



Daily Report

Tuesday, 2 March 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 2 March 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:31 P.M., 02 March 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Carbon Emissions

Tim Farron:

[\[156316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to incentivise investment capital in low carbon (a) innovation, (b) technology and (c) energy solutions to help accelerate the delivery of regional decarbonisation targets.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a green industrial revolution will create long-term advantage for the UK in low-carbon technologies and services. It will support up to 250,000 green jobs, levelling up regions across the UK, and reinvigorate our industrial heartlands. The Plan will mobilise £12 billion of government investment to unlock three times as much private sector investment by 2030.

Delivering clean investment at the scale and pace required will mean taking bold steps. That is why we will issue the UK's first Sovereign Green Bond and we will create a new infrastructure bank for the UK which will co-invest alongside private sector investors in infrastructure projects.

As part of the Plan, we announced £1 billion for the Net Zero Innovation Portfolio to develop the cutting-edge technologies needed to reach our energy ambitions. We are also investing up to £500 million for low carbon hydrogen production across the decade with £240 million confirmed out to 2024/2025 and £1 billion to capture carbon from power stations and industry, helping to support 50,000 jobs.

■ Consumer Goods: Electrical Safety

Robert Halfon:

[\[158909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that electrical goods offered for sale by third party sellers on online marketplaces are safe for use in the UK.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to ensuring that only safe electrical goods can be sold in the UK. All distributors have a duty to act with due care to ensure products they are selling are safe, this includes online retailers selling goods via marketplaces.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is engaging proactively with major online marketplaces to ensure that they are playing their part in protecting UK consumers from unsafe products. The OPSS has recently taken action to ensure that a number of non-compliant products being sold by overseas third-party sellers have been removed from sale, including electrical appliances.

The OPSS is also developing a new voluntary commitment for online marketplaces to agree actions they will take to reduce the risks from unsafe products being sold online. This will enable online marketplaces to demonstrate their commitment to the safety of their consumers in the UK by publicly promising to work with UK regulators.

In order to ensure that the UK's Product Safety framework is flexible and fit for the future, the OPSS is conducting a review. This will ensure we have a framework that delivers safety for consumers while supporting businesses to innovate and grow and will consider the impact on product safety (including electrical goods) of new business models such as third-party sales through online marketplaces.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Helen Hayes:

[158988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that adequate supplies of each covid-19 vaccine are available for second doses in terms of (a) volume of supply and (b) distribution of first doses of Pfizer and Oxford/Astra Zeneca vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has secured early access to 457 million vaccines doses through agreements with eight separate vaccine developers.

We have successfully met our target of offering a first dose to everyone in the top four priority groups, as advised by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, by 15th February and we are on track to offer a vaccine to priority cohorts 1 to 9 by mid-April. Everyone will receive their second vaccine dose within 12 weeks of their first.

The Government has conducted a supply chain risk assessment and continues to monitor the requirements across the supply chain from supplier through to patient; we remain confident that the supply of vaccines to the UK will not be disrupted.

■ **Environment Protection: North West**

Tim Farron:

[156315]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to encourage and incentivise businesses to embrace innovative green technologies and to invest in green jobs, skills and training in the North West.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We are determined to seize the opportunities of the net zero transition, which by one estimate could support up to 2 million green jobs by 2030 across all regions of the UK. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan will create long-term advantage for the UK in low-carbon technologies and services. Investment in the green economy across sectors including offshore wind, nuclear, low carbon heating, CCUS and clean hydrogen will benefit regions across the UK.

We will bring forward the Local Recovery and Devolution White Paper, detailing how the Government will build a sustainable economic recovery across the country. We have also launched the Green Jobs Taskforce to advise what support is needed for people in transitioning industries. The taskforce will conclude its work in spring 2021, with the actions feeding into our Net Zero Strategy to be published later in the year.

The Government's actions are delivering results in the North West. We have invested in excess of £4m of the Local Growth Fund in Cumbria for developing skills in higher and further education, working alongside employers to support high quality jobs in new and emerging sustainable and green technologies. This includes support for Kendal College on training for future jobs such as electric vehicle maintenance, with over 600 apprentices supporting employers in the green economy in South Lakeland.

■ EU Grants and Loans

Kate Hollern: [158945]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the amount of European Structural and Investment Funding that is (a) unallocated and (b) allocated but yet to be spent in the next three years.

Kate Hollern: [158946]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the list of projects that have been allocated European Structural and Investment Funding in (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23.

Paul Scully:

The UK will remain in European Structural & Investment (ESI) Fund programmes (ERDF, ESF, EAFRD and EMFF) until the end of December 2023, and after this they will be closed. Allocations are published in the Operational Programmes for each fund. These allocations need to be spent within three years of being allocated or by 31st December 2023.

Published information on all ESI funds can be accessed from the ESIF Home Page on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/european-structural-investment-funds>, through which links to the websites of the Devolved Administrations can also be accessed.

Published information on ESI funding (ERDF and ESF) in Gibraltar can be found at www.eufunding.gi.

National authorities responsible for managing each Operational Programme will report progress against these allocations in their Annual Implementation Reports to the European Commission. For ESI funds in England the Annual Implementation Reports are available on GOV.UK. Annual Implementation Reports for ESI funds in the Devolved Administrations are available on their respective websites.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Darren Jones:

[R] [\[156507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department made of the number of Green Homes Grant scheme applications it would receive by the end of January 2021 in the initial design of the Green Homes Grant programme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Green Homes Grant Voucher scheme has faced a number of delivery challenges, as many new mechanisms do. This has been exacerbated by the understandable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the willingness of householders to welcome tradespeople into their homes.

Different levels of lower than anticipated uptake were considered. However, given the uncertainties surrounding potential take-up, and delivery pathways, no specific forecast was made for the end of January.

■ ICT

Chi Onwurah:

[\[156385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the UK's withdrawal from the European High Performance Computing programme, what strategy the Government has in place to ensure UK scientists have access to high performance computing infrastructure comparable to that available to other European nations and the UK's international peers.

Amanda Solloway:

The High Performance Computing (HPC) needs of UK researchers will be considered as part of the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Digital Infrastructure Strategy. This strategy will also consider access to European and other international computing initiatives. UKRI is investing in UK HPC, such as the new ARCHER2 national facility at the University of Edinburgh (£79m) and the DiRAC HPC provision at Leicester, Durham, Edinburgh, Cambridge, and UCL. The UK has never been part of the European High Performance Computing programme but remains a member of the European PRACE HPC initiative.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[156386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Government's objective to lead the world in the areas of Artificial Intelligence and scientific research and the role of high performance computing in those areas, what plans he has to publish a strategy to ensure adequate computing capabilities are available for scientific and business communities to support that policy.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[156387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to publish a strategy on improving the provision of adequate computing infrastructure for the UK's scientific, research and business communities.

Chi Onwurah:

[156388]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what strategy the Government has in place on investment in the UK's high performance computing infrastructure; and whether that strategy includes exascale class supercomputers for research.

Amanda Solloway:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) recently published a Statement of Opportunities on AI setting out UK's vision to grow and maintain its international lead in AI research and innovation. UKRI has a key role in facilitating an inclusive and enabling environment for AI research and innovation, including seeking to ensure that professional skills, computing and data analytics capabilities are sufficient to meet the requirements of the UK's researchers and innovators.

UKRI has been developing a strategy for computing infrastructure that includes people, software and data. Computing is one strand of a successful digital infrastructure ecosystem. Rapid advances in artificial intelligence, and the ability to create 'digital twins' of complex systems using High Performance Computing (HPC), have transformative potential for researchers, industry and the public sector. Their large-scale applications requires investing in a computational infrastructure that includes exascale supercomputers to enable the most challenging modelling and simulation problems and the largest AI training challenges. The UK is preparing for the arrival of the exascale era through investment in the UKRI-Met Office ExCALIBUR programme to develop exascale-ready algorithms and software. UKRI's strategy is for the UK to deploy an exascale supercomputer by 2025.

Additionally, the Government will be investing up to £1.2 billion in new supercomputing infrastructure for the Met Office to provide the UK with world-leading weather and climate science capability.

■ Industry

Darren Jones:

[156508]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his Department's planned timescale is for concluding work on the Industrial Strategy review.

Amanda Solloway:

The majority of the 142 policy commitments from the 2017 Industrial Strategy are now in delivery, with around £45 billion of funding assigned to initiatives. These initiatives have strengthened the foundations of productivity, by investing in transport, housing, digital infrastructure, and skills. The Grand Challenges and missions have strengthened the UK's standing as a global leader in AI, clean growth, healthy ageing, and future transport technology – preparing the UK for a resilient, future economy.

However, the 2017 Industrial Strategy was developed in a pre-COVID-19, pre-Brexit world and the coming decade poses new challenges. The Government is, and will continue to be, a champion of the needs of business and industry as we build back

better from the pandemic. We will be laying out our plans to drive growth and support jobs across the UK in due course, and existing work will continue where appropriate.

■ **Medicine: Research**

Sam Tarry:

[\[156626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to support medical research charities through a life sciences-charity partnership fund.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government is aware of the challenges, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, that medical research charities are currently facing. We appreciate the globally recognised expertise of these charities, and the substantial contributions they make to our world-leading life sciences sector.

BEIS and DHSC regularly discuss the impacts of Covid-19 on charity-funded research with the Association of Medical Research Charities. We are continuing to engage with them and receive intelligence on the impacts facing the sector, such as the challenges facing fundraising activities.

The Government already provides significant funding to charities' research, for example through Research England's Quality Related (QR) charity support funding. This year charity QR will amount to £204m, to support charity funded research in universities in England and equivalent support is provided in Scotland through devolved funding arrangements.

