

■ Gaming: Coronavirus**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[153154\]](#)

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

Alex Sobel: [\[153359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department plans to take to support the re-opening of adult gaming centres nationally once covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Alex Sobel: [\[153361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of adult gaming centres on (a) Government support during national covid-19 restrictions and (b) the potential re-opening of those centres.

Alex Sobel: [\[153362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether adult gaming centres are planned to re-open alongside non-essential retail once covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Mick Whitley: [\[153376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with representatives of the gambling industry on the effect of the covid-19 lockdowns and local covid-19 restrictions on levels of employment in (a) the gambling industry and (b) adult gaming centres.

Mick Whitley: [\[153377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the financial viability of adult gaming centres.

Mick Whitley: [\[153378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the potential merits of allowing adult gaming centres to reopen alongside licensed betting operators when the January 2021 covid-19 national lockdown is lifted.

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.

The government recognises that the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be extremely challenging for businesses, including in the arcades sector. That is why we have introduced a number of unprecedented financial packages to help to ease pressures and help businesses navigate through this crisis, including extending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, introducing £4.6 billion in lockdown grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses and providing further discretionary funding for Local Authorities.

We are continuing to work with organisations in the land-based gambling sector to understand the impacts and how we may be able to support them. Currently, we estimate that up to 5% of adult gaming centres (AGCs) have ceased trading with roughly 10.1% of jobs lost in the past twelve months. This estimate is based on recent discussions with Bacta, the trade association for the arcades sector. We know that there are also significant job losses across the land-based gambling sector from discussions with the Betting and Gaming Council and the Bingo Association.

As set out in response to question 149200 on 9 February, the government has published guidance to help businesses understand how to make workplaces Covid-secure and help tackle the spread of the virus. AGCs should follow the [shops and branches](#) guidance in addition to Bacta's specific guidance for [FECs and AGCs](#) to ensure they can operate as safely as possible when they are open.

The shops and branches workplace guidance was intended as guidance for those businesses on how they could operate safely when the regulations permitted them to

do so after the first national lockdown and beyond. It does not have a direct bearing on the timing for reopening of the businesses included in the guidance.

■ Music: Coronavirus

David Warburton:

[\[155281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether recording studios are eligible for Government support for businesses affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinenge:

The Government has provided 100% business rates relief for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses, extensions to the furlough scheme and Self-Employment Income Support Schemes, as well as the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan and Bounce Back Loan Schemes.

The Chancellor has also announced further support for businesses with one-off top-up grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses worth up to £9,000 per property, plus a further £594 million discretionary fund to support other impacted businesses. That builds on the £1.1 billion discretionary fund that local authorities in England have already received to help impacted businesses.

The guidance for these additional restrictions grants encourages local authorities to develop discretionary schemes to help those businesses that are perhaps not legally forced to close but are nonetheless severely impacted by the restrictions put in place to control the spread of covid.

On this point, I have received reports that some businesses such as recording and rehearsal studios, which might not be ratepayers and which are not explicitly mentioned in the guidance on these grant schemes, are being deemed ineligible by some local authorities.

To be clear to local authorities and businesses, although the ultimate decision is at the local authority's discretion, the fund can, and in my opinion should, be used to provide grants to businesses like recording and rehearsal studios. Supporting these businesses is vital to preserve the UK's talent pipeline, even if they do not sell to consumers directly on a specific premise.

I therefore encourage and expect local authorities to be sympathetic to applications from these types of businesses that have been impacted by covid-19 restrictions but are ineligible for other grant schemes.

■ Rugby: Coronavirus

James Grundy:

[\[156627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what financial support the Government plans to provide to rugby league clubs to ensure the safe return of local sport following the covid-19 pandemic.

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. This included a provisional allocation of £12 million to support rugby league which is in addition to the £16 million cash injection government announced in May 2020 to safeguard the immediate future of the sport for the communities it serves.

Furthermore, rugby league clubs will have benefitted from the £220m of National Lottery and Exchequer funding committed by Sport England since March 2020 to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through this pandemic. This sector support was recently boosted by an extra £50million to help grassroots sports clubs and organisations as part of Sport England's new strategy Uniting the Movement. Further details of Sport England funding including the organisations that have benefited can be found at: <https://www.sportengland.org/why-were-here>.

■ Social Media: Labelling**Martyn Day:****[155214]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the content labelling provisions on sites hosting user-generated content such as YouTube; and if he will ask platforms to ensure the effectiveness of their content labelling.

Caroline Dinenge:

The regulation of video sharing platforms by Ofcom came into force on 1 November 2020. UK-established video sharing platforms must now take appropriate measures to protect the public, including minors, from illegal content and harmful material. Although Youtube is not in scope of UK regulation, as its European headquarters is not in the UK, UK-established video sharing platforms may adopt content labelling as an appropriate measure. However they are not obliged to do so.

Under the future online harms regulatory framework, which will be introduced in the online safety legislation that we will be bringing forward later this year, all companies in scope of the new framework will need to have appropriate systems and processes in place to protect users. Any instances of advertising on sites hosting user-generated content, such as YouTube, must be obviously identifiable to meet the provisions of the regulator, the Advertising Standards Association.

DCMS will review how online advertising is regulated later in the year, to ensure standards about the placement and content of advertising can be effectively applied and enforced online so that consumers have limited exposure to harmful or misleading advertising.

Information about the call for evidence can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-advertising-call-for-evidence/online-advertising-call-for-evidence>

We will continue to engage with industry to encourage platforms to adopt appropriate content labelling.

■ **Television Licences: Non-payment**

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[154606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is planning to take in response to the findings of the Consultation on decriminalising TV licence evasion.

Caroline Dinéage:

The government response to the consultation was published on 21 January. The response to the consultation shows that a significant number of people oppose the criminal sanction with some highlighting the considerable stress and anxiety it can cause for individuals, including the most vulnerable in society, such as older people.

However, changing the sanction for TV licence evasion would have wide-ranging impacts for licence fee payers, as well as potentially leading to a significant increase in fines for those evading payment.

The government will therefore keep the issue of decriminalisation under active consideration while more work is done to understand the impact of alternative enforcement schemes.

■ **Video on Demand**

Martyn Day:

[\[155213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has made an assessment of whether Netflix's best practice adoption of trusted BBFC ratings has encouraged other major streaming services to also adopt the BBFC's ratings; and if he will encourage those services to do so.

Caroline Dinéage:

As the designated body for age classification of film content, the Government has great trust in the British Board of Film Classification's (BBFC) best practice age ratings.

While adoption of the BBFC's age ratings by online platforms is currently voluntary, we welcome their usage by Video on Demand platforms. We were particularly pleased to see Netflix announce on 1 December 2020 that they have become the first platform to achieve complete coverage of their content under the BBFC's ratings.

With it being such a recent development, the Government has not made any specific assessment of the impact of Netflix's actions upon other streaming services. We will of course continue to engage with industry to encourage other platforms to adopt the BBFC's ratings across all of their content, and will keep the evidence for legislation in this area under review in the coming years.

EDUCATION**■ Apprentices: Coronavirus****Karl Turner:****[156348]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help apprentices catch up on practical learning missed due to the closure of colleges.

Gillian Keegan:

We are committed to supporting apprentices to safely continue and complete their apprenticeship.

Apprentices have been able to continue their training remotely and in COVID-safe workplaces, and apprentices who were due to undertake their end-point assessment in January, February or March are able to return to training providers' venues if they need practical training.

Following the announcement from my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, on 22 February 2021, all further education learners and apprentices can return and access face-to-face teaching in training providers' premises from 8 March 2021.

We have introduced a range of flexibilities to enable apprenticeships to continue wherever possible. Where training cannot continue, or where the remote delivery of off-the-job training or lack of access to the workplace compromises the quality of the apprenticeship, the employer or provider should initiate a break in the apprentice's learning. When apprentices resume training, providers will be able to consider whether and how to reschedule the training to ensure the apprentice has every opportunity to complete their apprenticeship at the planned time.

We continue to work with employers, training providers and end-point assessment organisations to provide support and flexibilities to ensure apprentices have the necessary skills and knowledge to complete their apprenticeship programmes. Our guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-apprenticeship-programme-response>.

■ Ellen Townsend**Philip Davies:****[154888]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many meetings (a) he, (b) his Ministers and (c) his officials have had with Professor Ellen Townsend in each of the last 12 months.

Vicky Ford:

The department does not have a record of any meetings between our ministers or officials with Professor Ellen Townsend in the last 12 months.

■ English Language: Education

Alison Thewliss:

[\[156452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial support he plans to provide to the English language teaching sector in 2021 in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

The International Education Strategy recognises the crucial contribution of the English language to the UK's global potential and the important role of the English language training sector. Our update to this strategy, published on 6 February 2021, outlines the government's support for the education sector, including English language training, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak as well as work across government aimed at improving the ability of the English language training sector to export their services and expertise.

English language schools are privately run businesses who teach fee-paying students in the UK and as such, are not in receipt of any funding from the department for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision. The department provides ESOL provision for people already resident within the UK through the Adult Education Budget.

■ NHS: Apprentices

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[155073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to introduce an NHS apprenticeship fund to ensure that unused apprenticeship levy funds are retained in NHS budgets; and if he will make a statement.

Gillian Keegan:

The funds in apprenticeship service accounts are available for levy-paying employers, including those in the NHS, to use for 24 months before they begin to expire on a rolling, month-by-month basis. Employers in the NHS can choose which apprenticeships they offer, how many apprenticeships they offer and when they offer the apprenticeships.

We do not anticipate that all employers who pay the levy will need or want to use all the funds available to them, but they are able to do so if they wish. Funds raised by the levy are used to support the whole apprenticeship system. This means that employers' unused funds are not lost but are used to support apprenticeships in smaller employers and to cover the ongoing costs of apprentices already in training. There are no plans to introduce an NHS apprenticeship fund to retain unused apprenticeship levy funds in NHS budgets.

We will again be making available £2.5 billion for investment in apprenticeships in the 2021-22 financial year, which is double that spent in the 2010-11 financial year.

In August 2020, the government announced a new financial package worth £172 million to support healthcare employers increase participation in nursing degree apprenticeships.

In addition to this funding, NHS employers in England will benefit from £2,000 for each apprentice they hire as a new employee aged under 25, and £1,500 for those aged 25 and over, up until 31 March 2021 as part of the government's Plan for Jobs.

We continue to work closely with the Department for Health and Social Care, employers, and stakeholders to make sure the NHS is fully supported to recruit the apprentices it needs to deliver high-quality care.

■ Special Educational Needs

Jack Lopresti:

[\[156342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the adequacy of education for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Vicky Ford:

During periods of national lockdown, education settings have remained open to vulnerable children and young people, including those with education, health and care plans. The guidance for the full opening of schools is clear that all children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), should return to education settings full-time from Monday 8 March. Where it is not possible for a child or young person with SEND to attend their education setting during this period, there is a legal duty on schools and colleges to use their best endeavours to meet the educational needs of their pupils or students. Discussions should be collaborative, focusing on the welfare and views of the child or young person and their parents.

To support remote learning, the department has made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy, both for the summer term of the 2019-20 academic year and the 2020-21 academic year, to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects for Reception to year 11. This includes specialist content for pupils with SEND, along with therapy-based lessons and resources.

Whilst inspection activity has been paused, Ofsted is conducting monitoring inspections of inadequate schools and some that require improvement. These include a focus on support for pupils with SEND, whether they are in school or being educated at home.

The government has announced further elements of the recovery support package so that children and young people can catch up on missed learning and development due to the COVID-19 outbreak. This will be supported with a new £700 million package, focusing on an expansion of one-to-one and small group tutoring programmes, as well as supporting the development of disadvantaged children in early years settings, and summer provision for those pupils who need it the most. These measures will build on the existing £1 billion support package, which includes a £650 million catch-up premium directly allocated to schools, with additional weighting for specialist settings, recognising the significantly higher per-pupil costs that they face. Headteachers decide how this premium is spent (for example, on

educational psychologists, speech and language therapy or other activities to support children to catch-up).

We have put major funding investments into education, including increasing high needs funding for local authorities by £780 million this year and a further £730 million next year, boosting the total budget to more than £8 billion in 2021-22. Local authorities have been allocated a further £4.6 billion to help their communities through the COVID-19 outbreak. This funding is un-ringfenced, recognising local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the major COVID-19 service pressures in their local area, including support to children's services.

Through the SEND review, we are committed to ensuring the SEND system is consistent, high quality, and integrated across education, health and care. It is also considering measures to make sure that money is being spent fairly, efficiently and effectively, and that the support available to children and young people is sustainable in the future.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper:

[\[155404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure university students who are required to extend finishing their studies to autumn 2021 as a result of the covid-19 outbreak receive additional financial support for tuition and living expenses.

Michelle Donelan:

It is a key priority of the government to ensure that as many students graduate on time this year and we are working closely with other government departments including the Department of Health and Social Care, to ensure this.

We also recognise that this is a difficult and uncertain time for students, but we are working with the higher education (HE) sector to make sure all reasonable efforts are being made to enable students to continue their studies. If providers are unable to facilitate good online or in-person tuition, they should seek to avoid charging students for any additional terms they may need to undergo as a consequence – avoiding effectively charging them twice.

Eligible full-time undergraduate students whose universities require them to extend their studies in the current 2020/21 academic year up until 31 August 2021 will qualify for means-tested long courses loans for the additional period of study to help them with their living costs.

Eligible full-time students who will need to retake either all or part of a year of study in the academic year 2021/22 from September 2021 onwards, may qualify for additional tuition fee loan support for their repeat study in the academic year 2021/22. Full-time undergraduate students qualify for fee loan support for the length of the course, plus one extra year if needed, less any years of previous study. A further year of fee loan support in addition to the standard entitlement can be paid in certain circumstances where students need to repeat a year of their current course for compelling personal reasons (which may include reasons associated with the COVID-19 outbreak). In

addition, eligible students will qualify for partially-means tested loans for living costs for a repeat year or part-year of study.