The Government has demonstrated its ambitions for research by committing £14.6bn to R&D in 2021/22. This funding will support the life sciences sector within which Medical Research Charities operate alongside other research areas.

■ **Parcels: EU Countries**

Ian Murray:

[\[158906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the average (a) cost and (b) time taken to ship a parcel to the EU in 2021 compared to 2020.

Paul Scully:

The Government's priority is to keep goods moving and avoid delays at the border. The Government is ensuring that border processes are as smooth as possible, without compromising security.

The Government is continuing to engage with businesses across sectors to support their adjustment to the new processes and arrangements with the European Union.

■ Personal Care Services: Wolverhampton South West**Stuart Anderson:** [\[156563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support hair and beauty businesses in Wolverhampton South West constituency.

Paul Scully:

We have put in place one of the most generous packages of support in the world worth over £280 billion. For Hair and Beauty businesses, this includes business rates holidays, various loans schemes and the extended furlough scheme. Closed businesses such as hairdressers, like those in your constituency, can also receive a grant of up to £3,000 a month and a one-off payment up to a maximum £9,000.

I meet with the sector regularly to understand the impact of the pandemic on businesses.

■ Ports: Competition**Kelly Tolhurst:** [\[158976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of (a) the adequacy of competition in the ports sector and (b) the ability of customers to switch between different ports.

Kelly Tolhurst: [\[158977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps can be taken in the event that a port operator is suspected of breaking competition law through abuse of a dominant position.

Paul Scully:

Under competition law, responsibility for investigating individual and market-wide competition issues falls to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), the UK's competition authority. If an individual is concerned about the conduct of individual ports, or the state of competition in the market as a whole, these concerns can be submitted to the CMA. The Government has ensured that the CMA has significant powers to investigate and act if it finds that a company has abused its dominant position within a market. As an independent authority, the CMA has discretion to investigate competition cases which, according to its prioritisation principles, it considers most appropriate. The CMA also has powers to conduct detailed examinations of why particular markets may not be working well, and decide what remedial action is appropriate.

■ Tourism: EU Countries**Andrew Gwynne:** [\[158882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department has made on negotiating mutual recognition agreements with the EU that would apply to mountain professionals.

Paul Scully:

The recognition of professional qualifications, including for mountain professionals, is important for individuals wishing to practise their chosen profession outside the jurisdiction in which they qualified. It is for this reason that UK negotiators worked hard to secure a best-in-class Free Trade Agreement with the EU, in which the recognition of professional qualifications is covered.

We have secured a framework under which regulators and professional bodies from across the UK and EU may agree arrangements on the recognition of professional qualification (such as Mutual Recognition Agreements) covering the UK and all 27 EU Member States. Once an arrangement is adopted by the Partnership Council under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, UK professionals will be able to use the terms outlined in the arrangement to secure recognition of their professional qualifications within EU Member States. The Department has set up a unit to assist regulators and professional bodies negotiating these arrangements.

Visual Impairment: Coronavirus**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[156548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 restrictions on people with sight loss or visual impairment who cannot shop online while non-essential shops are closed.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the specific challenges faced by people with sight loss or visual impairment.

We are ensuring that disabled people continue to have access to employment support, disability benefits, financial support, food, medicines, as well as accessible communications and updated guidance.

We are clear that consideration of equality impacts must be integral in all key policy decisions. All equality and discrimination laws and obligations continue to apply during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Cabinet Office Disability Unit works with disability stakeholders and across Government Departments to ensure that the needs of disabled people are considered in the Government's response to COVID-19.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has secured online shopping slots for people whose independence has been challenged by lockdown, including those with sight loss. Eligible people can be referred through the Royal National Institute of Blind People's helpline on 0303 123 9999.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus

Peter Dowd: [\[156435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what economic impact assessment has been made on the extended closure of the wedding industry.

Paul Scully:

We have provided an unprecedented package of financial support since March 2020 to businesses, including those in the weddings sector. We keep this regularly under review, through discussions with HM Treasury.

Peter Dowd: [\[156436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the wedding sector and its supply chain on the sectors' re-opening timelines as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Paul Scully:

I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce and we will continue to discuss how the Government can support the sector through the different steps towards reopening.

Peter Dowd: [\[156437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has for the safe reopening of the wedding sector when covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Paul Scully:

I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce and we will continue discussions on how we can support the sector through the different steps towards reopening.

Peter Dowd: [\[156438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has been made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on employment levels in wedding sector (a) in total and (b) by gender.

Paul Scully:

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

Peter Dowd: [\[156439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with representatives of the wedding industry on the effect of the covid-19 outbreak (a) on that sector and (b) on employment levels of women working in that sector.

Paul Scully:

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

Peter Dowd:[\[156440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the financial support required by the wedding industry to support its safe re-opening when covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Paul Scully:

Over the course of the pandemic the Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support to businesses, including those in the wedding industry, which we keep under regular review. I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce and we will continue to discuss how the Government can support the sector through the different steps towards reopening.

Peter Dowd:[\[156441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason the wedding sector has not received tailored financial support during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Over the course of the pandemic the Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support to businesses, including those in the wedding industry, which we keep under regular review. I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce, established to represent all parts of the sector, to understand the impact on jobs and businesses.

Peter Dowd:[\[156442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of a sector specific support grant of £680 million for eligible wedding business.

Paul Scully:

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

Peter Dowd:[\[156444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of establishing a Government-backed scheme to support (a) consumers and (b) business in the wedding sector in the absence of available insurance cover.

Paul Scully:

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

In order to help consumers, the Competition and Markets Authority have produced guidance for businesses to help them comply with pre-existing consumer law in respect of refunds and cancellations.

CABINET OFFICE**Blood: Contamination****Sarah Champion:**[\[156406\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 14 September 2020 to Question 85069 on Blood: Contamination, what the Government's timescale is for publication of the framework for compensation.

Penny Mordaunt:

Work is currently underway across government to address the concerns of people infected and affected by infected blood, and a compensation framework is being explored. A statement will be made in the House shortly.

Civil Servants: Apprentices**Mr Jonathan Lord:**[\[158034\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to improve the quality of civil service apprenticeships.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the Honourable Member to the [answer](#) I gave to the Honourable Member for Meriden on 11 February 2021.

"The civil service will launch its new apprenticeship strategy next year. The first phase will have delivered 30,000 apprenticeships by next April, but going forward I want to focus not just on numbers, but on the quality of training on offer, so that Departments get much better at growing their own talent and plugging skills gaps. To that end, we recently published the curriculum and campus for Government skills, with the goal of setting the highest standard in vocational training for all civil servants, including apprentices."

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Lost Working Days**Paula Barker:**[\[156617\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Average Working Days Lost were for (a) female and (b) male civil servants in the calendar years (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Paula Barker:

[156618]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the average working days lost was for civil servants from (a) Black, Asian and minority Ethnic background and (b) recording themselves as White in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Paula Barker:

[156619]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the average working days lost was for civil servants aged (a) 30 and younger, (b) 30 to 50 (c) 50 to 60 and (d) over 60 in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Paula Barker:

[156620]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the average working days lost was for (a) civil servants who have and (b) have not declared themselves as having a disability in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Julia Lopez:

The latest sickness absence data for the Civil Service was published on 4 February 2021 at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-sickness-absence> and includes average working days lost by sex and age for years ending 31 March 2019 and 2020. Sickness absence data by ethnicity and disability is not held centrally by the Cabinet Office.

■ Elections: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft:

[156466]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department has taken to ensure voting is accessible for disabled people, including the accessibility of (a) polling stations and (b) forms.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[156467]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to improve electoral registration levels among disabled people.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[156468]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much funding his Department has provided to local authorities specifically to ensure upcoming elections are accessible in the context of covid-19 restrictions.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[156469]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what data his Department holds on voter turnout levels among disabled people.

Chloe Smith:

The Government is committed to ensuring that elections are accessible for all those eligible to vote and is actively working to improve the electoral process for voters with disabilities.

The Government intends to introduce legislation to improve the support provided to disabled voters at polling stations, and to allow a wider range of people to act as a companion to support disabled voters at the polling station.

The Cabinet Office has led work to make electoral registration more accessible to people with disabilities. This work, coordinated through the Cabinet Office's Accessibility of Elections Working Group, includes providing accessible information on registering to vote and voting; including easy read guides which sit on the Register to Vote Website, and provides support on the online application process.

There will be an estimated £92 million of government funding that will be provided to Returning Officers and local authorities for the elections; of this, £31 million is an uplift to directly address costs associated with making the elections COVID-secure. This funding will support Returning Officers to deliver the polls and ensure that all eligible electors are able to vote in a way of their choosing, either in person, by proxy or by post. We encourage those wishing to use a postal vote to apply early.

The Government does not collect data on the protected characteristics of voters.

■ **Government Departments: Disclosure of Information**

Peter Dowd:

[\[156446\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to introduce in central Government Departments similar transparency rules to those applied to local authorities under the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.

Chloe Smith:

Since 2010, the Government has been at the forefront of opening up data to allow Parliament, the public and the media to hold public bodies to account.

Under the terms of the Ministerial Code, departments regularly publish data on a range of information such as Ministers' external meetings.

Despite the need to reprioritise resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, tremendous progress continues to be made this year by central government departments in publishing core transparency data.

■ **Joint Consultative Working Group**

Simon Hoare:

[\[155231\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which (a) UK Government and (b) Northern Ireland Executive Departments were represented at the meeting of the Joint Consultative Working Group on the Northern Ireland Protocol on 29 January 2021; and which officials from those Departments attended that meeting.

Simon Hoare:

[\[155232\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether, at the meeting of the Joint Consultative Working Group on the Northern Ireland Protocol on 29 January 2021, the rules of procedure adopted by that Working Group were those included as an Annex to the EU's Council Decision 2020/1599 adopted on 23 October 2020; and whether any amendments were made to those proposed rules of procedure.

Stephen Farry:

[\[156634\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the attendance of the Joint Consultative Working Group on 29 January 2021; and how membership of that group was determined.

Louise Haigh:

[\[157220\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the (a) attendees and (b) the minutes of the Joint Consultative Working Group meeting of 29 January 2021.

Louise Haigh:

[\[157221\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the next scheduled meeting is of the Joint Consultative Working Group; and who is scheduled to attend that meeting.

Penny Mordaunt:

Article 15(2) of the Northern Ireland Protocol establishes that the Joint Consultative Working Group shall be composed of representatives of the United Kingdom and the European Union. The Government has committed to including representatives of the Northern Ireland Executive as part of the UK delegation to meetings. The JCWG briefly convened for a very short period on 29 January to adopt the Rules of Procedure. This was not a full meeting so was attended by limited delegations of only three officials from each side.

The Rules of Procedure adopted by that Working Group were those included as an Annex to the EU's Council Decision 2020/1599 adopted on 23 October 2020; and no amendments were made.

The Working Group will continue to meet at dates decided by the co-chairs.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

John Redwood:

[\[156222\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to tackle bottlenecks on the passage of goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

John Redwood:

[156223]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to smooth the flow of parcels from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

John Redwood:

[156224]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to ensure goods flow between all parts of the UK's internal market as smoothly as before 1 January 2021.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the hon. Member to the [Joint statement](#) published following the meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee on 24 February. The Government is committed to facilitating the effective flow of trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland as required by the Protocol on Ireland/ Northern Ireland.

COP26

■ Offshore Industry: Environment Protection

Alexander Stafford:

[152677]

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he plans to take to promote the North Sea Transition Deal to international partners in the run-up to the COP26 summit.

Alok Sharma:

The offshore oil and gas sector has a key role to play as we move to a net zero economy and the UK Government has committed to supporting this energy transition through the North Sea Transition Deal.

The Deal will focus on the decarbonisation of domestic oil and gas production while using the capabilities of the sector to deliver carbon capture and storage and hydrogen production. This will support and sustain new high-quality jobs and anchor the supply chain in the UK.

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, is accelerating work on this Deal now and aims to have it completed early this year.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies

Stephen Doughty:

[153255]

To ask the President of COP26, what formal (a) consultation he has had with and (b) representation he has established for the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies in relation to the COP26 processes.

Alok Sharma:

The UK Government represents the interests of UK Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change (UNFCCC), including in negotiations at the annual Conference of the Parties (COP).

Whilst the Overseas Territories (OTs) are not part of the formal COP negotiating framework, as small island developing states (SIDS), they are also impacted by climate change. COP26 also provides an opportunity for the OTs to showcase their unique biodiversity, environments and marine protected areas and to highlight the importance of adaptation. The UK Government is working with all OTs to ensure that their unique perspectives are accurately represented and is designing a specific package to support Territory Governments in the run up to COP26 and beyond. I have asked my Regional Ambassador for Latin America and the Caribbean, for COP26, to also act as a liaison point for the OTs.

My officials are also engaging with the Crown Dependencies on preparations for COP26.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Housing

Alex Sobel:

[\[159020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has plans to replace (a) the contractor and (b) the terms of the contract when the existing contract for maintenance of Service Family Accommodation expires.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is currently undergoing a procurement exercise to replace the existing contract for maintenance of Service Family Accommodation. As the procurement decision process has not concluded, MOD cannot confirm whether the existing National Housing Prime contractor has been successful in one or more of the UK regions covered by the current procurement exercise.

The terms of the replacement contract will be different. In developing the new contracts, Defence Infrastructure Organisation have worked closely with each Service and the Service Families Federations to ensure that the needs of Service families are captured to enable an improved 'lived experience'. Our collective aim is to ensure that the contracts comprehensively address the key concerns identified by Service families.

■ C17 Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[158863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2021 to Question 156277, what the out of service date is for those aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

The out of service date for the C-17 aircraft is currently set for 2040 but is subject to the Integrated Review.

■ European Fighter Aircraft

Dave Doogan: [\[159027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2021 to Question 156559 on European Fighter Aircraft, whose commercial interests would be compromised if an answer to the Question was provided.

Jeremy Quin:

If details of costs per flying hour were to be released it could prejudice the commercial interests of the Ministry of Defence when dealing with manufacturers that may wish to use its military aircraft, for example for training purposes or as part of sales demonstrators.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement

Stephen Morgan: [\[159017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Government's procurement strategy for new Fleet Solid Support ships will set any lower limit on the proportion of work that must be completed in the UK in order to qualify as UK-Led.

Stephen Morgan: [\[159018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential economic benefits of a higher proportion of work on new Fleet Solid Support Ships being completed in the UK as part of assessing value for money in that procurement.

Stephen Morgan: [\[159019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the timetable is for the Government to make a decision on where new Fleet Solid Support ships will be maintained.

Jeremy Quin:

The Fleet Solid Support (FSS) ship competition will be launched in the spring. It is anticipated that the competition will require that the winning bidder must be a UK registered company or consortia and a significant proportion of the build and assembly work must be carried out in the UK. We will seek to deliver UK social value in recognition of the opportunities for prosperity and levelling-up that the programme presents.

No decisions have yet been taken as to how or where the FSS ships will be maintained. Such decisions will be made at an appropriate time before the ships enter service.

■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[158864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department regards (a) the cockpit canopy system and (b) all-composite engine fan inlet for the Joint Strike Fighter Programme as UK-content.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[158865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has designated (a) flaperons, (b) Inflight Opening Doors (IFOD), (c) Arresting Gear, (d) Electrical Wiring and Interconnection Systems (EWIS) of the Joint Strike Fighter programme as UK-content.

Jeremy Quin:

Due to the complexity of the detail required to answer the hon. Member's question I will instead write to him in due course, and place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[158866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 148723, on Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Procurement, whether all work undertaken by Cobham within the Joint Strike Fighter programme has been designated as UK-content by his Department.

Jeremy Quin:

Work undertaken by Cobham at their UK facilities as part of the F-35 Lightning programme meets the criteria to be considered UK content.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Lost Working Days**

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[156648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average working days lost was for (a) female and (b) male civil servants in his Department in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[156649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average working days lost was for civil servants (a) from BAME backgrounds and (b) recording themselves as White in his Department in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[156650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average working days lost was for civil servants who (a) have and (b) have not declared themselves as having a disability in his Department in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[156651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average working days lost was for civil servants aged (a) 30 and younger, (b) 31 to 50, (c) 51 to 60 and (d) over 60 in his Department in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Johnny Mercer:

The information is not held in the format requested and will therefore need verification before release. I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Australia: Multinational Companies****Andrew Rosindell:****[156280]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with his Australian counterpart on potential international co-operation on regulating multi-national technology companies.

Oliver Dowden:

We have a close relationship with our Australian allies. I met with my counterpart in the Australian Government on 25th February 2021 to discuss digital regulation, and the importance of defending free speech and supporting the sustainability of the press.

■ Broadband: Rural Areas**Tom Tugendhat:****[153298]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether projects funded by the Rural Gigabit Connectivity vouchers, but not submitted by 19 February 2021, will still be eligible for new Gigabit Broadband Vouchers from April 2021.

Matt Warman:

Since May 2019, eligible homes and businesses in rural areas that are part of a group project have been able to benefit from the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme funded by the Rural Gigabit Connectivity programme. Voucher funding is a grant to individual residents and small businesses and is therefore committed when a voucher is issued to a beneficiary, at which point their supplier has 12 months to provide a connection. The Rural Gigabit Connectivity programme is due to close on March 31 2021, by which point all voucher requests must be received.

Due to the success of the voucher scheme, and in line with the government's ambition to provide access to gigabit-capable broadband to the hardest-to-reach communities in rural areas across the UK, a new gigabit broadband voucher is being developed as part of the UK Gigabit programme. This will target the hardest to reach areas which are least likely to benefit from commercial rollout. The government expects the new voucher to go live in April 2021 and, along with further details of the voucher, a new eligibility checker will be published in order to help consumers identify if they are eligible for a voucher. BDUK will also work with suppliers to help them transition existing projects, where they are eligible, to the UK Gigabit programme so that communities do not miss out on the opportunity for government funding to enable their access to gigabit capable connections.

■ Caravan Sites: Coronavirus

Mr Kevan Jones:

[156275]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to enable caravan owners to be refunded for services that they have not received from caravan park operators during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

Whether a consumer is due a refund will depend on the terms of their contract or agreement. The Citizens Advice consumer service offers consumers free advice on their rights and how to take their complaint forward. The helpline can be contacted on 0808 223 1133, and via www.citizensadvice.org.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus

Julie Elliott:

[156395]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the losses (a) incurred by the live events industry in 2020 and (b) that that industry will incur in the first two quarters of 2021.

Caroline Dinenage:

We recognise the significant challenge the current pandemic poses to the live events industry.

The Office for National Statistics estimates that there has been a 47.6% drop in the Index of Services in 2020 from 2019 for Creative arts and entertainment activities and a 26.1% drop for Arts, entertainment and recreation activities.

The Government has not forecast losses for 2021, but officials have been working closely with live events industry stakeholders to understand the challenges they face and help them access support through these challenging times and through recovery.