Universities and other HE providers are autonomous and responsible for setting their own fees within maximum fee limits set by regulations. In deciding to keep charging full fees, HE providers will of course want to ensure that they can continue to deliver courses which are fit for purpose and help students progress their qualifications.

It is a registration condition of the Office for Students (OfS) that HE providers must deliver well-designed courses that provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed. If HE providers are unable to facilitate good online or in-person tuition, they should seek to avoid charging students for any additional terms they may need to undergo as a consequence, avoiding effectively charging them twice. Whether or not an individual student is entitled to a refund of fees will depend on the specific contractual arrangements between the HE provider and student.

The government has been clear that universities are expected to maintain quality and academic standards and the quantity of tuition should not drop. Universities should seek to ensure all students, regardless of their background, can access their studies remotely. The OfS monitors online teaching to ensure standards are met, and there is an established process in place for students with concerns about their education.

■ Universities: Greater London

Dawn Butler:

[\[154842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Government protects (a) higher education in London (b) Teaching Grant in London and (c) London weighting for London's Universities.

Michelle Donelan:

The Strategic Priorities Grant, formerly referred to as the Teaching Grant, plays an important role in supporting providers and students to develop the skills and knowledge needed locally, regionally, and nationally to support the economy.

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

The London weighting accounts for a small proportion of London-providers' income. Providers in London received around £64 million London Weighting in the 2020/21 academic year, which is less than 1% of their total income.

Excellent provision can be delivered across the country. London universities will be able to benefit from the significant uplifts we are making to elements of the Strategic Priorities Grant, including the first real terms increase in years in per capita funding for high-cost subjects in Grant funding, as well as being able to bid for capital investment to support the delivery of strategic subjects.

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

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

■ Universities: Remote Education

Robert Halfon:

[\[154633\]](#)

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

Michelle Donelan:

The government is aware of the disproportionate impact the COVID-19 outbreak will have on some students.

We are making available an additional £50 million of hardship funding this financial year. In total, we have made £70 million of funding available for student hardship, given the £20 million made available to higher education (HE) providers in December 2020.

HE providers will have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to students, in a way that will best prioritise those in greatest need. Support can include assistance to help students access teaching remotely. The funding can be distributed to a wide population of students, including postgraduates (whether taught or research) and international students.

This money is in addition to the £256 million of Student Premium funding that HE providers are able draw on this academic year towards student hardship funds, including the purchase of IT equipment.

We know that not all students will face financial hardship. The current measures aim to target support for students in greatest need and the government continues to monitor the situation going forward to look at what impact this funding is having.

The government has also invested over £400 million to help provide laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people so they can access education and social care services remotely. As part of this, we have provided devices for care leavers, including those who may be studying at university.

On 13 January 2021, I wrote to the Office for Students (OfS), the regulator for HE providers in England. I outlined government expectations of the HE sector: universities should maintain the quality and quantity of tuition and seek to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have the resources to study remotely.

In June 2020, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, commissioned OfS chair Sir Michael Barber, to conduct a review of the shift toward digital teaching and learning in English HE since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak. His report, published on 25 February 2021, is based on interviews, a call to evidence, roundtable discussions and surveys and includes 'six actions' university and college leaders can take for next academic year. Details of the 'six actions' can be found here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/gravity-assist-propelling-higher-education-towards-a-brighter-future/six-actions-for-2021-22/>. The full report can be found here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/gravity-assist-propelling-higher-education-towards-a-brighter-future/>.

HE providers must also continue to comply with their legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010, ensuring that education and learning is accessible to all students. When making changes to the delivery of their courses, providers need to consider how to support all students, particularly the most vulnerable, to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Animal Welfare

Luke Pollard:

[152635]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many licences were issued for (a) breeding dogs, (b) providing or arranging for the provision of boarding for cats, (c) providing or arranging for the provision of boarding for dogs in kennels, (d) providing or arranging for the provision of day care for dogs, (e) hiring out horses, (f) selling animals as pets and (g) keeping or training animals for exhibition under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

The table below provides data for the various activities as provided by local authorities, as required under *The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018*. Data held for animal boarding is not separated into catteries and kennelling or day care:

ACTIVE LICENCES ISSUED/RENEWED*

	Pet selling	Dog breeding	Animal boarding	Riding schools	Exhibiting animals
2018/19	338	321	1,842	167	64
2019/20	539	561	2,401	185	539

*according to records submitted by local authorities – 64 returns in 2018/19 and 82 returns in 2019/20.

■ Animal Welfare: Officers**Robert Halfon:** [\[152496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to require local authorities to employ an Animal Welfare Officer.

Victoria Prentis:

Local authorities are responsible for enforcing certain animal related activities which are licensed, such as pet selling, dog breeding and selling, animal boarding, riding schools and the exhibiting of animals. Therefore, every local authority at district level will have access to officers who enforce animal welfare standards. Local authorities have powers, under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, to investigate allegations of animal cruelty or poor welfare. Local authorities must be allowed to decide how to enforce the 2006 Act based upon local priorities and resources.

■ Bees: Imports**Rebecca Long Bailey:** [\[153276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to protect (a) imported packages of and (b) colonies of bees in the context of (i) permissible bee imports to GB extending only to queen bees and (ii) sectoral uncertainty on bee imports via Northern Ireland.

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[153277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has held with the devolved Administrations on improving the clarity of the regulatory framework that applies to the import of colonies and packages of bees to Great Britain via (a) Northern Ireland or (b) other routes since the end of the transition period.

Rebecca Pow:

Since only queen honey bees can be imported into Great Britain, packages or colonies arriving here would be returned to the country of export. Guidance on the new rules for importing bees was published and known importers were contacted prior to the end of the transition period.

Movements of queens, packages and colonies from Northern Ireland to Great Britain remain permitted. There is, and will remain, unfettered access for Northern Ireland goods including honey bees to the rest of the UK market.

We are aware of concerns raised by some beekeepers and we continue to listen to beekeepers and their associations as part of our monitoring of the new trading arrangements. We have continued to update guidance in response to questions raised.

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

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Coronavirus**

Liam Byrne:

[\[153134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what (a) policies and (b) grant and funding programmes his 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.

Victoria Prentis:

Since March the Government's priority has been to save lives and protect jobs, businesses, and livelihoods. To support workers and businesses across all sectors the Government has provided an unprecedented package of support worth more than £280 billion.

My Department has introduced a number of support packages to avoid the loss of productive capacity, prevent disproportionate harm to the economy or society and to protect vulnerable groups against the effects of Covid-19. These are as follows:

1. Clinical Extremely Vulnerable individuals – in March 2020, Defra put in place £212m of packages to support individuals defined as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable. This included food boxes delivered to those that were shielding and the set-up of the National Shielding helpline.
2. Food for economically vulnerable individuals – In April 2020, Defra secured funding, via a DCMS managed scheme for the voluntary and charity sectors, to support the distribution of grants worth £16m to front line charities who were best placed to respond to the immediate needs of economically vulnerable people. The majority of this funding was provided to FareShare. In November 2020, building on the support given to the most vulnerable during the initial months of the pandemic, the Government announced a winter support package of interventions to support the economically vulnerable. The winter package included a further £16m of funding for Defra to support food charities with the purchasing and distribution of food to the vulnerable over a 16-week period starting from the beginning of December. This funding stream is being managed by the food redistributor FareShare.
3. The Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant – a further scheme to support people struggling to afford food and other essential supplies was announced on 10 June 2020. The £63m package of support was distributed to Local Authorities to make discretionary one-off emergency payments to people in their communities in need.
4. Emergency surplus food grant – In April 2020, through the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), Defra launched a series of grant opportunities to support the redistribution of surplus food to those most in need. Defra made

£3.25m available for this Covid-19 emergency grant. The primary focus of the fund is to enable not-for-profit organisations both large and small to overcome barriers to the distribution of surplus food that would otherwise be wasted in the wake of Covid-19.

5. Zoo Animals Fund – In May 2020 the Government launched the Zoo Support Fund. This initial £14 million envelope for zoos was increased to up to £100 million (with final expenditure subject to zoos' submitting successful applications) in August 2020 when the Zoo Support Fund was replaced by the Zoo Animals Fund. These funds have been created for the purpose of providing for zoos which, due to a coronavirus-related drop in income, are experiencing severe financial difficulties and need support in caring for their animals. These funds were introduced to ensure the welfare of zoo animals, including when zoos are closing, downsizing or rehoming their collections.
6. Fisheries Response Fund (FRF) – The FRF provided up to £9 million in funding for catching and aquaculture businesses with payments to individual businesses capped at £10k. The FRF covered fixed costs for the period April to June 2020. A further £1 million was also made available for projects to encourage domestic selling through the Domestic Seafood Supply scheme.
7. Seafood Response Fund (SRF) – The SRF was announced on 21 February to support catching and shellfish aquaculture businesses across the UK which continue to be impacted by Covid-19. The scheme will be similar to the FRF, providing grants to eligible businesses to assist them in covering their fixed costs for the period January-March 2021. Further details are expected shortly, with the scheme opening to applications in early March.
8. Dairy Response Fund (DRF) – The DRF was a fund to provide support to eligible dairy farmers in England who have been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 outbreak. Eligible farmers were entitled to up to £10,000 each to cover 70% of their losses incurred across April and May as a result of a drop in price. The fund opened on 18 June 2020 and closed on 11 September 2020. The DRF paid 132 farmers a total of £1,017,250.
9. Changes to the Textile Grant Fund – Defra also worked with the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to alter the requirements of the Textile Grant Fund so that the grant could be used for capital costs to reconfigure a business to comply with Covid-19 safety measures, where this forms an integral part of an innovative proposal/project; and to streamline the application process so that these funds could be allocated more quickly.
10. Arms length bodies – A number of Defra arms-length bodies including RGB Kew and the Forestry Commission have been seriously impacted by the pandemic, in particular through a significant reduction in revenue generating activity. We have worked closely with HMT to address this and provided additional budget cover of £19m to provide some protection and a viable operating model going into 21/22.

11. Green Recovery Challenge Fund – This fund enabled environmental charities and their partners to kick-start a range of nature projects that had been adversely affected by the pandemic. Funding was made available quickly in order to create and retain jobs in the nature sector. £40m was allocated to the fund in 20/21.
12. European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) – £800k was also made available in England through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19. This included £300k for improvements to health and safety on board fishing vessels and £500k for ports or harbour infrastructure projects which reduce the impact of Covid-19. This funding has now been committed and is no longer open to new applications.

In addition, Defra has worked with delivery bodies and partners to introduce a number of regulatory easements to ensure regulatory obligations remain proportionate in these challenging circumstances, including in the areas of veterinary medicines, environmental regulations and marketing standards inspections. Specific interventions were also made with key Departments to ease regulations to support food supply, including competition law exclusions and driver hours flexibilities.

■ **Game: Birds**

Greg Smith:

[\[152657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many (a) licences and (b) consents have been issued for (a) game bird release, (b) outdoor sports and (c) leisure and recreation activities on European protected sites under the interim licencing scheme for 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is preparing to introduce an interim licensing regime for the 2021 releases of common pheasant and red-legged partridge within European protected sites and within a 500m buffer zone around the sites. A consultation will be launched shortly proposing a general licence to cover the majority of European Protected Sites. It will not cover consents or include other activities beyond gamebird release.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[152678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the cost to the public purse has been of reviewing gamebird releasing on European protected sites compared with the cost of reviewing other outdoor sports, leisure activities and recreation activities in the last two years.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[152679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether it is his policy to introduce a licensing regime for gamebird releasing on certain European protected sites for 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

I can confirm that it is the Government's policy to introduce an interim licensing regime for the 2021 releases of common pheasant and red-legged partridge within

European protected sites and within a 500m buffer zone around the sites. A consultation has been launched that sets out the proposals.

The cost to the public purse of reviewing gamebird releasing on European protected sites has not been specifically calculated or compared to other outdoor pursuits.

Alexander Stafford: [\[153427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his preferred option for the interim licensing regime of game bird release on protected sites remains general licences.

Rebecca Pow:

We have launched a public consultation on our proposals for the interim licensing of game bird releasing which includes the use of a general licence. We are committed to achieving an interim licensing regime which is both effective and workable for users.

■ Land Drainage

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[152440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to help ensure that water companies take responsibility for drainage in order to prevent flooding.

Rebecca Pow:

Water companies, specifically sewerage undertakers, have a statutory duty under section 94(1) of the Water Industry Act 1991 to provide, improve and extend a system of public sewers to ensure that an area is "effectually drained".

However, drainage alone cannot prevent flooding, and the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 ("the 2010 Act") establishes flood Risk Management Authorities (RMAs), to address the risk of flooding. The 2010 Act defines RMAs as the Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales, Lead Local Flood Authorities, water and sewerage undertakers, highway authorities, district authorities and Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs).

All RMAs must act in a manner that is consistent with the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy. The 2010 Act requires RMAs to cooperate with each other and gives them information sharing powers to facilitate cooperation. They have flexibility to form informal partnerships and to act on behalf of one another.

In addition, the Environment Bill will require sewerage undertakers to produce Drainage and Sewerage Management Plans on a statutory basis which aim to assist such partnerships and collaborative working. Plans will fully assess an undertaker's network capacity and set out the measures undertakers plan to take to develop their drainage and sewerage systems. Undertakers started developing plans on a non-statutory basis in 2018.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[152441]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will impose on water companies that allow sewage to enter drainage systems additional penalties that are spent on schemes to reduce river pollution.

Rebecca Pow:

Sewerage systems are used by water and sewerage companies to collect sewage (comprising both rainwater run-off and waste water from domestic, industrial and commercial premises). This is then transferred to sewage treatment plants for treatment before discharge to permitted water quality standards. This is a legal use of the sewerage system and it would therefore not be appropriate to impose penalties for this use.

Separately from the sewerage system, there are surface water drainage systems that collect rainwater run-off from roads and urban areas and discharge direct to local waters. Water companies do not allow sewage to enter surface water drainage systems.

During and after heavy or prolonged rainfall, the capacity of sewerage systems can be exceeded. When this happens, storm overflows act as relief valves to discharge excess sewage combined with rainwater to rivers or the sea. This protects properties from flooding and prevents sewage backing up into streets and homes during heavy storm events.