■ Gyms: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[156278]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of continued gym closures during the covid-19 national lockdown on people's physical and mental wellbeing particularly with regard to (a) people with a disability and (b) women being less able to exercise during winter months.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

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

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

■ Internet: Sales

Alexander Stafford:

[159065]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to remove and prevent the selling of (a) illegal and (b) dangerous products on (i) online marketplaces and (ii) online community forums.

Caroline Dinenage:

In December 2020 we published the full government response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation, setting out further details about the new online safety regulatory framework.

Under the new legislation, both online marketplaces and online community forums will need to take action to tackle criminal activity. This includes the sale of illegal products such as drugs and weapons. They will need to ensure that illegal content is removed expeditiously and that the risk of it appearing and spreading across their services is minimised by effective systems.

The Government is committed to tackling the sale of unsafe consumer products online. My officials engage regularly with the Office for Product Safety and Standards, which works to ensure that major online marketplaces play their part in protecting UK consumers from unsafe goods.

We are working on legislation at pace and it will be ready this year.

■ Members: Correspondence

Robert Largan:

[157334]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon. Member for High Peak of 25 November 2020, reference RL15336.

Caroline Dinenage:

A response was issued on 25 February under the case reference MC2020/26807. We apologise for the delay in responding.

■ Musicians: Coronavirus

James Grundy:

[\[157332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the financial effect of covid-19 on self-employed musicians.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government recognises the significant challenge the current pandemic poses to many individuals and freelancers working in the music industry.

The Government has carried out an assessment of access to the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) for individuals' working in the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation Sector:

- For SEISS round 1: 76,000 individuals given an average of £2,700
- For SEISS round 2: 72,000 individuals given an average of £2,400
- For SEISS round 3: 66,000 individuals given £2,700

We are working very hard to help freelancers in those sectors access support, including through the Self Employment Income Support Scheme and funding from Arts Council England.

The Government has and will continue to look for ways to improve the Self Employment Income Support Scheme grant and existing support.

■ Musicians: Visas and Work Permits

Ms Harriet Harman:

[\[156238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many days a UK musician can work as a musician without a work permit or visa in each EU member state in (a) one period and (b) a calendar year.

Caroline Dinenage:

Musicians and performers can continue to work and tour in the EU. However, while some activities undertaken by creative professionals will be covered by the Short Term Business Visitor clause of the agreement (including attending meetings or trade shows) and will therefore not require a work permit, other activities will not be covered and could therefore require visas or work permits.

UK cultural professionals seeking to tour within the EU will be required to check domestic immigration rules for each Member State in which they intend to tour. Although some Member States allow touring without a permit, others will require a visa, work permit or other documentation. We are working with the sector to make the arrangements as clear as possible.

Where visas apply, our agreement with the EU contains measures that will help ensure processes are as smooth as possible. This includes minimum processing standards and transparency provisions that mean guidance for business travellers must be clear and regularly updated.

Rugby: Coronavirus**Colleen Fletcher:****[158953]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much grant funding has been allocated to Championship Rugby Clubs through the Sports Winter Survival Package to date; how many Championship Rugby Clubs (a) applied for grant funding through that scheme and (b) were awarded (i) all, (ii) part and (iii) none of the grant funding they applied for; and what criteria was applied to such applications to determine whether a club was eligible for grant funding through that scheme.

Nigel Huddleston:

On 19 November 2020, the government announced a £300 million Sport Winter Survival Package (SWSP) to provide a lifeline to organisations that would otherwise not survive the winter as a result of the restriction on spectators announced from 1 October. This included a provisional allocation of £9 million to support Championship Rugby clubs.

SWSP funding is primarily made up of loans and provided on the basis of what a sport needs to survive, with decisions made by an independent Board. We will announce details of those decisions in due course.

Sports: Gambling**Ronnie Cowan:****[156464]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Ofcom, (b) the Advertising Standards Authority and (c) the Gambling Commission on sponsorship of UK sport by Asian gambling operators.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Details of ministerial meetings are publicly available and can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/search/transparency-and-freedom-of-information-releases?content_store_document_type=transparency&organisations%5B%5D=department-for-digital-culture-media-sport.

All gambling companies offering gambling facilities to consumers in Great Britain, wherever they are based, must be licensed by the Gambling Commission and comply with the conditions and codes of practice of their operating licences. All sponsorship arrangements must be responsible and not targeted at children or vulnerable people.

The government launched its Review of the Gambling Act 2005 on 8 December with the publication of a Call for Evidence. As part of the wide scope of that Review, we have called for evidence on the impact of gambling sponsorship arrangements across sport, esports and other areas.

■ Surveillance: Employment

Gareth Thomas: [156998]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what guidance his Department has issued to employers on the appropriate use of information accumulated from surveillance technology; and if he will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas: [156999]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government has taken to ensure that (a) CCTV and (b) other measures taken in workplaces to keep workers safe are not used inappropriately to monitor employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr John Whittingdale:

All organisations in the UK that process personal information must comply with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is the UK's independent regulator for data protection and is responsible for providing advice and guidance on compliance with the UK's data protection laws.

The ICO has published specific guidance for employers on the rules in relation to monitoring of employees. Section 3 of its Employment Practices Code deals with the monitoring of electronic communication, video and audio recordings:

https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1064/the_employment_practices_code.pdf.

Employees who have concerns about the way employers are using their data can contact the ICO's helpline on 0303 123 1113 or their livechat at

<https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/live-chat/> for further advice.

■ Tourism: Mountains

Andrew Gwynne: [158881]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the UK-EU Trade Cooperation Agreement on the UK mountain leaders sector.

Nigel Huddleston:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) provides a framework under which the UK and the EU may agree Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) on the recognition of professional qualification covering the UK and all 27 EU Member States. Once an arrangement is adopted under the TCA, UK professionals will be able to use the terms outlined in the arrangement to secure recognition for their professional qualifications within EU Member States.

Arrangements are implemented on a profession-by-profession basis and depend upon reciprocal cooperation from both the UK and EU Member States. The framework enables UK and EU professional bodies or authorities to make recommendations on MRAs to the Partnership Council. Once an arrangement has

been adopted, a professional qualified in the UK (e.g. an engineer) will be able to use the terms outlined in the arrangement to secure recognition of their qualifications within an EU Member State.

The Government continues to engage with stakeholders in the tourism sector to hear their priorities for the UK's future relationship with the EU. Officials are currently engaging with the tourism trade bodies, including the British Association of International Mountain Leaders (BAIML) to gather feedback on priority regulators and qualifications for the tourism sector.

The government will provide help and guidance to UK regulatory authorities and professional bodies to help them benefit from these provisions as well as other recognition paths. Where visas apply, our agreement with the EU contains measures that will help ensure processes are as prompt and smooth as possible.

EDUCATION

■ 16 to 19 Tuition Fund

Robert Halfon:

[156338]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on ensuring that the 16 to 19 tuition funding is not limited to students with low prior attainment in GCSE English and Maths.

Gillian Keegan:

I regularly meet with Cabinet colleagues on a range of issues, including the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on education.

The 16-19 Tuition Fund is focused on supporting those young people who are at significant disadvantage and whose learning has been impacted most severely by the outbreak.

Low prior attainment in GCSE English and/or maths at the expected standard at age 16 is the agreed measure used for disadvantage in 16-19 education and an established part of the 16-19 funding formula. Agreement to any extension of tuition funding for 16-19 students will continue to be based on this measure.

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

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

■ Academies: Staff

Sir David Amess:

[154677]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason the Education and Skills Funding Agency has changed its policy on membership of academy trusts, meaning that employees of a school can no longer act as members of its academy trust.

Nick Gibb:

Members play a limited but critical role in safeguarding the governance of academy trusts. They have the power to appoint and remove trustees, they can also direct trustees to take specific actions in some circumstances. As trustees are in turn ultimately responsible for the appointment and removal of employees, an employee also being a member risks undermining clear lines of accountability within the trust.

Given the importance of this clear accountability, the Academies Financial Handbook 2020 included a requirement that all trusts move to having no members employed by the trust by March 2021.

■ Assessments: Coronavirus

Jack Lopresti:

[156343]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent progress his Department has made on the introduction of alternative arrangements to exams in 2021.

Nick Gibb:

Given the ongoing disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department announced in January that GCSE, AS and A level examinations will not go ahead as planned this summer. In ensuring our approach was developed with the sector, the Department and Ofqual launched a joint consultation in January 2021 on how to award grades in 2021 to ensure they are robust and fair. We received over 100,000 responses from students, parents, teachers, school leaders and other stakeholders. There was widespread support for our approach.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, confirmed in his statement on 25 February 2021 that pupils will receive grades determined by their teachers, with pupils only assessed on what they have been taught. Fairness to young people is fundamental to the Department and Ofqual's decision making. We want to ensure all young people have the confidence that, despite examinations not going ahead, they will receive a grade that reflects their ability and enables them to progress.

Full details on alternative arrangements to exams can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/teacher-assessed-grades-for-students>.

■ Children in Care

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[158942]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's press release, Unregulated accommodation banned for vulnerable children under 16, published on 19 February 2021, who made the decision to change policy on unregulated care;

which organisations contributed to the consultation ahead of that policy change; which organisations consulted were (a) in favour and (b) against the change; and how many of those organisations that were in favour of the change are in receipt of contracts or financial awards from his Department.

Vicky Ford:

Every child in the care system deserves to live-in a high-quality setting that meets their needs and keeps them safe. Anything less is unacceptable. Local authorities have statutory duties to meet the needs of children whom they look after and to ensure that there is sufficient provision.

We are clear that independent and semi-independent provision has an important role to play in the care system, where it is high quality and meets the needs of older children. However, we know that reform is needed to improve the quality of this provision and to ensure that placement practice is appropriate. That is why, following our consultation last year – through which we received views from over 230 respondents and 160 care experienced young people – we will be proceeding with ambitious measures to do just this.

These settings cannot meet the needs of children under the age of 16. These children are too young to be placed in independent and semi-independent provision and should be placed in foster care or children's homes – that is why we are banning the practice from September 2021. Over three quarters of respondents to our consultation supported this ban.

The government will also introduce national standards for unregulated settings that are accommodating 16 and 17 year old children in care and care leavers, to raise the bar for the quality of this provision and ensure consistency across the country. The department will shortly launch a consultation on these new national standards which will ensure that, as more older children come into the care system, a high-quality option is available where they can receive the support they need to prepare for adult life. Over three quarters of respondents to our consultation were positive about the introduction of national standards.

The government will also be moving forward with plans for legislating to give Ofsted new powers to take enforcement action against illegal unregistered providers. This will enable Ofsted to take quicker action to register or close down these homes, building on their existing powers to prosecute providers operating without the correct registration and strengthening the options available to them. 85% of respondents to our consultation supported this proposal.

Alongside our response to the consultation, the department published an analysis of the responses we received to the consultation:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/962725/Unregulated_childcare_provision_-_Analytical_Report_Final1.pdf. This breaks down support for the proposals by type of organisation.

We have provided a list attached to this response of the organisations who responded to the consultation. There are 180 organisations on this list. This list does not tally with the total number of responses received to the consultation as some responses were made by individuals and some organisations responded multiple times from different positions within the organisation. 66 of the organisations named in the list provided currently hold an active grant or contract with the Department for Education.

We have considered your request to provide a breakdown of how each individual organisation responded to each policy proposal in the consultation, and whether those in favour of the measures are in receipt of a grant or contract. This breakdown of information is not readily available and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Attachments:

1. 158942 list of orgs. who responded to consultation [158942 list of organisations that responded to the consultation.doc]

■ **Children: Literacy**

Colleen Fletcher:

[153273]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the spend on literacy programmes for children under seven in England in each of the last 10 years.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is committed to continuing to raise literacy standards, ensuring all children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, can read fluently and with understanding, and literacy is a key aspect of overall school funding. In cash terms, the total funding allocated to schools was £47.6 billion in the 2020-21 financial year, an increase of 36.1% compared to the £35 billion allocated in the 2010-11 financial year. The total school funding per year, across the past 10 years, is set out in the annual school funding statistics publication which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-funding-statistics>. School budgets are rising by £2.6 billion in the 2020-21 financial year, £4.8 billion in the 2021-22 financial year and £7.1 billion in the 2022-23 financial year, compared to the 2019-20 financial year.

The Department for Education also currently funds, and has funded, a range of programmes to support literacy development for children under 7. In 2018, we launched a £26.3 million English Hubs Programme dedicated to improving the teaching of reading in Reception and Year 1, particularly for disadvantaged children. Since its launch, we have invested a further £17 million in this school-to-school improvement programme, which focusses on systematic synthetic phonics, early language, and reading for pleasure. The programme has provided targeted support to several thousands of schools across England and, in this academic year (2020-21), it is providing intensive support to over 850 partner schools.

Through the Early Years Professional Development Programme, we are investing £20 million to provide practitioners in nurseries with access to high-quality training to raise practitioners' skills in supporting young children's development in early language, literacy, and Mathematics. We have also invested £9 million of National Tutoring Programme funding in improving the language skills of reception age children who need it most this academic year, through the Nuffield Early Language Intervention.

Additionally, the £90 million Opportunity Areas programme is targeting support to 12 of the most disadvantaged areas in England. 11 of the 12 areas have made improving phonics and literacy a priority, and 8 of those have particularly focussed on improving speech and language in early years. The exact amounts spent on these issues vary across the areas.

■ Children's Social Care Independent Review

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[158943]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Children's Social Care Review, how many applications were made to join the Experts by Experience Group; what criteria were used to assess those applicants; who decided which applications were accepted and rejected; which of those accepted applicants are employed or in receipt of contracts or financial awards from the Department of Education.

Vicky Ford:

The Experts by Experience Group is one of the ways in which the Independent Review of Children's Social Care will be giving anyone who has had a social worker (either themselves or a child in their care) a voice in the review. The group will be responsible for helping the review to capture the views, experiences and opinions of care experienced children, young people, adults and families. The group will also be responsible for allowing us to test and refine emerging findings with children, young people, adults and families throughout the review and guiding the review on how best to engage and hear the voices of other children, young people and families that have experience of the care system.

Following an open expression of interest process the review has now established an Experts by Experience Board.

The review received 1,011 applications to join the board. The panel, chaired by the Lead Reviewer, Josh McAlister, assessed every application and have appointed a small number of individuals that met the criteria detailed in the Expression of Interest application:

The criteria was as follows:

1. Have lived experienced of the children's social care system, whether current or previous, through:

- interaction with a social worker as a child
- personal experience in care

- the family of a child who has interacted with a social worker
 - the family of a child who has been placed in care
2. Are comfortable contributing respectfully alongside people who may have had very different experiences to their own.
3. Have the ability to communicate views about children's social care clearly and concisely, and also the views of others with experience of children's social care.

Board members have been asked to declare any conflicts of interest, which will be checked and recorded at the Board's first meeting. The names of all the Experience by Expert Board members are available on the website:

<https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/experts/>.

■ Climate Change and Sustainable Development: Curriculum

Sir Mike Penning:

[156292]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to ensure that sustainability and climate change are taught as (a) part of the school curriculum and (b) a stand-alone subject to equip future generations with the skills and knowledge needed for the green jobs of the future.

Nick Gibb:

It is vital that young people are taught about climate change. For this reason, climate change and related topics, such as sustainability, are included throughout both the science and geography curricula and GCSEs. In primary science and geography, pupils are given a firm foundation for the further study of the environment in secondary school. For example, in primary science pupils are taught about how environments can change as a result of human actions. They will learn about animals' habitats, including that changes to the environment may pose dangers to living things. In geography at primary pupils will be taught about seasonal and daily weather patterns, climate zones and human geography, including land use, economic activity, and the distribution of natural resources.

In secondary science, pupils are taught about the production of carbon dioxide by human activity and the effect this has on the climate. This is expanded on in GCSE science where pupils will consider the evidence for additional anthropogenic causes of climate change. In secondary geography pupils will look at how human and physical processes interact to influence and change landscapes, environments, and the climate. As part of GCSE geography, pupils will look at the causes, consequences of and responses to extreme weather conditions and natural weather hazards. In 2017, we also introduced a new environmental science A level. This will enable students to study topics that will support their understanding of climate change and how it can be tackled. School and teachers can go beyond the topics set out in the National Curriculum, or do more in-depth teaching of these topic areas, if they so wish.

Apsana Begum:

[156603]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to make sustainability and climate crisis compulsory subjects for schoolchildren following August 2020 research which found that only 4 per cent of students reported being well informed about climate change.

Nick Gibb:

Climate change and related topics, such as sustainability, are included throughout both the science and geography curricula and GCSEs. In primary science and geography, pupils are given a foundation for the further study of the environment in secondary school. For example, in primary science pupils are taught about how environments can change as a result of human actions. In geography at primary, pupils will be taught about seasonal and daily weather patterns, climate zones and human geography, including land use, economic activity, and the distribution of natural resources.

In secondary science, pupils are taught about the production of carbon dioxide by human activity and the effect this has on the climate. This is expanded on in GCSE science where pupils will consider the evidence for additional anthropogenic causes of climate change. In secondary geography pupils will look at how human and physical processes interact to influence and change landscapes, environments and the climate. As part of GCSE geography pupils will look at the causes, consequences of and responses to extreme weather conditions and natural weather hazards. In 2017, the Department also introduced a new environmental science A level. This will enable students to study topics that will support their understanding of climate change and how it can be tackled. Schools and teachers can go beyond the topics set out in the National Curriculum, or do more in-depth teaching of these topic areas, if they so wish.

■ **Computacenter: Coronavirus**

Fleur Anderson:

[154609]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the attendees at negotiations for the contracts awarded to Computacenter to help deliver the Government's covid-19 response.

Fleur Anderson:

[155417]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the total value of contracts awarded to Computacenter in 2020 was to help the Government's response to covid-19.

Nick Gibb:

The names of Department employees that have taken part in the procurement activities for the Get Help with Technology programme contracts, including Computacenter's, cannot be shared due to General Data Protection Regulations. The Department can share the role titles of the individuals involved, which are the following: Commercial Lead, Commercial Practitioner, Associate Commercial Specialist, Commercial Deputy Director and Commercial Director. Representatives

from the Get Help with Technology programme and legal advisors also supported discussions.

The total value of contracts and associated variations awarded to Computacenter in 2020 in response to COVID-19 activities is £229,133,959.90 excluding VAT.

■ **Coronavirus Catch-up Premium**

Daisy Cooper:

[156574]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will allow schools to spend their allocation of the Coronavirus catch up premium funding beyond the 2020-21 school year, given that schools have been closed for the spring term to date.

Nick Gibb:

Schools are able to choose to use a proportion of their catch up premium to support catch up in the next academic year.

The Department recognises that it may be challenging for schools to deliver effective catch up measures during school closures. We have asked for schools to strategically plan the catch up support required for their pupils when schools reopen fully. The Education Endowment Foundation has published resources to help schools implement a catch up strategy using evidence based approaches. These resources are available here: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/guide-to-supporting-schools-planning/>.