I met water company CEOs last year and made clear that the volume of sewage discharged from storm overflows into rivers and other waterways in extreme weather must be reduced. To achieve this, our new Storm Overflows Taskforce has been established, bringing together representatives from government, the water industry, regulators and environmental NGOs to set out clear proposals to address the harm and frequency of sewage discharged into our rivers and other waterways from storm overflows. As announced on 22 January, this Taskforce has agreed a long-term goal to eliminate harm from storm overflows.

The Environment Agency currently regulates water companies in their operation of storm overflows to ensure they only discharge under strict permitted conditions. Where discharges occur outside of these conditions, the EA investigates and takes appropriate action, which includes enforcement action if necessary.

The EA has brought 44 prosecutions against water companies in the last five years, securing fines of £34 million. £7.9 million has also been donated to environmental and wildlife trusts organisations in the same period through enforcement undertakings, a voluntary agreement which will include a donation to environmental charities to restore any harm done.

■ Obesity

Craig Whittaker: [\[153184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has provided modelling on recent trends in food consumption to support the development of (a) the Government's obesity strategy and (b) plans for the restriction of the advertising and promotion of foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar.

Craig Whittaker: [\[153186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of restrictions proposed by the Government on the promotion of foods that are high in fat, sugar or salt on (a) all and (b) SME manufacturers of those foods.

Victoria Prentis:

As a nation we are consuming too much sugar and too many calories. We are therefore encouraging industry to shift the balance of promotions and advertising to healthier options. The Government's response to the consultation on restricting promotions of products high in fat, sugar and salt and the accompanying impact assessments was published on 28 December 2020. The Government's response to the consultation on advertising restrictions for products high in fat, salt and sugar and accompanying impact assessment will be published shortly. Defra has not undertaken its own modelling or impact assessments to support the development of the obesity strategy policies, but we work closely with DHSC to ensure their evidence is robust.

■ Peat Bogs: Environmental Protection

Paul Maynard: [\[152462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to protect peatlands.

Rebecca Pow:

We are committed to restoring and sustainably managing England's peatlands. The Chancellor announced in March 2020 that as part of the Nature for Climate Fund, 35,000ha of peatland restoration would be achieved over the next 5 years. This represents a significant step forward in our restoration efforts and will require us to work closely with a wide range of stakeholders.

We are taking action now to prevent further damage to protected blanket bog by bringing forward legislation that will limit burning of vegetation; and will be consulting later this year on measures to phase out the use of peat in horticulture.

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

■ Sanitary Protection

Kim Johnson: [\[153415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of use of reusable menstrual products; and whether his Department has set any waste reduction objectives for menstrual products.

Rebecca Pow:

We have not carried out an assessment of the trends in the level of use of reusable menstrual products.

We have recently commissioned work into the environmental impacts of disposable versus reusable absorbent hygiene products (AHPs). The primary focus will be on nappies, but it will also include a broad assessment of other AHPs such as menstrual products. This will help inform future policy interventions on waste prevention. At this time, we have no plans to set specific waste reduction objectives in this area.

■ Waste Management: Local Government

Wera Hobhouse: [\[152604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what funding and resources the Government will make available to local authorities to support the requirement for weekly food waste collections set out in the Environment Bill.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government will ensure that local authorities are resourced to meet net costs arising from new statutory duties. This will include the additional costs associated with the requirement to separately collect food waste at least once a week from households, introduced through the Environment Bill. This includes upfront transition costs and ongoing operational costs.

We are carrying out a new burdens assessment for this policy and will provide further detail on new burdens funding in due course, following the outcome of the second consultation on recycling consistency, which we are preparing to launch in the spring.

■ Zoo Animals Fund

Caroline Lucas: [\[153172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the combined effect of the zoo animals fund, furlough, VAT deferral, business rates relief, the business interruption loan schemes, the option to reclaim the costs of statutory sick pay, and ordinary hospitality and leisure grant funding on the financial stability of zoos, wildlife parks and aquariums; what representations he has received from zoos, wildlife parks and aquariums on the need for further Government support for the sector because of covid-19; if he will make it his policy to create a dedicated zoo recovery fund; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

I fully understand the pressure that the current coronavirus restrictions are placing on zoos, wildlife parks and aquariums. We know many of these organisations have been able to access the funding schemes the Government has provided to support businesses during the covid-19 pandemic, including the Job Retention Scheme, VAT deferral, Business Rates Relief, the Business Interruption Loan, the option to reclaim the costs of Statutory Sick Pay and grant funding. Feedback from the sector is that these have provided very welcome relief. We have received positive feedback from recipients of the Zoo Animals Fund on how the funding has supported organisations and their animals through this difficult time allowing them to continue to provide the best care for their animals and operate safely in these challenging times. The Zoo Animals Fund has been a lifeline for many organisations and small, medium and large zoos, wildlife parks and aquariums have been successful in securing funding under this scheme.

We keep all aspects of the Zoo Animals Fund constantly under review to ensure that it is meeting its aims to ensure the sector can deliver the best possible care for its animals. The application deadline for the Zoo Animals Fund is 26 February 2021 and funding is provided until the end of March 2021. Following feedback from stakeholders, changes were made to the Fund include extending the criteria to include maintenance costs, introducing the ability to apply ahead of reaching 12 weeks reserves and most recently extending the application deadline. Defra officials are in close, regular contact with BIAZA (British and Irish Association for Zoos and Aquariums) and the CEOs of the largest charitable zoos to enable us to fully understand the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the sector and any asks on future support. We will continue to engage with the sector and provide updates as situations change.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Coronavirus: Disease Control****Clive Lewis:**[\[155234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to use its representation on the Boards of (a) Gavi, the Vaccines Alliance and (b) the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations to assess how those organisations can support the operation of the WHO's COVID-19 Technology Access Pool.

Wendy Morton:

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) are co-leads of the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Technologies (ACT) Accelerator. The ACT-Accelerator is an initiative to support collaboration and resource mobilisation in accelerating the development of, and equitable access to new COVID-19 vaccines, treatments, and tests. In its COVID-19 Technology Access

Pool (C-TAP) concept note, the World Health Organisation sets out that the ACT-Accelerator is a separate but complementary initiative to C-TAP.

Clive Lewis:

[\[155235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what further plans he has to consult on the WHO COVID-19 Technology Access Pool with (a) the pharmaceutical industry, (b) research institutions and (c) G7 members.

Wendy Morton:

Since the World Health Organisation (WHO) provided initial details on the COVID-19 technology access pool (C-TAP) in October 2020, the UK has, and will continue to engage with all interested parties. We are in ongoing discussions with the WHO as it refines both governance structures and the operating model for C-TAP, and will seek clarity on questions being posed by stakeholders.

■ **Cyprus: Politics and Government**

Mark Pritchard:

[\[154892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his policy is on Cyprus and the UK's continuing commitment to UN Resolutions 789 and 550.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is a strong supporter of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus issue, based on the existing parameters as set out in relevant Security Council Resolutions, including UN Security Council Resolutions 550 (1984) and 789 (1992).

A Cyprus Settlement remains key to resolving wider tensions in the region. We are supportive of the UN Secretary General's efforts and the proposal of the informal meeting between the parties ("5+UN"). The UK stands ready to engage with any meetings in support of the settlement process.

■ **Developing Countries: Coronavirus**

Paul Blomfield:

[\[155012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 4 February 2021 on Question HL12460, what recent steps he has taken to support developing countries with procuring and administering covid-19 vaccines.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. The UK has committed £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines, of which the UK is one of the largest bilateral donors. Our commitment helped encourage other donors to commit \$1 billion by the end of 2020. Our funding will contribute to the supply of at least 1.3 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021 for up to 92

developing countries. The Prime Minister has said that the UK will share the majority of future vaccine doses surplus to domestic needs with COVAX.

The COVAX AMC aims to supply fully subsidised doses sufficient to vaccinate up to 20 per cent of country populations, initially prioritising healthcare workers, and then expanding to cover other priority groups. Countries will then be able to procure additional doses, subject to vaccine availability, in order to increase coverage further. COVAX is supporting countries to assess vaccine introduction readiness, and to develop detailed national deployment and vaccination plans, including support needed to strengthen delivery systems. Our network of health advisers in relevant AMC countries are working to support host governments to apply for the COVAX AMC and prepare for vaccine delivery.

■ Israel: Embassies

Scott Benton: [\[152666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of moving the UK Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

James Cleverly:

The British Embassy to Israel is based in Tel Aviv and we have no plans to move it.

■ Israel: Judiciary

Andrew Rosindell: [\[153156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with international counterparts on (a) judicial independence and (b) judicial accountability in Israel.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary regularly discusses matters of international justice with counterparts. He has had no recent discussions about Israel's internal justice system.

■ Overseas Aid

Dawn Butler: [\[154841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that UK (a) bilateral and (b) multilateral aid is disbursed (i) directly to local organisations in developing countries and (ii) to UK firms that score very highly in respect of their diversity.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO is committed to working in partnership with a diverse range of civil society organisations and recognises the unique role of in-country local organisations. A key aim of our funding for civil society is to support the capacity of local civil society organisations in developing countries so they can become strong, self-reliant and powerful development actors.

All FCDO's contracts are tendered in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations, which ensures open, transparent and fair competition between bidders. This means our contracts are competitively tendered following a set of standard processes. The Public Contracts Regulations provide a legal framework of procurement rules which ensure application of best practice including transparency, non-discrimination, equal treatment and proportionality and reasonableness.

■ Overseas Aid: Education

Nickie Aiken:

[\[152647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ensure the Global Partnership for Education's 2021-2025 replenishment is fully funded.

Wendy Morton:

The Prime Minister and President Kenyatta of Kenya will co-host the *Global Education Summit: Financing the Global Partnership for Education* (GPE) in London in July 2021. The UK is GPE's largest bilateral donor. No decision has yet been taken on the UK's next contribution to GPE, and details will follow in due course.

As co-hosts of the Summit, we are using all the means at our disposal to help the Global Partnership for Education secure its five-year financing target of up to \$5 billion (2021-2026), in line with our commitment to stand up for the right of every girl around the world to gain 12 years of quality education.

■ Palestinians: Children

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[152681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 11 December 2020 to Question 128695, what response his Department has received from the Israeli authorities on their investigation into the death of 15-year old Ali Abu Alia; and if he will make further representations to progress a conclusion in this case.

James Cleverly:

We continue to urge Israel to ensure that its investigation into this case is swift and comprehensive. We also continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**Alcoholic Drinks: Marketing**

Craig Whittaker: [\[153182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of proposed restrictions on (a) advertising and (b) promotion of on foods high in fat, salt or sugar on alcohol marketing and advertising.

Jo Churchill:

Policies on advertising restrictions and restricting the promotion of foods high in fat, salt and sugar by location and by volume are part of a package of measures with the primary aim of reducing childhood obesity. Our promotions policy is focused on food and non-alcoholic drinks.

Autism and Learning Disability

Helen Hayes: [\[151777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made on reducing the number of people with a learning disability and autism in inpatient settings.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: According to the latest NHS Digital Assuring Transformation data, since March 2015 there has been a 29% reduction in the number of people with a learning disability and autistic people in specialist inpatient settings.

As of December 2020, eight Transforming Care Partnerships have currently achieved the 2024 NHS Long Term Plan target rate of 30 adults in a mental health inpatient setting per million of the adult population and a further eight have achieved the March 2020 target of 37 per million.

We have established a new Building the Right Support Delivery Board to oversee implementation of the Building the Right Support national plan. The Board brings together representatives from Government departments, local government and other organisations with responsibilities for elements of the plan.

Breast Cancer: Screening

Andrew Bridgen: [\[155035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the (a) support available to and (b) capacity of the breast imaging and diagnostic workforce.

Helen Whately:

Health Education England (HEE) welcomes Professor Sir Mike Richards' report 'Diagnostics Recovery and Renewal', which stated that major expansion and reform of the diagnostic services is needed over the next five years to facilitate recovery

from the COVID-19 pandemic and to meet rising demand across multiple aspects of diagnostics.

HEE is working with system partners on the longer-term strategy that will also consider further the diagnostic and breast imaging workforce needs beyond 2021. This planning is fully aligned with the NHS Long Term Plan, the NHS People Plan and associated ambitions for further development of cancer services. This will include exploring sustainable growth beyond 2021 in key professions through continued investment in training places, with a greater focus on attracting and retaining students and improving the numbers of qualified professionals who go on to work in the National Health Service.

■ **Cancer: Surgery**

Dean Russell:

[\[152668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many local contracts are in place with independent hospitals to ensure the provision of Priority 2 cancer surgery operations in England.

Edward Argar:

A Contract Award Notice in respect of each of the 26 individual contracts entered into by NHS England with independent sector hospital providers has been published on 16 October 2020 by the Official Journal of the European Union. The Notice is available at the following link:

<https://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:492193-2020:TEXT:EN:HTML>

■ **Care Homes: Coronavirus**

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[124643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that care homes that have not been given free supplies of covid-19 testing kits can acquire sufficient numbers of kits to enable visits to take place.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 December 2020]: All Care Quality Commission-registered adult care homes are receiving lateral flow device (LFD) test kits to enable safe visits, where permitted. We have processed the delivery of the second order of LFD kits to care homes at the end of January 2021. If any care homes have not received their delivery or are not able to reorder, they should contact 119.

Chris Evans:

[\[152512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a timetable for the vaccination of all care home (a) residents and (b) staff in England.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We met our target to offer a first vaccine to everyone in the top four priority groups, as identified by the Joint Committee of Vaccination and Immunisation by 15 February. This included all residents in a care homes for older adults and their carers.

Second vaccination visits to care homes are taking place over the next month to offer vaccinations to staff or residents who were unavailable on the day of the first visit. Everyone will receive their second dose within 12 weeks of their first.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[96902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many care homes in England (a) have started and (b) are waiting to begin regular covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

All care homes in England are currently eligible for a combination of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and lateral flow device (LFD) testing. As part of our updated guidance on regular testing, staff have provision for two LFD and one PCR tests per week and residents have provision for one PCR test per month. In addition, all staff have access to 'rapid response' testing if a positive case is detected in the home consisting of daily LFD testing until five days after any further cases are found. Residents do not currently undertake regular LFD testing, unless in an outbreak setting.