In January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, committed to working with parents, teachers and pupils to develop a long term plan to help pupils make up their learning over the course of this Parliament. As an immediate step to support early years, schools, and colleges, on 24 February 2021 the Department committed an additional £700 million to support summer schools, tutoring, early language interventions, and a new one-off recovery premium. Further detail on this support and funding will be shared in due course.

■ **Environment Protection: Vocational Education**

Apsana Begum:

[156604]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase provision of low carbon vocational training.

Gillian Keegan:

The department is taking a number of steps to help deliver the provision needed to boost skills for green jobs.

The Green Jobs Taskforce, following its launch on 12 November last year, has aims to help the UK build back greener and deliver the skilled workforce needed to reach net zero emissions by 2050. This is a joint initiative between the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Education.

Details of the taskforce including a full list members can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-launches-taskforce-to-support-drive-for-2-million-green-jobs-by-2030>.

With help from the taskforce, we will ensure that our existing skills programmes (such as those set out in the recent Skills for Jobs White Paper and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's recent Lifetime Skills Guarantee) can be directed to support the net zero agenda and help to identify where the evidence tells us we might need to go further or faster.

For example, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has convened a Green Apprenticeships Advisory Panel (GAAP) to guide the continued alignment of apprenticeships with net zero and wider sustainability objectives. The GAAP is employer-led and includes stakeholders with an interest in climate change and sustainability. It aims to help identify which apprenticeships directly support the green agenda and which may need to be refocused. The panel will also crucially identify where there are potential opportunities to create new green apprenticeships and identify employers to help take this work forward.

■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments

Ruth Cadbury:

[156425]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish further information on the criteria for (a) GCSE and (b) A-level assessments in England in summer 2021.

Nick Gibb:

Given the ongoing disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department announced in January 2021 that GCSE, AS and A level exams will not go ahead as planned this summer. To make sure our approach was developed with the sector, the Department and Ofqual launched a joint consultation in January on how to award grades in 2021 so they are robust and fair. We received over 100,000 responses from students, parents, teachers, school leaders and other stakeholders. There was widespread support for our approach.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, confirmed in his statement on 25 February that students will receive grades determined by their teachers, with pupils only assessed on what they have been taught. Fairness to young people is fundamental to the department and Ofqual's decision making. We want to ensure all young people have the confidence that, despite exams not going ahead, they will receive a grade that reflects their ability and enables them to progress.

Full details on alternative arrangements to exams can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/teacher-assessed-grades-for-students>.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[158885]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that potential discrepancy between the grading of GCSE and A-level examinations by different schools is minimised.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[158889]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to reassure school pupils that the grading of GCSEs and A-levels will be fair and equitable.

Nick Gibb:

On 25 February 2021 the Government confirmed this year's cohort of GCSE, AS and A level students will receive grades based on teachers' judgements of their performance based on a range of evidence, details of which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualifications-in-summer-2021>.

Fairness to young people is fundamental to the Department and Ofqual's decision making. We want to ensure all young people have the confidence that, despite exams not going ahead, they will receive a grade that reflects their ability and enables them to progress.

Exam boards will provide teachers with a package of training and support materials in March 2021 on how to make judgements fairly. The guidance will also provide schools and colleges with support and training on how to minimise the risk of bias and malpractice.

Grades must reflect what a student knows, understands, and can do, and they must be widely understood and respected. Teachers will not be asked to judge the grade a student might have achieved had the COVID-19 outbreak not occurred or to measure potential. Exam boards will also provide grade descriptors, to help teachers to make accurate and fair judgements.

There will be a process to check teachers are doing what is needed and headteachers will have to confirm this to the exam boards. Exam boards will challenge schools where grades seem too low or too high. Every student who believes their grade does not reflect their performance or has not been properly determined will have a clear route to appeal this year.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[158886]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that school pupils who have not had access to digital devices to learn from home are fairly graded in their (a) GCSE and (b) A-levels this year.

Nick Gibb:

Given the ongoing disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department announced in January 2021 that GCSE, AS and A level exams will not go ahead as planned this summer. The Department and Ofqual launched a joint consultation on 15 January on how to award grades in 2021 so they are robust and fair. We received over 100,000 responses from pupils, parents, teachers, head teachers and other stakeholders. There was widespread support for our approach. Pupils will receive grades determined by their teachers. Teachers have the flexibility to use a range of evidence, including the use of optional questions provided by exam boards, mock exams, non-examined assessment, or in-class tests set by the school which align closely with the specification.

We know there has been differential learning loss, as some pupils have suffered more disruption to their education than others. Because of this, pupils will only be assessed on the content they have been taught, and not what they have missed.

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. To date, over 1.2 million laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, academy trusts, local authorities and further education providers. The Government is providing this significant injection of laptops and tablets on top of an estimated 2.9 million already owned by schools before the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.

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

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

■ GCE A-level: Assessments

Daisy Cooper:

[156571]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to harmonise university entry requirements across the devolved nations as a result of the alternative assessment and grading systems being used for A-level students in 2021.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is working closely with partners across the education sector to minimise the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and the disruption it has caused to young people's education, including for those who will be applying to university for the 2021 admissions cycle.

Higher education providers in England, as autonomous bodies, independent from government, are responsible for their own recruitment decisions. We have discussed this year's arrangements with the devolved administrations, where different approaches are always taken to exams, for example in Scotland where students take Scottish Highers rather than A levels.

On 25 February, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, announced that students in England will receive grades determined by teachers, with pupils only assessed on what they have been taught. There have been frequent and ongoing discussions with devolved administrations to discuss various matters relating to aligning processes where possible. This has included discussion affecting transition to university for students.

■ **Graduates: Disability**

Emma Hardy: [156530]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to commission research to better understand (a) how disabled graduates (i) make decisions on (A) location and (B) basis of employment and (ii) make other career decisions and (b) the barriers that disabled graduates face in achieving their career ambitions.

Emma Hardy: [156531]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to commission research to establish what is effective in improving the outcomes of disabled graduates.

Emma Hardy: [156532]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that all university careers services have in place effective interventions for students with disabilities.

Michelle Donelan:

This government believes it is important that disabled students receive an appropriate level of support wherever and whatever they choose to study and is committed to ensuring that all students with disabilities receive the support they need to enable them to study alongside their fellow students on an equal basis.

I am aware of the recommendations in the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services Disability Task Group's eighteenth annual 'What Happens Next? 2021 Report', looking at the outcomes of 2018 disabled graduates, and how the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle's questions reflect those recommendations. The report can be found here: <https://www.agcas.org.uk/Latest/what-happens-next-2021>.

It is pleasing to see the Disabled Students' Commission (DSC) is supporting the report's recommendation that more research should be undertaken on the outcomes of disabled graduates, and that the commission's upcoming primary research project will have a focus on disabled graduates and employment.

Good work in identifying barriers disabled students can face when moving into employment after graduation was also included in Policy Connect's 'Arriving at Thriving' report published in October 2020, following a six-month inquiry that included gathering evidence from over 500 disabled students, which can be accessed here: <https://www.policyconnect.org.uk/research/arriving-thriving-learning-disabled-students-ensure-access-all>.

I agree wholeheartedly with the report's suggestion that higher education (HE) providers must recognise the importance for disabled students of good careers information, advice and guidance by investing in the regular training and continuing professional development of careers services professionals. I am also delighted that the DSC has committed to producing materials shortly that will promote the development of disability employability guidance and boost effective practice among HE providers and employers.

Advance HE's 'Equality in higher education: Student statistical report 2020' meanwhile shows similar continuation and qualification rates for disabled and non-disabled UK domiciled full-time first degree entrants (89.3% and 88.5%, respectively). 6.5% of disabled students who entered HE in academic year 2017/18 left HE with no award the following year, compared with 6.8% of non-disabled students. The report can be found here: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/equality-higher-education-statistical-report-2020>.

The Office for Students has a formal key performance measure to eliminate the gap in degree outcomes (firsts or 2:1s) between disabled students and non-disabled students by academic year 2024/25.

■ Higher Education: Admissions

Ruth Cadbury:

[156426]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) students, (b) schools and (c) universities with the application process to study higher education courses from autumn 2021.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is working closely with partners across the education sector, including universities and schools, to minimise the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and the disruption it has caused to young people's education, including for those who will be applying to university for the 2021 admissions cycle.

For students applying to enter university in 2021, the UCAS deadline for most courses was pushed back to 29 January 2021. We recognise that this is a difficult time for young people, and it is vital that students applying to university in 2021 had this extra time to carefully consider their applications and make the best choices for their future. 415,470 people in England applied to full-time undergraduate courses by this deadline, up 11% from the equivalent January deadline for 2020.

We encourage universities to be flexible when making offers to individual students and we continue to work closely with the sector to ensure that students are not further disadvantaged by the COVID-19 outbreak.

We will continue to make every effort to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on young people's education, so that they are well placed to progress to the next stage of their lives, wherever they live and whatever choices they make.

Emma Hardy:

[\[156526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to enable the sharing of free school meals data with higher education providers to allow institutions to better identify individuals from the groups least likely to enter higher education.

Emma Hardy:

[\[156527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to give higher education providers access to free school meals data to fulfill his request that universities focus their access and participation work on white boys on free schools meals as set out in his Strategic Guidance letter to the Office for Students on 5 February 2021.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is committed to transforming the lives of young people, so they can go as far as their hard work and talent will take them, regardless of their background or where they live. It is more crucial than ever before that we tap into the brilliant talent that our country has to offer, and make sure that university places are available to all who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so.

All higher education (HE) providers wanting to charge higher level fees must also have an Access and Participation Plan agreed by the Office for Students (OfS), in which they set out the measures they intend to take to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups to access and succeed in HE.

Through our recent guidance letter to the OfS, we have asked that their work to improve access and participation in HE should include a focus on white working-class boys who are currently the least likely group to progress to HE.

Departmental officials are working closely with the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) to explore how we can support HE providers to improve and enhance access to data collected by the Department, including free school meals (FSM) data. We recently gave approval to UCAS to incorporate FSM data into their multiple equality measure for the 2021 HE admissions cycle, which UCAS will make available to HE providers as part of their modernised contextual data service. My officials are continuing to work with UCAS to consider the changes required to their processes to enable the lawful sharing of FSM data directly with HE providers.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[\[158892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 11 December 2020 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, regarding covid-19 safety in SEN schools, reference ZA54854.

Nick Gibb:

I can confirm that a response has been sent to the letter dated 11 December 2020, from the hon. Member of West Lancashire.

■ Office for Students: Public Appointments

Munira Wilson: [\[159038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether Lord Wharton was the highest scoring candidate for the role of Chair of the Office for Students following the Independent Advisory Assessment Panel's recruitment process.

Munira Wilson: [\[159039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the Independent Advisory Assessment Panel's report to him on that panel's recommendations for the appointment of the new Chair of the Office for Students.

Michelle Donelan:

Lord Wharton of Yarm was selected following a rigorous assessment process conducted in accordance with the Governance Code for Public Appointments. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, was presented with a list of candidates who were deemed to be appointable to the role of Chair of the Office for Students and he made his choice from that list.

The Governance Code for Public Appointments states at section 3.1: 'At the end of the process, Ministers should be provided with a choice of appointable candidates. Panels must not rank candidates unless the Minister has specifically asked for this. Ministers may choose not to appoint any of the candidates and re-run the competition.' In accordance with the Code, in this competition the candidates deemed to be appointable were not ranked.

Following his selection as the preferred candidate by the Secretary of State for Education, Lord Wharton faced a pre-appointment hearing with the Education Select Committee, which endorsed Lord Wharton's appointment as Chair.

We will not publish the Independent Advisory Assessment Panel's report as it contains details of peoples' performances at interview, making them identifiable.

■ Overseas Students

Daisy Cooper: [\[159570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that there is no reduction in the number of university places available to international students in 2021 compared to 2020.

Michelle Donelan:

The government does not impose a limit on the number of university places available to international students.

The government remains clear that our world-leading universities, which thrive on being global institutions, are, and will always be open to international students. On 6 February 2021, the government published an update to the International Education Strategy. At the heart of this update, we reaffirmed our commitment to the ambitions of the 2019 strategy to increase the number of international students hosted in the

UK to at least 600,000 per year by 2030. These ambitions will be supported through the efforts of our International Education Champion, Sir Steve Smith.

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, the department has worked closely with partners across the education sector, and with higher education (HE) providers, to minimise the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and the disruption it has caused to students' education, including for those who will be applying to university for the 2021 admissions cycle. This has included introducing a number of flexibilities to assist visa holders in the UK who have been impacted by global travel and health restrictions, including: the ability to engage via distance/blended learning for the duration of the 2020/21 academic year; offering extensions of visas for those whose leave expired; relaxing the rules on visa switching in the UK; and confirming that existing international students who have been studying by distance/blended learning will remain eligible to apply for the new Graduate route, provided they meet the other requirements of the route.

We encourage universities to be flexible when making offers to students whose education has been disproportionately and adversely impacted from the COVID-19 outbreak, to ensure they are able to receive fair offers for 2021. The department will continue to work closely with universities to ensure that places are available for everyone with the talent and ability to succeed in higher education.

As a result of flexibility shown so far, the UK remains an attractive study destination with the number of international students at UK HE providers reaching a record high of 560,000 in the 2019/20 academic year, an increase of 12% from the previous year. While these recent figures are encouraging, we are not complacent and will continue to do our utmost to continue to attract and support international students.

■ **Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education**

Jo Gideon:

[155450]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of making the enterprise and financial education aspect of Personal, Social, Health and Economic education a mandatory requirement of the curriculum.

Nick Gibb:

Financial education is part of the mathematics and citizenship curriculum where pupils are taught the functions and uses of money, the importance of personal budgeting, money management and the need to understand financial risk. The mathematics curriculum ensures pupils are taught the necessary knowledge and the need to make financial decisions. The computing curriculum should prepare pupils to apply existing digital technologies confidently and effectively, whilst also providing them with the fundamental knowledge needed to create new digital technology products.

The Department will continue to work closely with the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) and other stakeholders, such as Her Majesty's Treasury, to consider what

can be gained from other sector initiatives and whether there is scope to provide further support for the teaching of financial education in schools.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Robert Halfon:

[158913]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department plans to take to support early years providers with the additional costs associated with (a) personal protective equipment and (b) enhanced cleaning measures.

Nick Gibb:

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

Most early years staff will not require personal protective equipment (PPE) beyond what they would normally need for their work. If a child already has routine intimate care needs that involve the use of PPE, the same PPE should continue to be used. Additional PPE for COVID-19 is only required in a very limited number of scenarios, for example, when:

- a child becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms, and only then if a 2 metre distance cannot be maintained
- performing aerosol generating procedures when working with children who cough, spit or vomit but do not have COVID-19 symptoms, only any PPE that would be routinely worn, should be worn

The Department has published guidance for nurseries to follow, which provides further details about cleaning and PPE:

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

For further information about cleaning, Public Health England has published guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>. This contains advice on the general cleaning required in addition to the existing advice on cleaning when there is a suspected case.

For further information about funding support, guidance is available through the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care>.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[158159]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of suspending fines for non-attendance of enrolled students in schools

where parents or students have medical reasons such as clinically vulnerable or for anxiety reasons until at least 29 March 2021.

Nick Gibb:

School attendance will be mandatory from 8 March 2021 and all the usual rules apply. It is important that children attend school for their education, well-being and long term development. We have asked schools to implement a range of protective measures to ensure they are as safe as possible.

We know from growing evidence that many children identified at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak as clinically extremely vulnerable are not at increased risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19 and children are gradually being removed from the shielding patient list as appropriate, following review with a clinician. Pupils who have been confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend school while shielding advice applies nationally.

Where parents have concerns about their child's attendance at school, we ask that they discuss their concerns with the school and the protective measures that have been put in place to reduce the risk.

Where pupils are not able to attend school, as they are following clinical or public health advice related to COVID-19, the absence will not be penalised.

■ **Pupils: Coronavirus**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[157038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that school pupils who are required to self-isolate due to the covid-19 outbreak do not fall behind at school.

Nick Gibb:

We recognise teachers have been working exceptionally hard and making tremendous efforts to provide high quality remote education with much being achieved in recent months.

Until 8 March 2021, we continue to expect all primary and secondary schools in England to provide remote education for the majority of their pupils, with the exception of vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers, who can attend school in person. Where vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers do not attend school, we expect schools to provide them with remote education.

From 8 March 2021, attendance will be mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age. Schools affected by the remote education temporary continuity direction are still required to provide remote education for pupils where their attendance would be contrary to government guidance or legislation around COVID-19. This includes, for example, where such guidance means that a class, group or small number of pupils need to self-isolate, or that clinically extremely vulnerable children need to shield.

Where secondary schools are operating a phased return of pupils during week commencing 8 March to allow for testing, we expect schools to provide remote education for all pupils not yet expected to attend on-site.

Where it is needed, both now and after 8 March, schools are expected to offer pupils 3 to 5 hours of remote education that includes time for independent study and also either recorded or live direct teaching. This includes either recorded or live direct teaching alongside time for pupils to work independently to complete assignments that have been set. Online video lessons do not necessarily need to be recorded by teaching staff at the school. Oak National Academy lessons, for example, can be provided in lieu of school-led video content.

Schools are expected to have a system in place for checking on a daily basis whether pupils are engaging actively with their work. Schools will need to work with families to swiftly identify where pupil engagement is a concern and find effective solutions. A comprehensive package of support continues to be available to schools to help them meet these expectations. Schools can find further support via the Get Help with Remote Education page on gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-remote-education>.

In January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, committed to working with parents, teachers and schools to develop a long-term plan to help support pupils make up their learning over the course of this parliament.

We also recognise that extended restrictions on attendance at schools and colleges have had a substantial impact on children and young people's education. The Department has appointed Sir Kevan Collins as Education Recovery Commissioner, to advise on this plan and will say more on this in due course. More immediately, we are making available £700 million to put in place a range of additional measures to give nurseries, schools and colleges the tools they need to target support to their pupils.

In addition, we announced a catch-up package on 24 February 2021 which will build on the £1 billion catch up package announced in June 2020 and form part of the wider response to help pupils make up their lost learning over the course of this Parliament.

Finally, a range of high-quality online resources will be available for all teachers and pupils, starting from the summer term and throughout summer holidays, provided by Oak National Academy, to help give pupils the confidence they are ready for the next academic year.

Caroline Lucas:

[158001]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the logistics required to facilitate testing of older pupils for covid-19 before they attend their first on-site lesson on Monday 8 March 2021; whether schools will have to cancel lessons to administer those tests; what logistical support will be provided to enable head teachers to recruit volunteers and staff to provide adequate testing capacity; whether he has taken

steps to provide schools with staffing to provide mental health support for children and young people who experience stress or anxiety about testing for covid-19 in mass testing conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

Schools and colleges will have received all test kit deliveries before opening on 8 March 2021. Schools and Colleges have been running on site tests for staff and students since they returned from the Christmas holidays. Additionally, the Department has issued three guidance documents clearly setting out the instructions required to set up Asymptomatic Test Sites and deliver three tests to each student on site. The Department encourages Headteachers to review all updated material prior to schools opening on 8 March 2021.