■ Care Homes: Government Assistance

Helen Hayes: [\[155258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of bureaucracy required for care providers to access the (a) Infection Control Fund, (b) Workforce Capacity Fund and (c) Rapid Testing Fund; and what plans he has to reduce the paperwork and reporting associated with each of those schemes.

Helen Whately:

Under the Rapid Testing Fund and extended Infection Control Fund, local authorities are required to pass 80% of funding directly to relevant care providers in their area. The Workforce Capacity Fund operates differently and is provided to local authorities for use in line with the grant conditions.

All three funds require providers and local authorities in receipt of funding to report on how they have used it. As part of the Infection Control Fund conditions, providers must also agree to provide weekly reporting through the Capacity Tracker. The Government will consider feedback from the sector in the design of any future funding to ensure reporting and conditions remain proportionate.

■ Care Homes: Visits

Dan Carden: [\[153356\]](#)

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

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: We have acted to protect those most at risk in care homes and ensure visits can go ahead safely in some form. As set out in updated visiting guidance, visits to care homes can continue to take place with

arrangements such as substantial screens, visiting pods or behind windows. Close-contact indoor visits are not currently allowed. As has been the case throughout the pandemic, visits in exceptional circumstances including end of life should always be supported and enabled.

As of March 8th Care Homes will be expected to offer indoor visits for a single named visitor for every resident, supported by testing and PPE. In addition, visits should continue to be available using screens, pods etc so that each resident can see more than just a single visitor should they wish. Further detailed guidance on the new visiting arrangements will be published shortly.

■ Carers

Ed Davey:

[\[150668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to collect data on carers' assessments and carers' respite provision at a national level; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: NHS Digital collect annual information from local authorities in England detailing support provided for both new and already known carers. This support can be the outcome of a carer assessment or a carer review. Carers are included if they were receiving ongoing support during the year, even if no review of those arrangements took place. Information is provided relating to the type of support offered to the carer - for example, direct support such as 'direct payments' or 'Councils with Adult Social Services Responsibilities (CASSR) managed Personal Budget', or if support was directly arranged by the local authority for the cared-for person. This includes respite services.

Those carers assessed during the year but provided no support are also counted. In addition, last November we commissioned the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services to run a survey with local authorities to capture data on the current status of day services nationally to understand and help overcome the challenges in reopening and extending day care opportunities to enable carers to access respite.

■ Cervical Cancer: Screening

Mike Kane:

[\[153263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what research his Department has (a) completed and (b) planned on the use of new technologies as part of the cervical cancer screening programme.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: Since 2015/16, the Department, through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) has completed three research projects on the use of new technologies as part of the cervical cancer screening programme; two NIHR research projects are still active; and one project is planned.

In the same period, there are 19 completed NIHR studies on the use of new technologies as part of the cervical cancer screening programme; three active NIHR studies and one planned NIHR study.

■ **China: Coronavirus**

Sir Desmond Swayne: [\[153098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the WHO investigation into the origin of the covid-19 virus in Wuhan.

Jo Churchill:

The United Kingdom is supporting the World Health Organization's investigation and we now await the publication of the mission's report.

■ **Coronavirus**

Andy McDonald: [\[155054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the effects of covid-19 are (a) non-permanent or reversible, (b) non-progressive and (c) any disability temporary.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: Approximately one in 10 people who contract COVID-19 still experience symptoms and impaired quality of life after 12 weeks. We do not presently know whether these difficulties are permanent or temporary in their effects on patients.

There is ongoing research into the effects of 'long' COVID-19 in both hospitalised and non-hospitalised patients.

On 18 February, the Government announced £18.5 million funding for four research projects to help better understand the causes, symptoms and treatment of the condition.

■ **Coronavirus: Clinics**

Geraint Davies: [\[151590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to NHS England's announcement of 18 December 2020 on the introduction of long covid clinics, what plans NHS England has to ensure that those clinics include speech and language therapists.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The national specification for these services asks providers ensure patients have access to a multidisciplinary team of professionals to account for the multi-system nature of post-COVID-19 syndrome. Where speech and language therapy are required, patients should be able to get the treatment they need.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Caroline Lucas:

[\[96039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) names and (b) qualifications of the members of the executive committee of the NHS Test and Trace programme are; whether those people are remunerated for the work that they do for that committee; what plans he has to publish the minutes of that committee; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

As of 10 February 2021, the Executive Committee of NHS Test and Trace comprises of 15 members and one clinician:

Baroness Dido Harding – Executive Chair;

David Pitt – Chief Operating Officer;

Mark Hewlett – Testing Divisional Director;

Steve McManus – Tracing Divisional Director;

Carolyn Wilkins – Contain Divisional Director;

Clare Gardiner – Director General of Joint Biosecurity Centre;

Simon Bolton – Chief Information Officer;

Gareth Williams – Chief People Officer;

Donald Shepard – Chief Finance Officer;

Ben Dyson – Director of Policy;

Susan Hopkins – Chief Medical Advisor;

Jacqui Rock – Chief Commercial Officer;

Ben Stimson – Chief Customer Officer;

Raghuv Bhasin – Chief of Staff;

Michael Brodie – Chief Executive of Public Health England.

We are unable to provide personal information on qualifications. Baroness Harding is not remunerated for her role as Executive Chair. All other members of the Executive Committee are either civil servants and as such are remunerated on their respective pay grade or on secondment from other public sector departments. The minutes of Executive Committee meetings will not be routinely published.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Geraint Davies:

[\[153104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to NHS staffing data published on 11 February 2021 stating that there are 41,175 covid-19 related absences of staff, what assessment he has made of the reasons why NHS staff are being infected with covid-19; and what plans he has to mitigate against the infection of staff.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: It is not possible to state how many infections amongst staff have been contracted in the workplace and how many have been infected through contacts outside the National Health Service.

It is for individual hospital trusts to carry out continual risk assessments of their premises and to put appropriate measures in place such as distancing, sanitising measures and the use of personal protective equipment to help minimise the spread of COVID-19, in line with nationally published guidance.

■ Coronavirus: Health Services**Dr Dan Poulter:**[\[149194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of people with a recorded infection of covid-19 make a full recovery following successful hospital treatment.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

This information is not collected centrally.

Emma Hardy:[\[153354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support research on the treatment of long covid.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) have invested £8.4 million in the post-hospitalisation COVID-19 study (PHOSP-COVID) at Leicester University.

On 12 November 2020, the NIHR and UKRI announced joint funding for research into the long-term physical and mental health effects of COVID-19 in non-hospitalised people. Successful projects will be announced shortly.

■ Coronavirus: Liverpool**Ian Byrne:**[\[102955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the request of 1 October 2020 from Liverpool City Region MPs and leaders in a joint statement for the Government to provide the scientific evidence relating to covid-19 measures, for what reason the advice from SAGE of 21 September 2020 was published after (a) the Downing Street press conference of 12 October 2020 which announced further measures to control covid-19 in the Liverpool City Region and (b) his meeting with Liverpool City Region MPs to discuss those measures at 12.00pm on the same day.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There was policy under consideration prior to publication of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies' (SAGE) advice. Decisions are released as soon as these considerations permit. Further information on the validation and publication of SAGE minutes is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-publishes-sage-minutes>

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Zarah Sultana:

[152660]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people who are exempt from wearing face masks do not receive abuse or intimidation when in public places.

Jo Churchill:

We continue to issue advice on face coverings to alert the public to the places where they are required to wear a face covering, who is exempt from wearing one, and how to wear one correctly. This published advice has spanned a number of different mediums, including television, in person prompts such as in transport hubs and shop windows and on social media.

These campaigns have been running since summer 2020. Social media content and press coverage, especially regarding people with disabilities or health conditions, has been promoted throughout, as well as in line with events such as the International Day of People with Disabilities on 3 December.

By requesting that members of the public be respectful of circumstances where someone cannot wear a face covering and issuing guidance that no one need prove their exemption, we aim to minimise the negative impact on those with disabilities, which is a protected characteristic.

Our online guidance is clear that people are not required to prove they are exempt from a face covering and it is for individuals to choose how they would want to communicate this to others. Example exemption cards are available to print or display on mobile phones from GOV.UK. People are able to make their own exemption card if they would prefer or do not have access to the internet.

Bambos Charalambous:

[153336]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to raise public awareness of exemptions from the requirement to wear coverings in public places during the covid-19 outbreak; and where and when those campaigns have taken place.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: Our face covering guidance and associated communications campaign alerts the public to why and where face coverings are required, how to make them, how to wear them and what exemptions there are. This has spanned a number of different mediums, including television, in person prompts such as in transport hubs and shop windows and on social media.

These campaigns have been running since summer 2020. Social media content and press coverage, especially regarding people with disabilities or health conditions, has been promoted throughout, as well as in line with events such as the International Day of People with Disabilities on 3 December.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[153383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason it is his policy to exempt people from wearing face coverings without the need to provide medical proof.

Jo Churchill:

People are not required to prove they have an exemption or reasonable excuse which means they do not need to wear a face covering and it is for individuals to choose how they communicate this to others.

We expect that the majority of those who do not wear a face covering in regulated settings have a reasonable excuse or exemption. The Government has actively engaged with stakeholders including disability charities to understand the impact of the policy on disabled people. By requesting that members of the public be respectful of circumstances where someone cannot wear a face covering and issuing guidance that no one need prove their exemption, we aim to minimise the negative impact on those with disabilities, which is a protected characteristic. The Department, as a public authority, is legally obliged to give due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty when making policy decisions by considering the impact of policy on groups with protected characteristics.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[124665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to provide indemnity insurance to local authorities for costs incurred as a result of false negative results from mass covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

We have agreed to provide contingent liability cover for clinical negligence and product liability for local authorities and Directors of Public Health carrying out testing as part of the community testing programme.

People should continue to abide by the current restrictions which apply even when someone has a negative test result.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[138522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether physiotherapists and other healthcare staff providing patient-facing services in (a) charitable hospices, (b) care homes and (c) community services will have the same access to asymptomatic covid-19 testing as NHS employees.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 20 January 2021]: Since November 2020, twice weekly lateral flow device (LFD) testing has been available for all National Health Service patient-facing staff who may conduct visits in the community including to care homes and charitable hospices. In addition, all hospices and care homes in England have access to LFD tests, which can be used to test all visiting professionals prior to admission into those vulnerable settings.

Kate Hollern:

[155061]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department has provided to local authorities to carry out surge covid-19 testing in areas where the South African variant has been detected.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: Working in partnership with local authorities, we are targeting areas within specific postcodes where the variant has been found. Mobile testing units will be deployed offering polymerase chain reaction testing to people without symptoms who have to leave their home for work or essential reasons, with local authorities providing additional home test kits.

Gill Furniss:

[90201]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made on the adequacy of covid-19 testing available to NHS and care workers.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: All National Health Service patient facing staff in acute, mental health, ambulance and community trusts have been provided with lateral flow tests to enable them to test themselves at home twice a week. Lateral flow tests are also being distributed across primary care including general practice, community pharmacy, dentistry and optometry. In addition tests have been provided to independent sector providers and community interest companies providing NHS care.

For care homes, new guidance advises all care home staff to undertake an additional two lateral flow tests per week, in addition to the current regular polymerase chain reaction testing regime.

■ **Coronavirus: Speech and Language Disorders**

Geraint Davies:

[151587]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 on people's communication, voice and swallowing.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: The Your COVID Recovery website has a section on the impact of COVID-19 on the voice and swallowing which is available at the following link:

<https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/managing-the-effects/effects-on-your-body/voice-and-swallowing/>

For longer term effects, 'long' COVID-19 is a relatively new illness and understanding of the condition and the best treatment is developing.

■ Coronavirus: Young People**Rachael Maskell:****[133953]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answers of 28 September 2020 to Question 86107 and 30 November 2020 to Question 99041 on Coronavirus: Disease Control, if he will publish the data to substantiate the reasons for the spike in covid-19 infection rates of people under (a) 30 years old and (b) 25 years old in (i) York and (ii) the UK.

Helen Whately:

Rates in York corresponded to growth rates seen throughout the United Kingdom for the second half of December 2020 and which continued to climb in the first half of January 2021 for all ages, but particularly in 17 to 21 year olds and 20 to 29 year olds. Similarly, test positivity increased until the end of December 2020 among 10 to 29 year olds, plateauing and then decreasing more recently. The sharp increase in York is similar to that seen in other parts of the country and reflects widespread community transmission. Data is published at the following link:

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

■ Cystic Fibrosis: Transplant Surgery**Lee Anderson:****[148919]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve lung transplantation for people with cystic fibrosis during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

NHS England and NHS Improvement, NHS Blood and Transplant and transplant teams have been working closely together throughout the pandemic to ensure that donation and transplant activity can safely continue for very urgent lifesaving transplants. Transplant teams have kept in close contact with patients on the lung transplant waiting list to discuss transplant options and ensure the right decisions are taken based on the patient's clinical condition.

The national position is reviewed weekly and is highly co-ordinated to ensure all capacity for transplantation is optimised. This is despite the major impact on hospital capacity due to COVID-19. A patient's position on the lung transplant waiting list is determined by their overall clinical status and if a lung transplant becomes available, the highest priority patient will be selected.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Crime and Justice Task Force**Ms Lyn Brown:****[154908]**

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

Edward Argar:

It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its Committees and how often they have met is not normally shared publicly.

Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[152419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to Question 139985 on IQVIA: Redundancy, tabled on 19 January 2021 by the hon Member for North Durham, when he plans to provide an answer.

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.

DNACPR Decisions: Coronavirus**Emma Hardy:**[\[155345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Care Quality Commission's review of the application without consent of do not apply cardio-pulmonary resuscitation notices during the covid-19 outbreak will be completed; and whether that review will cover recent reports of the application of those notices.

Helen Whately:

In October 2020 the Department asked the Care Quality Commission to review how Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation decisions were used throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Interim findings were published on 3 December 2020, with a final report due shortly. The review will take a national view of how these decisions were made and will inform national learning and good practice development as the nation continues to respond to the pandemic.

DNACPR Decisions: Learning Disability**Emma Hardy:**[\[155344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance has been issued by NHS England on the application without consent of do not apply cardio-pulmonary resuscitation notices to people with learning disabilities during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: A learning disability should never be a reason for a Do Not Attempt Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decision and blanket DNACPR decisions for whole groups of people are completely inappropriate.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have issued a number of joint statements to health and care providers reiterating that DNACPR decisions must not be applied in a blanket fashion to any group. The 2020/21 General Medical Services contract Quality and Outcomes Framework now includes a requirement for all DNACPR decisions for people with a learning disability to be reviewed.

Mike Amesbury: [\[155370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports of do not resuscitate notices being given to patients with learning disabilities during the second wave of covid-19.

Helen Whately:

Learning disability should never be a reason for a Do Not Attempt Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decision and blanket DNACPR decisions for whole groups of people are completely inappropriate. We have communicated this through a number of channels to the National Health Service in England.

We have asked the Care Quality Commission to undertake a review of DNACPR decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. We do not currently have evidence to suggest widespread practice of inappropriate DNACPR decisions for people with a learning disability at this time. However, we continue to monitor the situation and have invited charities to inform us where cases of inappropriate practice are identified.

Helen Hayes: [\[156479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the practice of giving Do Not Resuscitate orders to people living with learning disabilities during the covid-19 pandemic.

Helen Hayes: [\[156480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the increase in the number of Do Not Resuscitate orders given to people living with learning disabilities during the covid-19 pandemic.

Helen Hayes: [\[156481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he is having with the NHS, care providers, charities and groups representing people living with learning disabilities on the increase in the number of Do Not Resuscitate orders given to people living with learning disabilities during the covid-19 pandemic.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 February 2021]: A learning disability should never be a reason for a Do Not Attempt Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decision and blanket DNACPR decisions for whole groups of people are completely inappropriate. We have asked the Care Quality Commission to undertake a review of DNACPR decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. This review has started and will report later this year.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have issued a number of joint statements to health and care providers reiterating that DNACPR decisions must not be applied in a blanket fashion to any group. The 2020/21 General Medical Services (GMS) contract Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) now includes a requirement for all DNACPR decisions for people with a learning disability to be reviewed. We do not currently have evidence to suggest widespread practice of inappropriate DNACPR decisions for people with a learning disability at this time. However, we continue to monitor the situation and have invited charities to inform us where cases of inappropriate practice are identified. The Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to have discussions with stakeholders to discuss issues for people with a learning disability during the pandemic.

■ Eating Disorders: Mental Health Services

Olivia Blake:

[\[156643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that both adults' and under 18s' eating disorders services have adequate resources to respond to the level of urgent referrals that those services are receiving.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 25 February 2021]: For children and young people, we are enhancing capacity in community eating disorder services to ensure appropriate support including crisis care and intensive home treatment. The community team can provide support during an admission to a paediatric ward for medical stabilisation or inpatient mental health bed if required.

For adults, we are increasing our investment in community mental health care year-on-year, up to almost £1 billion extra by 2023/24. Twelve areas in England have transformation funding since 2019/20 to test new integrated models of primary and community mental health care. Eight of these sites have also received specific additional funding to transform the eating disorders pathway, including early intervention for young adults with eating disorders.

■ Euthanasia

Caroline Nokes:

[\[151699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with the Office for National Statistics to collect data on assisted dying.

Helen Whately:

The Government does not currently collect data on assisted dying.

■ Food: Marketing

Craig Whittaker:

[\[153180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of restrictions on the promotion of foods that are high in fat, salt or sugar on reformulation work being undertaken by food and drink manufacturers.

Jo Churchill:

The final impact assessments on the proposals to restrict the promotion of foods high in fat, salt and sugar by location and by volume, which include the potential effect of the policy on reformulation, 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>

Encouraging the reformulation of food and drink high in fat, salt or sugar is part of our policy objective. There is incentive for businesses to reformulate their products to achieve the Nutrient Profiling Model threshold, and therefore be out of scope of the promotion restrictions. There are further incentives for reformulation including consumer demand for healthier products, the possibility of making nutrition claims and Public Health England's reformulation programme, which can encourage manufacturers to reduce the fat, salt and sugar levels in their products.

Food: Regulation**Craig Whittaker:****[153181]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the proposed ban on advertising online food and drink high in salt, fat and sugar, whether products designated as high in fat, salt or sugar will be re-categorised if the fat, salt and sugar content is reduced.

Jo Churchill:

The current proposal for what food and drink is classed as in scope of further advertising restrictions online and on TV, is to use the categories originally put forward by Public Health England (PHE) as part of the calorie reduction programme, sugar reduction programme and the soft drinks industry levy overlaying this with the 2004/05 Nutrient Profiling Model. Officials are considering the final list put forward by PHE as well as views fed in as part of the consultation process to come to a final decision on what products are in scope and will publish our full response to the consultation shortly.

The Nutrient Profiling Model uses a simple scoring system where points allocated for 'C' nutrients (fruit, vegetables and nut content, fibre and protein) are subtracted from 'A' nutrients (energy, saturated fat, total sugar and sodium). Foods scoring four or more points, and drinks scoring one or more points, are classified as 'less healthy' and will be subject to the restrictions.

Products that are reformulated and achieve the Nutrient Profiling Model threshold will be out of scope of the restrictions and therefore able to advertise.

Genito-urinary Medicine: Staff**Rosie Cooper:****[156305]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were employed as (a) bladder and bowel continence nurses, (b) urology nurses, (c) stoma

nurses and (d) pelvic floor physiotherapists in the most recent period for which that information is available.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 February 2021]: The Department does not hold the information requested for bladder and bowel continence nurses or pelvic floor physiotherapists.

As at September 2020, there were 2,054 full time equivalent (FTE) nurses employed with an area of work of urology and 312 FTE nurses with an area of work of stoma care. These figures are based on the main area of work in which each staff member is coded and therefore may not reflect the complete number of staff providing these services.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[156306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to recruit increased numbers of specialist staff to provide (a) bladder and bowel continence and (b) stoma care.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[156307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding his Department makes available for the training of staff to provide bladder and bowel continence care.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[156308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether funding to train staff in providing (a) bladder and bowel continence, (b) urology and (c) stoma care is allocated through the NHS.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 February 2021]: National Health Service employers are responsible for determining and recruiting the number of specialist staff that they require to meet their local workforce and service needs. NHS employers also have a responsibility to ensure their workforces have the mandatory training required to undertake their roles. The approach taken for post-registration for bladder, bowel, urology and stoma care will differ in each locality depending on service, profession and workforce supply need and as such is generally commissioned by NHS employers.

Health Education England (HEE) is responsible for ensuring that there are training models in place nationally to support and develop post-registration specialty training pipelines. HEE develops, and funds a wide range of national training platforms, programmes and initiatives for cross-profession specialist workforce training.

■ **Health Services and Social Services: Coronavirus**

Darren Henry:

[\[155433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what further support he plans to make available to the health and social care workforce during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

We are maintaining high levels of support for staff, including ensuring they have access to the personal protective equipment and testing they need. Furthermore, all eligible frontline workers have now been offered the vaccine. We continue to expand the workforce, having committed to increasing the National Health Service nursing workforce by 50,000 by the end of this Parliament and promoting social care careers through a national media campaign. We have also put in place a package of mental health support for all staff.

Heart Diseases: Surgery**Thangam Debbonaire:**[\[153289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients are on the NHS England waiting list for time critical heart surgery.

Edward Argar:

This data is not held in the format requested.

Hospitals: Disease Control**John Redwood:**[\[154675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) issue guidance on and (b) undertake modifications to hospitals in respect of reducing the risk of infection through (i) air flow and (ii) heating systems in those buildings.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The current National Health Service infection prevention control principles are applicable to all healthcare staff in all healthcare settings. The guidance is available the following link:

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

The guidance sets out safe systems of working including administrative, environmental and engineering controls as well as interventions to reduce the risk of transmission of infection. This includes cleaning and decontamination of the environment and shared equipment, social/physical distancing, hand hygiene personal protective equipment and ventilation.

Medical Detection Dogs: Coronavirus**Rachel Reeves:**[\[152507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what formal process the Government used to award funding to the Medical Detection Dogs charity as part of the covid-19 response.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: No funding award has been made to the Medical Detection Dogs (MDD). Funding for the COVID-19 Detection Dog studies was provided as a grant in line with Test and Trace grant processes to the London School of Tropical Hygiene and Medicine (LSTHM). The LSTHM is leading a research project including the MDD charity and Durham University to determine whether trained dogs can discriminate pre-symptomatic, asymptomatic and mild cases of COVID-19 from uninfected individuals.

Rachel Reeves:[\[152508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether a formal application was made for funding awarded by the Government to the Medical Detection Dogs charity as part of the covid-19 response.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: A letter of application was sent from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to the Department.

Rachel Reeves:[\[152509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether a formal application was made for funding awarded by the Government to the Medical Detection Dogs charity as part of the covid-19 response.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: A letter of application was sent from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to the Department.

■ Mental Health Services: Finance**Sir Mark Hendrick:**[\[154786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to increase funding for mental health support (a) immediately, (b) over the next six months, (c) over the next 12 months and (d) in the longer term.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

As part of the Spending Review 2020, we announced that the National Health Service will receive around an additional £500 million in 2021/22 to address waiting times for mental health services, give more people the mental health support they need and invest in the workforce. We are 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 by 2023/24.

■ Mental Health: Coronavirus**Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[155217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the mental wellbeing of people who have been shielding during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Every Mind Matters website is available to everyone with advice and practical steps that people can take to support their wellbeing and manage their mental health during the pandemic. The NHS Volunteer Responders programme is available for anyone shielding. National Health Service volunteers can provide short-term telephone support such as Check-in and Chat for those at risk of loneliness

In addition, NHS mental health services have deployed innovative digital solutions to connect with people and provide ongoing support. Remote delivery has ensured that people can continue to access talking therapies from the safety of their own home. Online self-referral options are commonly available for psychological therapies services for adults with common mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. For those with severe needs or in crisis, all NHS mental health providers have established 24 hours a day, seven days a week urgent mental health helplines.

■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Coronavirus**Carolyn Harris:**[\[155204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the prevalence of aesthetic practitioners administering (a) Botulinum toxin and (b) dermal fillers during covid-19 lockdown under the guise that they are essential medical procedures.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department does not collect data on recorded breaches of the Regulations or offences committed by providers of aesthetic services.

Personal care services provided for essential medical and health needs, which cannot be deferred, may continue. It is for each provider to assess whether they are a business required to close having considered the Regulations and guidance on business closures and any guidance issued by the healthcare regulators, or a relevant professional body.

■ Nurses: Birmingham**Jack Dromey:**[\[154935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to address the persistent shortages of Registered Nurses in Birmingham's hospitals as identified by the Care Quality Commission in December.

Helen Whately:

Individual National Health Service employers carry out their own recruitment to meet their local need.

The Government is committed to delivering 50,000 more nurses by the end of the Parliament and put the NHS on a trajectory to a sustainable long-term supply in future. We have set up a comprehensive work programme to improve retention and support return to practice, invest in and diversify our training pipeline and ethically recruit internationally.

The latest published NHS digital data shows that nurse numbers in NHS Trusts and CCGs have increased by almost 11,100 in the past year.

■ Nurses: Students

Stella Creasy:

[\[156378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made on the provision of the £10, 000 payment incentive intended to support the 2018-19 cohort of pre-registration postgraduate students studying health, learning disability and district nursing announced in May 2018; and what steps he is taking to ensure that students are aware that that funding is available to them.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 February 2021]: Health Education England is finalising operational policy requirements. This includes the most appropriate arrangements for making payments to eligible students and the most effective way to communicate the process to students and other stakeholders. Further information will be announced as soon as possible.

■ Respite Care

Ed Davey:

[\[150666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the resumption of local authority carers' respite services.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: Throughout the pandemic we have worked with local authorities to support them to maintain services and support for unpaid carers. After the first wave of the pandemic we worked with the Social Care Institute for Excellence to publish guidance on the safe reopening of day/respite services.

We have also enabled some of the money provided to local authorities through the Infection Control Fund to be used to help services reopen safely or be reconfigured to work in a COVID-19 secure way to continue to provide community and day support services, which we know in turn provide respite for carers. The restrictions on leaving home and gathering during the current lockdown have been drafted to ensure that day services can continue to operate with up to 15 service users per session and for people to leave home for respite and receive respite care in their own homes. These respite provisions apply to both unpaid carers and those they care for.

We know that day services and other forms of respite care are vital services and we are working with local authorities, in collaboration with the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and Ministerial counterparts in the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure, where possible, the safe resumption of services.

■ Test and Trace Support Payment

Kate Griffiths:

[\[126997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on additional funding to enable local authorities to continue to provide discretionary payments under the covid-19 self-isolation support scheme.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: Discussions have taken place with HM Treasury regarding a range of issues including the Test and Trace Support Payment. The Government has provided a total of £110 million to local authorities for the scheme to date, including £35 million for discretionary payments. To enable local authorities to continue supporting individuals on low incomes to self-isolate, we are increasing the funding available to local authorities for discretionary payments to £20 million a month.

HOME OFFICE

■ Airguns: Children

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:

[\[152403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many fatalities have occurred due to a person between the ages of 14 and 17 using an airgun within the law unsupervised on private land with the permission of the owner in the last 14 years.

Kit Malthouse:

The requested information is not held centrally.

■ British National (Overseas): Hong Kong

Alyn Smith:

[\[153369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which Minister is responsible for (a) overseeing the Hong Kong BN(O) Visa and (b) ensuring the welcome and integration of BN(O) passport holders to the UK.

Kevin Foster:

On 31 January the new Hong Kong BN(O) route launched. The route will enable BN(O) status holders and their eligible family members to come to the UK to live, work and study. This new route reflects the UK's historic and moral commitment to those people of Hong Kong who chose to retain their ties to the UK by taking up BN(O) status at the point of Hong Kong's handover to China in 1997.

The Home Secretary continues to oversee the implementation of the immigration route.

Due to the cross-cutting nature of this policy, departments across the UK Government are working together, along with the devolved administrations given their

responsibilities, to identify how support and guidance can be provided to ensure BN(O) status holders have every opportunity to thrive.

Further details will be set out in due course.

■ Crime: Harlow

Robert Halfon:

[\[152482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect on levels of crime in Harlow of the recent uplift in funding for the police.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects data from police forces on police recorded crime, broken down by Police Force Area and Community Safety Partnership Area, including Harlow.

The latest data can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

On the 4th February 2021, the Government published a total police funding settlement of up to £15.8 billion in 2021/22, an increase of up to £636 million compared to 2020/21. Overall police funding available to PCCs will increase by up to £703 million (5.4% in cash terms) next year.

Essex police's funding will be up to £339 million in 2021/22, an increase of up to £18.8 million. In 2020/21, they are receiving up to £320.2 million in funding.

■ Drugs: Smuggling

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[153299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what quantity by weight of (a) cannabis, (b) heroin, (c) morphine, (d) cocaine (including crack), (e) benzodiazepines, (f) synthetic cannabinoids, (g) amphetamines, (h) MDMA, (i) LSD, (j) magic mushrooms and (k) anabolic steroids were seized by (i) the police, (ii) Border Force, (iii) prison services, (iv) armed forces and (v) other government agencies in (A) UK territory, (B) UK territorial waters, (C) international waters and (D) overseas territories in each year between 1971 and 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the quantity of class A, class B and class C drugs seized in England and Wales by the police, including the British Transport Police, and Border Force. This data is published annually. The quantities of drugs seized are summarised in terms of kilograms, doses (in thousands) or plants, depending on the drug type.

Official statistics on seizures of drugs in England and Wales between 2000 and 2020 are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/seizures-of-drugs-in-england-and-wales>.

Statistics on seizures of drugs in England and Wales between 1978 and 2000 can be found on the National Archive Research Development and Statistics website:

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Data for earlier years is not available. Information on drugs seized by the prison services, armed forces and other government agencies, and data on seizures made outside England and Wales is not held by the Home Office.

■ Home Office: Coronavirus

Liam Byrne:

[153135]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, 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.

Victoria Atkins:

Details of the Home Office's additional funding for domestic abuse support services during the Covid-19 pandemic is available on Gov.uk, where the Home Office has allocated £2m of funding to charities with a national or regional presence and for which the other domestic abuse-focused funding streams were not specifically designed. Please refer to the link below.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/897709/COVID19_Home_Office_Extraordinary_Funding_for_Domestic_Abuse_Support_Services_Bid_Prospectus_Reopened.pdf

Funds launched in response to covid-19 outbreak include: the Covid-19 Vulnerable Children National Charities Strategic Relief Fund

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vulnerable-children-national-charities-strategic-relief-fund/vulnerable-children-national-charities-strategic-relief-fund-prospectus>

and Support for Victims and Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse Fund.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-sexual-abuse-victims-and-survivors-national-support-services-fund/support-for-victims-and-survivors-of-child-sexual-abuse-svscsa-fund-2020-22>

The Home Office has also awarded other grants to provide support to individuals and organisations in response to the covid-19 outbreak. The details of these grants will be published by Cabinet Office in due course

■ Members: Correspondence

Paul Maynard:

[152455]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to reply to the letter of August 12 2020 from the hon. Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys on the

accountability and management of the Police Federation for England and Wales raised on behalf of a constituent.

Kit Malthouse:

I would like to apologise to the hon. Member for the delay in responding to his letter of 12 August 2020. This was mistakenly not recorded as requiring a reply due to technical issues when the Department moved to a new correspondence system on 24 August 2020. This issue has now been resolved and I will reply to the hon. Member's letter shortly.

John Spellar:

[\[153117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter from the hon Member for Warley dated 21 December 2020 regarding Mr Almarasha.

Chris Philp:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the Rt Hon. Member's correspondence. A response was provided by the Home Office on 12 February.

■ **Offences against Children: Convictions**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[153120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to obtain accurate data on the ethnicity of people convicted of group-based child sexual exploitation.

Victoria Atkins:

The paper 'Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation: Characteristics of Offending', published in December 2020, set out the available evidence on the demographics of group-based child sexual exploitation offenders.

The limitations of the available data are disappointing, particularly as understanding the contexts in which offending occurs is pertinent to identifying, preventing and tackling offending.

Child sexual exploitation often involves a number of different sexual and non-sexual offences, and there is no discrete set of offences that are exclusive to group-based child sexual exploitation. Data on characteristics such as ethnicity are not routinely collected and are subject to inaccuracies in recording. Importantly, the data that is collected is limited to the cases that are identified, and we know that most child sexual abuse goes unreported. All of these factors limit our understanding of the characteristics of offending.

As set out in the Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy, published in January 2021, we are committed to addressing these issues as a priority. We have invested in analysts in each of the policing regions who will produce quarterly data on child sexual abuse cases undertaken by police forces, as well as maintaining a Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Operations Database which will capture details of

victims and offender numbers, characteristics (including ethnicity), and modus operandi.

Building on this, we will engage with criminal justice agencies, charities, safeguarding partners, academics and think tanks to understand better the barriers to collecting accurate data on ethnicity and other characteristics, and to address these barriers so that local and national agencies have a robust picture of the characteristics of offenders.

■ Personation

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[153337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce identity theft.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is aware of the harms caused by identity theft and that criminals will use this to commit and enable a range of offences.

Existing legislation is in place to protect people's personal data and prosecute those that commit crimes enabled by identity theft. These include the Fraud Act 2006, the Computer Misuse Act 1990, the Identity Documents Act 2010 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Building on this legislation, we believe that the most effective way of preventing identity theft is to improve the safety and security of the identity systems we use, particularly online. The Government, through proposals led by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport recently published draft "rules of the road" for governing the future use of digital identities. The new trust framework, including details of how to contribute to this work can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-digital-identity-and-attributes-trust-framework>.

■ Police: Demonstrations

Dawn Butler:

[\[153160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government plans to take into account the outcome of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire Services (HMICFRS) report into how the police manage protest before bringing forward legislative proposals on protest.

Kit Malthouse:

In October 2020, the Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to inspect how effectively the police manage protests. Home Office officials have been in touch with the inspectorate to understand their initial findings, these have supported our work to ensure that the police have the powers they need to manage highly disruptive protests.

The inspection is ongoing, and we look forward to receiving their final report.

■ Travellers: Caravan Sites**Martin Docherty-Hughes:** [\[152549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that the protections afforded to Gypsies and Travellers under the Public Sector Equality Duty are encompassed in her response to the 2019 consultation, Strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments with regard to (a) criminalising trespass and (b) seizing homes.

Kit Malthouse:

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

That is why we set out in the Queen's Speech in December 2019 our firm aim to bring forward legislation which will help police tackle unauthorised encampments where they cause harm and disruption.

All responses to the consultation have been considered and the Government response will be published soon.

■ VFS Global**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[153147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many contracts the Government holds with VFS Global to run its visa centres.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Department holds a single contract with VFS Global for the delivery of visa centres. This contract covers 6 of the regional lots which were part of the tender exercise carried out in 2013.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[153148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the total value of Government contract with VFS Global is.

Kevin Foster:

The total value of the Home Department's contract with VFS Global is £320m over a period of 9 years.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[153149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many UK VFS Global managed visa centres are operated through sub-contracts with local companies.

Kevin Foster:

VFS Global operate 136 centres on behalf of the Home Department across the globe, 47 of these are operated through subcontracts with companies based locally.

■ Visas: China**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[153150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many UK visa centres are operated by Beijing Shuangxiong Foreign Service Company.

Kevin Foster:

Only one visa application centre in Beijing is operated by Beijing Shuangxiong Foreign Service Company.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[153151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many visa applications were processed at her Department's visa centre in Beijing in the last year for which records are available.

Kevin Foster:

Home Office Migration Statistics do not capture data on the number of applications processed at the visa application centre in Beijing.

The Home Office does publish data on the number of visa applications received by nationality and region. This can be found in our published statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2020/how-many-people-come-to-the-uk-each-year-including-visitors>

■ Windrush Generation: Compensation**Jack Dromey:** [\[154924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the number of claimants under the Windrush Compensation Scheme that had legal representation; and how many of those claims were successful compared to those made by claimants who are not known to have been legally represented.

Jack Dromey: [\[154925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the number of claimants under the Windrush Compensation Scheme seeking a Tier 1 or Tier 2 review the Department who had legal representation; and how many of those reviews were successful compared to those made by claimants who are not known to have been legally represented.

Jack Dromey: [\[154926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many awards of legal fees have been made under the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

Jack Dromey: [\[154927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many claimants under the Windrush Compensation Scheme received advice from the Citizens Advice; and how many of those claimants were successful.

Jack Dromey: [154929]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Tier 1 and Tier 2 reviews under the Windrush Compensation Scheme resulted in a change to the original decision.

Jack Dromey: [154930]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Tier 1 and Tier 2 reviews under the Windrush Compensation Scheme resulted in a (a) financial award where previously the claimant had been found to be ineligible, (b) financial award where previously the claimant had been found to have zero entitlement and (c) higher financial award than had been granted in the original determination.

Jack Dromey: [154931]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many claimants under the Windrush Compensation Scheme (a) accepted and (b) did not accept the determination from her Department.

Jack Dromey: [154932]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applicants to the Windrush Compensation Scheme have been deemed to be ineligible by (a) resident country, (b) reason for decision and (c) ages of the applicants.

Jack Dromey: [154934]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many claims under the Windrush Compensation Scheme have been resolved in (a) less than two months, (b) between two and four months, (c) between four and six months, (d) between six and 12 months and (e) over 12 months.

Priti Patel:

The Home Office has no published data to answer these questions. The information is not readily available in a reportable format nor held centrally and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Jack Dromey: [154928]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for urgent and exceptional support have been made under the Windrush Compensation Scheme; and how many of those applications were successful.

Priti Patel:

Details regarding the amount of applications for urgent and exceptional support made under the Windrush Compensation Scheme; and how many of those applications were successful can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/update-to-hasc-on-windrush-28-april-2020>.

Jack Dromey: [154933]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many outstanding claims there are under the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

Priti Patel:

The Home Office publishes information on how many claims have been submitted along with further data and information online at the following address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-compensation-scheme-data-february-2021>

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund

Dr Matthew Offord: [153215]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what level of interest will be charged on loans made under the Building Safety Fund to leaseholders in properties under 18 metres.

Christopher Pincher:

We have announced a multi-billion pound investment to protect hundreds of thousands of leaseholders from the cost of replacing unsafe cladding on their homes, and will be publishing more details on how these schemes will work.

Dr Matthew Offord: [153216]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the formula is for the imposition of levies on the construction of residential properties over 18m under the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

We announced on 10 February 2021 plans to introduce a developer levy. We will be setting out details of the levy, which will be implemented through the forthcoming Building Safety Bill.

Dr Matthew Offord: [153218]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether recharging liabilities under the Building Safety Fund will be levied against the leaseholder or the title deeds of properties under 18 metres.

Christopher Pincher:

We have announced a multi-billion investment to protect hundreds of thousands of leaseholders from the cost of replacing unsafe cladding on their homes. We will publish more details on how these schemes will work shortly.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[153221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what methodology his Department used to establish 18 metres as the qualifying height for applications under the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

We are taking decisive action to improve building safety and prioritising unsafe cladding which is a higher risk and can act as a fire accelerant – and is a greater risk in higher rise blocks. It is right that we prioritise action on higher rise buildings (over 18 metres) where risk to multiple households is greater when fire spreads. 18 metres is the height referenced in building regulations guidance and in all the advice we have issued to building owners since the Grenfell Tower fire. For the purposes of the Building Safety Fund we are allowing a tolerance of 30cm to this measurement so where there is appropriate evidence that a building measures 17.7 metres or above it will be eligible in regard to its height. This is to allow for measurement error, the potential for ground levels to have varied from the original design and the settlement of the building over time.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[153222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the repayment of loans under the Building Safety Fund will be means tested.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is conscious of the need to make any financing scheme affordable for leaseholders. That is why we have said that any financing scheme will have a £50 a month cap. Further details of the financing scheme will be made available soon. We will work with the sector to develop the details and make sure it protects leaseholders, prioritising affordability and transparency and accelerates remediation where required.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[153223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the residential property levy announced on 10 February 2020 will be hypothecated to the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

We announced on 10 February 2021 plans to introduce a developer levy at Gateway 2 of the new Building Safety Regime, and a new tax on the residential property development sector. We will be setting out details of the levy and tax.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[153224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government plans to recoup the costs of the Building Safety Fund from residential property developers.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Safety Fund should not be the only means of funding the remediation of unsafe cladding on high-rise residential buildings. Building owners should meet the costs without passing them on to leaseholders wherever possible, through their own resources or by recovering costs from applicable warranty schemes or from the developers or contractors who were responsible for the installation of unsafe cladding, as is happening with more than half of the private sector buildings with ACM cladding. Applicants to the Building Safety Fund are required to demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to recover the costs of replacing the unsafe cladding from those responsible.

Furthermore, as announced on 10 February 2021, we are going to introduce a developer levy through the Building Safety Bill to be targeted and applied when developers seek permission to develop certain high-rise buildings in England. In addition, we will introduce a new tax for the UK residential property development sector in 2022. The levy and tax will ensure that the largest property developers make a fair contribution to the remediation programme. The Government will consult on the policy design of the tax in due course.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Liam Byrne:**[\[153132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what (a) policies and (b) grant and funding programmes his 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.

Luke Hall:

Throughout the pandemic, the Government's priority has been to save lives and protect jobs, businesses, and livelihoods. To support workers and businesses across all sectors the Government has provided an unprecedented package of support worth more than £280 billion.

In light of current restrictions, businesses in retail, hospitality and leisure facing forced closure in England are eligible for a one-off grant worth up to £9,000 to help them through to Spring. This is on top of the existing Local Restriction Support Grant (Closed) which will continue to offer businesses support of up to £3,000 for each month they closed.

Local authorities are being provided with a top up to the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) worth £500 million, bringing the total value of ARG to over £1.6 billion. This grant ensures local authorities can support, on a discretionary basis, businesses not eligible for other grants but still affected by restrictions.

Businesses across the UK can continue to apply for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which as of mid-December had supported 9.9 million jobs. The Government has also extended the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) until the end of April 2021, with a boosted package of support providing the

self-employed with grants covering 80% of average trading profits. So far SEISS has seen 2.7 million self-employed workers make claims under the scheme totaling £13.7 billion.

Businesses needing access to liquidity can also apply for guaranteed loans through various loan schemes, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme. Over 1.4 million small and medium sized companies have received Government-backed loans, worth over £68 billion.

This support comes on top of billions of pounds' worth of business rates reliefs, tax deferrals, and other labour market schemes.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government has introduced a number of programmes to support individuals and organisations through the COVID-19 outbreak – spending £5.8 billion in our response to the pandemic. These programmes include funding to support pressure on social care and other services in local government, funding for rough sleepers and the Next Steps Accommodation Programme, and for council tax relief (Hardship Fund).

Full details of my Department's COVID-19 funding is available in the NAO COVID Tracker: https://nao-mesh.shinyapps.io/Covid_cost_tracker/.

■ High Rise Flats: Tenants

Dr Matthew Offord:

[153217]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of people who live in properties whose overall construction is 18m or taller.

Christopher Pincher:

The latest estimate (as of December 2020) of the number of dwellings in high-rise residential buildings of 18 metres or more in height, or more than six storeys (whichever is reached first), in England is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/960212/Building_Safety_Data_Release_January_2021.pdf.

The average size of households living in high-rise flats as of 2017-18 is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2017-to-2018-households>.

■ Housing: Insulation

Dr Matthew Offord:

[153212]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the average amount is that a leaseholder would have to pay in the event that the removal of combustible external cladding on the exterior of their property is required.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has announced a globally unprecedented investment in building safety and hundreds of thousands of leaseholders will be protected from the cost of replacing unsafe cladding on their homes. The Government will provide grant funding for removal of unsafe cladding on buildings over 18 metres.

This generous scheme will also provide leaseholders in buildings of 11-18 metres with access to finance for cladding remediation costs and a commitment that their monthly cladding repayment costs will not exceed £50 a month.

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[153213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on the value of a residential property under 18 metres of a liability to remove combustible external cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department does not hold this data.

Charlotte Nichols:[\[153411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he made of the potential merits of his policy to provide funding to remove cladding from buildings over 18m and loans to leaseholders living in buildings with cladding under 18m.

Christopher Pincher:

Instead of facing sudden cladding bills of tens of thousands of pounds, leaseholders will need to pay either nothing, or up to £50 per month towards fixing the problem. This helps gives lenders certainty both that the cladding will be remediated, and of the total potential financial implications for a leaseholder and their property.

This announcement is therefore an important step towards restoring confidence in the housing market. It provides certainty for lenders where unsafe cladding is present and complements the wider work we have underway to continue to develop a proportionate risk-based regulatory environment on fire safety.

This builds on steps already taken to support leaseholders, including £1.6 billion of funding to remediate unsafe cladding, the £30 million waking watch fund to help end excessive costs and new legislation in the Building Safety Bill which will ensure homes are made and kept safer in future.

Local Government: Meetings**Caroline Lucas:**[\[152469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make it his policy to extend beyond 7 May 2021 the provisions to allow local authorities to hold all meetings remotely and to decide how those meetings are conducted; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Hall:

The Government keeps all policy under review. To extend the facility for all local authorities to continue to meet remotely or in hybrid form after 7 May 2021 would require primary legislation. We have received representations from local authorities and sector representative organisations making the case for the continuation of remote meetings beyond 7 May 2021 and we are carefully considering next steps in this area.

Nickie Aiken:[\[152648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to extend the power to allow Councils to continue meeting remotely, such as in (a) licensing and (b) planning committees, after the expiry of the relevant powers in the Coronavirus Act 2020 on 6 May 2021.

Luke Hall:

The Government keeps all policy under review. To extend the facility for councils to continue to meet remotely, or in hybrid form after 7 May 2021 would require primary legislation. We have received representations from local authorities and sector representative organisations making the case for the continuation of remote meetings beyond 7 May 2021 and are carefully considering next steps in this area.

Members: Correspondence**Paul Maynard:**[\[152454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to reply to the letter of August 27 2020 from the hon. Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys on alley gates raised on behalf of a constituent.

Christopher Pincher:

The response was sent on 26 February.

Matthew Pennycook:[\[153321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 15 December 2020 to Question 126087 and the Answer of 22 January 2021 to Question 137988, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich of 12 October 2020 on the approach of property insurers to mature trees in close proximity to homes that require underpinning to prevent or correct subsidence.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: This correspondence has been transferred, as Her Majesty's Treasury is best placed to respond.

■ Planning Permission

Stephen Hammond: [\[152443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to further extend planning permission beyond 1 May 2021 for those permissions which lapsed between 23 March and 31 December 2020 during the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

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

■ Surveying: Training

Gareth Thomas: [\[153105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many people have commenced training as building surveyors since November 2020; and if he will make a statement.

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. This training commenced in January and there are currently 453 candidates on the course.

■ Wigan Council: Coronavirus

James Grundy: [\[153417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the cumulative total is of covid-19 related funding allocated to Wigan Council.

Luke Hall:

Wigan Council has so far received almost £28 million of emergency grant funding since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic as part of its share of the £4.6 billion of unringfenced support to councils across the country.

Wigan has also received £9.3 million through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, £5.7 million through the Infection Control Fund, £3.1 million via the sales, fees and charges income support scheme and £1.1 million via the Covid Winter Grant Scheme. This additional £19.2 million of support alongside almost £3 million of other grant funding to Wigan comes to a cumulative total of £50.1 million of funding since the start of the Pandemic.

In addition, Wigan Council will receive over £9 million in unringfenced funding to address the impacts of COVID-19 in the next financial year. This is alongside an increase in settlement Core Spending Power up to over £11 million.

SOURCE OF COVID-19 SUPPORT	ALLOCATED TO WIGAN (£M)
Total COVID-19 Additional Funding for LAs for 2020/21 (£m)	28.0
Further Direct Support - 20/21	
COMF - Test and Trace Service Support Grant (£m)	2.4
COMF - Additional Surge Funding (£m)	6.9
ASC Infection Control Fund(Round 1 and 2)(£m)	5.7
ASC Workforce Capacity Fund (£m)	0.8
ASC Rapid Testing Fund (£m)	0.7
Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) Funding (£m)	0.2
Compliance and Enforcement Grant (£m)	0.2
Reopening High Streets Safely Fund (£m)	0.3
Provisional Rough Sleeping emergency funding (£m)	0.006
Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) (£m)	0.3
Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies (£m)	0.4
DWP Covid Winter Grant Scheme (£m)	1.1
Sales, Fees and Charges Compensation Scheme (£m)	3.1
Total direct COVID-19 funding for Wigan for 2020/21 (£m)	50.1
Settlement	
Annual Change (£m)	11.3
Annual Change (%)	4.7%
21/22 Funding	
Additional Unringfenced Tranche Funding for	9.5

SOURCE OF COVID-19 SUPPORT

ALLOCATED TO WIGAN (£M)

2021/22

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Trade: G7****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[153211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on trade priorities for the UK's G7 presidency.

Greg Hands:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade has discussed with Cabinet colleagues global trade priorities for our G7 Presidency, including climate, health and digital trade, including with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, to ensure common priorities in the UK's G7 Ministerial tracks.

TRANSPORT**■ Bus Services: Disability****Sam Tarry:**[\[154664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his Department's timescale is for requiring audio-visual announcements to be available on all bus services.

Rachel Maclean:

We want disabled people to travel independently and with confidence. Accessible onboard information identifying the route and upcoming stops can help all passengers to use buses and we encourage operators to invest in suitable equipment on board their vehicles to enable this.

We consulted previously on proposals for increasing the provision of audible and visible information onboard local buses in Great Britain. We remain committed to this aim and will announce later in the year the steps we will take to achieve it.

In the meantime, we are supporting smaller operators to provide audible and visual information with £2 million of targeted funding.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Swansea**Fay Jones:**[\[154577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to tackle the covid-19 outbreak at the DVLA office in Swansea.

Rachel Maclean:

On 22 February, there were three cases of Covid across the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s workforce of more than 6,000 staff.

Since January, more than 5,000 lateral flow tests have been carried out with DVLA contact centre staff, with no positive results identified. This scheme is currently being extended to other DVLA staff working across its estate undertaking work which cannot be done from home.

All staff whose jobs can be done remotely are working from home, with now more than 2,000 staff doing so exclusively. Extensive safety measures have been put in place across the DVLA's sites. These include enhanced cleaning, social distancing, leasing an additional building, perspex screens installed, floors divided into zones with no mixing within zones, one-way systems introduced, and communal areas closed.

The DVLA has made significant investment in making its estate Covid-secure, working closely with Public Health Wales, Swansea Council's Environmental Health team and the trade union. Swansea Bay University Health Board has confirmed a high level of compliance with control measures and did not identify any additional concerns over the control regime in place.

Throughout the pandemic, the DVLA has implemented Welsh Government legislative requirements and advice fully, including the workplace guidance for offices and contact centres. The organisations mentioned work closely with the DVLA and regularly review the measures in place. When advice is revised, it is acted upon and changes made quickly.

■ Driving Licences**Justin Madders:**[\[155126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of drivers who are driving under the section 88 provision of the Road Traffic Act 1988.

Rachel Maclean:

No data is available about the number of drivers who continue to drive under Section 88 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. This is because it is for individual drivers to consider if they can meet the relevant criteria.

■ Driving: Sanitation**John Spellar:**[\[154745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to toilets for taxi, bus, van delivery, lorry and other professional drivers.

Rachel Maclean:

The government recognises the hard work and commitment from transport workers since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and expects them to have easy and safe

access to toilets and hand washing facilities to support their health and wellbeing whilst carrying out their important work, which supports the economy.

All motorway service stations in England are open to Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) drivers and critical workers, providing takeaway food only, toilet facilities and fuel. Operators of Motorway Service Areas (MSAs) have also been given an exemption, along with other transport hubs, to have their seating within the concourse still available throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, because they offer a safe place for HGV drivers and other critical workers to stop and rest.

In addition, the Department for Transport has published a joint letter with the Health and Safety Executive on gov.uk, reminding businesses of their legal obligation to provide toilet and handwashing facilities to drivers visiting their premises to deliver or collect goods as part of their work. The joint letter with the Health and Safety Executive is available to download and print, via the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/887867/dft_-_hse_-_letter_-_drivers_-_facilities.pdf

■ Infrastructure: Planning

Caroline Lucas:

[153174]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will list the proposed Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects relating to his Department that the Planning Inspectorate's Examining Authority recommended consent should be withheld from in (a) 2015, (b) 2016, (c) 2017, (d) 2018, (e) 2019, (f) 2020 and (g) 2021.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Applications for Development Consent Orders since 2015, for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in the transport sector, where the Examining Authority has recommended withholding consent, are:

YEAR THE EXAMINING AUTHORITY'S RECOMMENDATION WAS RECEIVED	NAME OF SCHEME
2015	East Midlands Gateway Rail Freight Interchange
2019	A63 Castle Street Improvement-Hull
2019	Manston Airport
2019	A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling
2020	A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down

Although decisions on these applications are always made in the name of the Secretary of State, some decisions are taken by other ministers within the Department for propriety reasons and without the involvement of the Secretary of State.

■ Railways: North of England

Julian Sturdy: [\[156370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) recent progress he has made on and (b) future plans he has to electrify rail networks in the north of England.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We are continuing to progress development and design of the TransPennine Route Upgrade, including the examination of the case for full electrification of the route. The electrification of the Midland Main Line, from Market Harborough to Nottingham and Sheffield, is also currently being examined by the Department and Network Rail and is at an early stage of development.

Electrification of the rail network will be an important part of how we will decarbonise the railway and meet net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Therefore, the Department will consider further electrification schemes with Network Rail to ensure that they can be delivered efficiently and affordably.

TREASURY

■ Advertising: Tax Allowances

Martyn Day: [\[152583\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing an advertising tax credit as part of the longer-term covid-19 economic recovery plan to (a) help stimulate consumer spending and (b) channel investment into specific categories of media.

Martyn Day: [\[152584\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing advertising tax credit outlined in the Advertising Association's industry modelling on tax revenues.

Jesse Norman:

The Government keeps all tax policy under review and regularly receives proposals for sector-specific tax reliefs. When considering any new tax reliefs, HM Treasury must ensure they provide support to businesses across the economy and represent good value for money for the taxpayer.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Robert Halfon: [\[152498\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support people who have been unable to access the Government's covid-19 financial support schemes to date.

Jesse Norman:

Throughout this crisis, the Government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK, putting in place an economic package of support worth over £280 billion this year. These support measures are carefully designed to complement each other to ensure jobs and livelihoods are protected. Support is targeted to make sure public funds are used responsibly, helping those who need it most as quickly as possible, while minimising fraud risk. The Government has engaged closely with proposals put forward by stakeholder groups, and will continue to do so.

■ Debts: Advisory Services**Andrew Selous:**[\[153158\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of households who (a) will need debt advice in 2021-22 and (b) needed debt advice in (i) 2019-20 and (ii) 2020-21.

John Glen:

The Government works closely with the Money and Pensions Service to understand the need for debt advice and monitor financial difficulty through an annual survey and notes the Financial Conduct Authority's biennial Financial Lives Survey.

The Government recognises that some people are struggling with their finances at this challenging time. To help people in problem debt get their finances back on track, an extra £37.8 million support package has been made available to debt advice providers this financial year, bringing this year's budget for free debt advice in England to over £100 million.

In May 2020, the Government announced the immediate release of £65 million of dormant assets funding to Fair4All Finance, an independent organisation that has been founded to support the financial wellbeing of people in vulnerable circumstances. The funding is used to increase access to fair, affordable and appropriate financial products and services for those in financial difficulties.

From May 2021, the Breathing Space scheme will offer people in problem debt a pause of up to 60 days on most enforcement action, interest, fees and charges, and will encourage them to seek professional debt advice.

The Government has delivered unprecedented support for living standards during this challenging time, protecting livelihoods with the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), and temporary welfare measures.

The Government has extended the CJRS until 31 March 2021. Eligible employees will continue to receive 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month.

The Government has increased the overall level of the third grant under the SEISS to 80% of average trading profits, meaning that the maximum grant available has now increased to £7,500.

The Government has provided local authorities with £500 million to support people who may struggle to meet their council tax payments this year. The Government expects that this will provide all recipients of working age local council tax support with a further reduction in their annual council tax bill of £150 this financial year.

These measures are in addition to the changes this Government has made to make the welfare system more generous, worth over £7 billion according to recent estimates by the Office for Budget Responsibility.

The Government has worked with mortgage lenders, credit providers and the Financial Conduct Authority to ensure the financial sector provides support for people across the UK to manage their finances by providing payment holidays on mortgages and consumer credit products.

The Government has also delivered protections for renters, including an extension to the ban on bailiff evictions for all but the most egregious cases until at least 21 February 2021, with measures kept under review.

■ Financial Markets: Computer Software

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[152658\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to update regulations on the trading of financial instruments and assets through mobile applications to prevent unfair practices and price manipulation by those means.

John Glen:

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is the UK's financial markets conduct regulator and is responsible for protecting consumers, ensuring market integrity and promoting effective competition

As set out in the FCA's statement of 29 January, broking firms are not obliged to offer trading facilities to clients and may withdraw or suspend services if it is necessary or prudent to do so. The FCA statement also said that they would take appropriate action wherever they see evidence of UK firms or individuals causing harm to UK consumers or markets.

The Government recognises that the pace and creativity of innovation in UK financial services creates new opportunities for businesses and consumers to participate in markets through technologies such as app-based platforms. However, investors should be aware that investing in securities comes with risks. The FCA's statement of 29 January noted that any losses that result from such investments are unlikely to be covered under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

■ Members: Correspondence**Paul Maynard:** [\[152456\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to reply to the letter of 18 March 2020 and email of 6 October 2020 from the hon. Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys on VAT and veterinary fees raised on behalf of a constituent.

Jesse Norman:

The Financial Secretary responded to the Member on 9 November 2020. A further copy has been sent by email.

■ Protective Clothing: VAT Zero Rating**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[152421\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether a zero-rating of VAT can be applied on face masks that do not meet Public Health England's PPE standards if they are held out for sale for young children by retailers.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[152422\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether a zero-rating of VAT can be applied on face masks that meet Public Health England's PPE standards if they are held out for sale for young children by retailers.

Jesse Norman:

In order to help keep costs down for families, the Government maintains a zero-rate of VAT on the supply of children's clothing. VAT Notice 714 sets out guidance on what qualifies for the zero rate; this does not include face masks.

VAT makes a significant contribution towards the public finances and helps to pay for the Government's spending priorities, including health, schools and defence.

Although the Government keeps all taxes under review, there are no plans to change the VAT treatment of children's clothing.

■ Research: Tax Allowances**Chi Onwurah:** [\[153243\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the Government's timescale is for responding to the scope of qualifying expenditures for R&D Tax Credits consultation that closed on 13 October 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The Government sought views from stakeholders on the scope of qualifying expenditures for R&D Tax Credits between 21 July and 14 October 2020. Officials are currently considering responses to the consultation and the Government will respond in due course.

The Government keeps all tax reliefs under review. When considering making any changes to tax reliefs, HM Treasury must ensure they provide support to businesses

across the economy in a fair way and represent good value for money for the taxpayer.

■ **Sanitary Protection: Vat Zero Rating**

Kim Johnson:

[153413]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason the zero-rate of value-added tax for period products is not applied to reusable menstrual underwear that has been specifically designed for period management.

Kim Johnson:

[153414]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on women of not including reusable menstrual underwear in the new zero rate of VAT for sanitary protection products.

Jesse Norman:

A zero rate of VAT has applied to women's sanitary products since 1 January 2021. This applies to those products which were previously subject to the reduced rate of 5 per cent, for example, tampons and pads, and to reusable menstrual products, such as keepers.

The relief specifically excludes articles of clothing, such as "period pants". Such exclusions are designed to ensure that the relief is properly targeted, since difficulties in policing the scope of the relief create the potential for litigation, erosion of the tax base and a reduction in revenue. Under existing rules "period pants" may already qualify for the zero rate, if they have been specifically designed to be worn by a child, meet the sizing criteria, and are held out for sale specifically for use by girls under the age of 14 years old.

Details are provided in VAT Notice 714: zero-rating young children's clothing and footwear: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-notice-714-zero-rating-young-childrens-clothing-and-footwear/vat-notice-714-zero-rating-young-childrens-clothing-and-footwear#items-suitable-only-for-young-children>.

The new zero rate will ensure that every woman that needs sanitary protection during their monthly cycle will now, for the first time, have access to a variety of zero rated products on which they had previously paid a 5 per cent rate of VAT.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ **Sexuality**

Darren Jones:

[152617]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what plans her Department has to update the Equality Act 2010 to include asexuality as a protected characteristic.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Equality Act 2010 covers discrimination in employment, the provision of goods, services and public functions, housing, premises, education, transport, occupational pensions, clubs and associations. The Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of a number of characteristics, including sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is defined under the Act as a person's orientation towards persons of the same sex, the opposite sex or of either sex. We have no plans to amend the Act and are not aware of any significant evidence of discrimination against people because of their asexuality.

There are however situations in which an asexual person may already be protected by the Equality Act – for example, the Act bans discrimination based on the perception that someone has a protected characteristic (for example that they are lesbian or gay), or because they are associated with someone who has that characteristic.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Department for Work and Pensions: Crime and Justice Taskforce****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[154906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what targets the Crime and Justice Task Force has set for her Department.

Will Quince:

It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its Committees, and how often they have met, is not normally shared publicly.

■ Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessment**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[154860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to question 150714 answered on 12 February 2020, on Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessment, if he will make an estimate of the number of claimants who have had their contributory based employment and support allowance payments stopped because of the temporary suspension of face-to-face assessments for health and disability-related benefits.

Justin Tomlinson:

Individuals claiming contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA(C)) do not have their benefit stopped because face-to-face assessments have been suspended. Entitlement to ESA(C) ends after 365 days unless the claimant has been placed in the Support Group.

Throughout the pandemic we have continued to assess people on paper evidence, using this route whenever possible. We also introduced telephone assessments in

June 2020 in a phased approach which allowed us to build capability and improve processes. From 1 February 2021 the combination of paper and telephone assessments will enable us to 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 have to wait for their assessment.

We recognise that some assessments have unfortunately not been completed within the 365 day window due to the pressures presented by the pandemic. If, following their assessment, and the subsequent decision, an ESA claimant is entitled to a higher rate of benefit, payments are backdated where appropriate, so that they do not lose out.

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.

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Andy McDonald:

[155052]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 February 2021 to Question 147867, on Employment: Coronavirus, whether the Health and Safety Executive plans to re-categorise covid-19 in the workplace as serious.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: The answer to question 147867 outlined how the category label "serious" is used in the context of the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Enforcement Management Model (EMM). There are currently no plans to change guidance to inspectors about how they use any category in the model. HSE continues to keep the evidence under review and will make changes if the evidence requires.

HSE takes Covid-19 safety at work very seriously and it is playing a critical role in the national response to the pandemic. The Government has provided additional funding of £14 million to HSE to strengthen its capacity to tackle Covid-19.

Since the start of the pandemic HSE has carried over 127,000 Covid-19 spot checks and responded to over 19,000 concerns. Over 700 checks a day are currently taking place. Spot checks have been targeted in those industries where workers are most likely to be vulnerable to transmission risks.

HSE's evidence is that more than 90% of the businesses checked have the right precautions in place or are willing to make necessary changes promptly and without the need for enforcement notices. HSE will continue to take enforcement action where appropriate, but the best use of its time and resource to ensure employers take the right action promptly is often to educate, persuade or require matters to be put right immediately.

HSE has to date issued two prohibition notices for breaches of workplace COVID-secure standards, both in the oil and gas industry (part of the extractive utilities sector).

A further 223 COVID-19 related interventions have resulted in improvement notices, 1,512 in written correspondence and 6790 in verbal advice.

Andy McDonald:

[\[155053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 February 2021 to Question 147867, on Employment: Coronavirus, whether the effects of covid-19 are non-permanent or reversible, non-progressive and any disability is temporary.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: The answer to question 147867 provided the definition of one category label used in the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Enforcement Management Model (EMM). This question omits a very important part of that definition, namely that the characterisation refers to the likely response of the working population as a whole, not taking account of individuals with a particular resistance or susceptibility. I have nothing to add to my previous response to question 147867, which provided the complete definition.

HSE takes Covid-19 safety at work very seriously and it is playing a critical role in the national response to the pandemic. The Government has provided additional funding of £14 million to HSE to strengthen its capacity to tackle Covid-19.

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A further 223 COVID-19 related interventions have resulted in improvement notices, 1,512 in written correspondence and 6790 in verbal advice.

■ Funeral Payments

Fleur Anderson:

[\[157318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if the Government will increase the capped portion of the social fund funeral expenses payment.

Guy Opperman:

On the 8 April 2020, the value of the capped portion of the Social Fund Funeral Expenses Payment rose by 43 per cent, from £700 to £1000. There are no current plans to increase this.

■ National Insurance**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[155070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2020 to Question 86679, on National Insurance, what progress her Department has made on implementing a digital solution to speed up the National Insurance Number (NINo) process; and when that digital service will be available.

Guy Opperman:

The department has continued to progress the development of its digital solution, 'Apply for a National Insurance Number (NINo)' and will soon be available to applicants who require a NINo for employment purposes.

The department started testing a partial digital solution, on a small scale, in mid-October, to support the allocation of National Insurance Numbers. This solution enables the collection of an applicant's data, but not the online verification of their identity. Alternative identity verification solutions to reduce the need for a face to face identity check for some customer groups, including EU nationals with Settled or Pre-Settled status, was part of that test.

In January, we gained Government Digital Service approval as a result we were no longer required to limit the number of applicants we can serve, although we do not have an identity solution for all potential applicants yet. Our current plan is that by the end of March 2021 we will be able to offer a service to all applicants who do not require their identity to be verified face to face.

This means that we have moved from a position in March 2020 of only offering a NINo service to the most vulnerable, to a place where we are able to provide a service to the majority.

■ Personal Independence Payment**Marion Fellows:**[\[155165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in receipt of personal independence payments (PIP) have been migrated to the 10 yearly light touch review process; what criteria must be met for that migration to take place; and whether her Department is advising people in receipt of PIP that they may migrate to that process.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

Once someone has been awarded Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which can be paid at one of eight rates, that award will be reviewed. Reviews of PIP are a

key part of the benefit and ensure that not only do awards remain correct where needs may change but that we also maintain contact with the claimant. Importantly, the length of an award is based on an individual's needs and the likelihood of change, regardless of the award outcome, and can vary from nine months to an on-going award, with a light touch review at the ten-year point.

Following changes to the guidance for those who are awarded the highest level of support under PIP, and whose needs are expected to stay the same or increase, and those who are of State Pension age, existing claimants are being identified prior to their award review and being put onto ongoing awards instead. Claimants do not need to contact the Department and decisions on whether someone falls within either group remain subject to Case Manager decision making in line with the guidance. Claimants who are subject to a review of their award may also be placed on to an ongoing award depending on the nature of their needs and the likelihood of change in the future.

Marion Fellows:

[\[155167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ensure that people in receipt of personal independence payments (PIP) as a result of permanent disability, neurological diversity and lifelong illness will be automatically awarded ongoing PIP with a 10 yearly light touch review at the end of their existing claim period.

Justin Tomlinson:

Once someone has been awarded Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which can be paid at one of eight rates depending on the level of an individual's disability-related needs, that award will be reviewed. Reviews of PIP are a key part of the benefit and ensure that not only do awards remain correct where needs may change but that we also maintain contact with the claimant. Importantly, the length of an award is based on an individual's needs, rather than their condition or disability, and can vary from nine months to an on-going award, with a light touch review at the ten-year point.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Epilepsy**

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[155111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, in what circumstances a diagnosis of active epilepsy is a criterion for an individual to be placed on the PIP Light Touch Review.

Justin Tomlinson:

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is an extra costs benefit based on assessment of disability-related needs rather than medical condition. Reviews of PIP are a key part of the benefit and ensure that not only do awards remain correct where needs may change but that we also maintain contact with the claimant. Importantly, the length of an award is based on an individual's needs, rather than their condition or disability, and can vary from nine months to an on-going award, with a light touch review at the ten-year point.

■ Universal Credit: Housing**Craig Tracey:****[R] [\[155251\]](#)**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether renters that receive income for payment of rent from (a) Income Protection and (b) other insurance policies have that income amount deducted pound for pound from their universal credit housing allowance.

Will Quince:

Universal Credit is not paid to claimants who have sufficient income available from other sources to support themselves. Where claimants have income available to meet their everyday living costs, their entitlement to Universal Credit is adjusted accordingly.

Regular income payments that are paid to meet living costs, including individual income protection insurance payments, result in reductions in the claimant's Universal Credit entitlement pound for pound.

Craig Tracey:**[R] [\[155252\]](#)**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the conclusion of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries' report, entitled Building financial resilience for households in the private rented sector, published on published 1 July 2020, that it is not possible to insure against facing a rent shortfall in the event of a claim for universal credit.

Will Quince:

The criteria for accessing insurance products is a matter for the insurance industry, therefore no such assessment has been undertaken by the DWP.