From 8 March, all pupils should attend school. During the week commencing 8 March, pupils and students will be offered asymptomatic testing on site in secondary schools and colleges. Pupils and students who consent to testing should return to face-to-face education following their first negative test result. Pupils and students not undergoing testing should attend school and college in line with the institution's phased return arrangements. Schools/colleges may start testing students/pupils before 8 March if they would like to do so to help manage the return. This is voluntary and at the discretion of each school. Asymptomatic testing is an important tool for helping to stem the transmission of the virus and so students/pupils may go to school/college specifically for a test before 8 March if their school/college offers to test them.

The Department will provide funding for schools, colleges and specialist settings, for reasonable workforce costs incurred in on-site testing.

We recognise that undertaking COVID-19 testing may cause concerns for some pupils. We encourage parents and staff to discuss such concerns with pupils, agree strategies to help reduce anxiety, and put in place any reasonable adjustments. We ask that positive test results are communicated to pupils in private wherever possible to avoid any stigma.

■ **Remote Education: Computer Software**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[157106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of January 29 2021 to Question 142923 on Remote Education, how much funding has been allocated to technical support to help schools set up accounts for Google and Microsoft during the covid-19 lockdowns; and how much funding for that purpose is yet to be allocated.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[157107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria his Department used in its decision on the inclusion of (a) Microsoft, (b) Google and (c) other commonly used platforms in its guidance entitled Contingency framework: education and childcare settings, updated on 22 February 2021.

Nick Gibb:

As of 24 February 2021, £5.4 million has been spent out of a programme budget of £14.23 million, leaving £8.83 million of remaining funding.

The primary reason for selecting the (a) Microsoft and (b) Google platforms was that they are free to use to the education sector, and both platforms include features and functionalities that are designed to support communication, collaboration and assessment.

■ Remote Education: Disadvantaged**Jack Lopresti:****[156341]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help disadvantaged children and young people learn at home during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

Given the critical importance of ensuring that all children and young people continue to learn during the national lockdown, the Department updated our remote education expectations for schools and FE colleges to clarify and strengthen what is expected, drawing on our evolving understanding of best practice in remote education.

To support disadvantaged children and young people with access to remote education and online social care, the Government is investing over £400 million. We have secured 1.3 million laptops and tablets and have already delivered over 1.2 million of these to schools, colleges, academy trusts, local authorities, and further education colleges to support disadvantaged children and young people who would not otherwise have access to a digital device.

The Department has also partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online, as well as delivering over 70,000 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home.

The Department has also made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy, both for the summer term of the academic year 2019-20, and then for the 2020-21 academic year, to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects for Reception up to Year 11. Specialist content for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is also available. Four major mobile network operators - Vodafone, O2, Three and EE - have also committed to working together to make access to Oak National Academy free for school children.

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

In addition, the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) provides additional, targeted support for disadvantaged pupils to catch-up on missed learning. The NTP provides

access to high-quality tuition for disadvantaged pupils, helping to accelerate their academic progress and tackling the attainment gap between them and their peers.

■ Remote Education: ICT

Siobhain McDonagh:

[157002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) laptops and tablets and (b) 4G wireless routers have been delivered to (i) schools, (ii) local authorities and (iii) academy trusts as of 22 February 2021.

Siobhain McDonagh:

[157003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the remote education support scheme being offered by mobile phone networks in partnership with his Department, how many pupils are receiving support offered by (a) EE, (b) O2, (c) Sky Mobile, (d) SMARTY, (e) Tesco Mobile, (f) Three, (g) Virgin Mobile and (h) Vodafone as of 22 February 2021.

Nick Gibb:

As of Monday 15 February 2021, over one million laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, trusts, local authorities and further education providers. More information can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data/2021-week-7>.

We publish this data every week during term time and the next publication will be Tuesday 2 March 2021.

We have partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help disadvantaged children get online. We will provide official statistics on the number of requests received for uplifts in mobile data in early March 2021. We will not be able to provide a breakdown of the numbers of requests received for each provider as this information is commercially sensitive for providers.

We are grateful to EE, Lycamobile, O2, Sky Mobile, Smarty, Tesco Mobile, Three, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, Vodafone, iD Mobile and giffgaff for supporting the mobile data offer. We are currently engaged with additional mobile network operators to provide further support through this offer.

Additionally, we are grateful to BT and EE, who have made access to BBC Bitesize resources free from the end of January 2021.

■ Schools: Charities

Ben Bradley:

[156540]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his policy is on school engagement with (a) race equality and (b) other charities.

Nick Gibb:

External agencies, including charities, can provide speakers, tools, and resources to enhance and supplement a school's curriculum and wider activities. It is important

when using external agencies that schools take particular care that the agency and any materials used are appropriate and in line with their legal duties.

Schools must not promote partisan political views and should ensure the balanced treatment of political issues. Schools should also ensure that speakers, tools and resources do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Ellie Reeves:

[155310]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the recently announced £300 million of catch up tutoring will go directly to schools.

Nick Gibb:

On 24 February 2021, the Government announced a new £700 million plan to help young people catch up on lost education due to the COVID-19 outbreak. This package includes funding that will be provided directly to schools as well as funding for national support programmes that will provide additional capacity to support schools.

The funding includes:

- A new one-off £302 million Recovery Premium for state primary and secondary schools, building on the Pupil Premium, to further support pupils who need it most. The average primary school will receive around £6,000 extra, and the average secondary school around £22,000 extra. This will help schools to bolster summer provision for their pupils, for example, laying on additional clubs and activities, or for evidence-based approaches for supporting the most disadvantaged pupils from September 2021.
- £200 million (from the £300 million announced by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister in January 2021) will expand our successful tutoring programmes targeted at disadvantaged pupils. This will fund an £83 million expansion of the National Tutoring Programme for primary and secondary schools, which has been shown to boost catch up learning by as much as 3 to 5 months; a £102 million extension of the 16 to 19 Tuition Fund for a further year to support more pupils in English, maths and other vocational and academic subjects; and £18 million funding to support language development in the early years, supporting a critical stage of child development.
- £200 million (including the final £100 million from the Prime Minister's announcement) will be available to secondary schools to deliver face to face summer schools. Schools will be able to target provision based on pupils' needs but the Government is suggesting they may want to initially target incoming Year 7 pupils. This is alongside wider support funded through our Holiday Activities and Food Programme across the country.

Daisy Cooper:

[156587]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Government's roadmap on easing lockdown restrictions announced on 22 February 2021, what authority he plans to give (a) Headteachers and (b) local Public Health Directors on deciding how their schools should re-open on 8 March 2021.

Nick Gibb:

Based on the Government's assessment of the current data against its four tests for relaxing COVID-19 restrictions, the Department will no longer be asking schools to limit attendance and from 8 March all year groups should be allowed to attend school. The latest data suggests that infection rates have fallen across all ages, including in children and young people.

From 8 March, all primary pupils should attend school. All secondary pupils will be offered testing and those who consent to testing should return to face-to-face education following their first negative test result. Testing is voluntary but strongly encouraged. Pupils not undergoing testing should attend school in line with the phased return arrangements in their school. Head teachers in secondary schools can phase the return of their pupils during the first week as they carry out on-site asymptomatic testing. Where secondary schools are operating a phased return to allow for testing, the Department expects schools to provide remote education.

School attendance will be mandatory for all pupils and the usual rules on school attendance will apply again from 8 March, including parents' duty to secure their child's regular attendance at school.

The Department has published updated guidance which outlines the actions school leaders should take to minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their school from 8 March. The guidance can be found here:

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

Dame Diana Johnson:

[157037]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that schools are adequately ventilated to make them covid-19-secure when school pupils return on 8 March 2021.

Nick Gibb:

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

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

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

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

Dame Diana Johnson:

[157039]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the evidential basis is for the decision to have all school pupils return on 8 March 2021 rather than a staggered approach.

Nick Gibb:

The Government's wider decision making is set out in the Government's 'COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021' Roadmap, where the step by step plan to ease restrictions in England cautiously, starting with schools and colleges, is set out. It can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021>.

SAGE regularly publishes minutes and papers, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/scientific-evidence-supporting-the-government-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19>. In addition, a summary of the evidence in relation to children, young people and education settings is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-summary-covid-19-children-young-people-and-education-settings>.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[157222]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to provide additional temporary classrooms ahead of schools and colleges reopening to all students on 8 March 2021.

Nick Gibb:

From 8 March 2021, all schools, colleges and further education colleges should allow full attendance. To prepare for return to full attendance, schools and colleges should update their risk assessment and ensure they are implementing the system of controls as set out in guidance, to minimise the risk of infection. The guidance can be found here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachm>

[ent_data/file/958906/Restricting_attendance_during_the_national_lockdown_schools_guidance.pdf](#) and here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963584/Further_education_coronavirus_COVID-19_operational_guidance.pdf. This includes taking steps to minimise contact

between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible. Measures have been further strengthened to provide more reassurance and to help decrease the disruption that the COVID-19 outbreak causes to education.

Whilst the Department encourages schools to make use of additional space, support older pupils to maintain distance and keep groups of pupils separate, we do not think that schools need to make significant changes to their buildings. By assessing risk and implementing all the measures, including ventilating occupied spaces, wearing face coverings when recommended and putting in place enhanced cleaning, schools will effectively manage risks and create an inherently safer environment for pupils and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. The way to control this virus is the same, even with the current new variants.

Colleges should also follow the measures set out in the guidance. They are advised to look to maximise the use of their sites and any associated available space.

Following a risk assessment, colleges may determine that small adaptations to their sites are required. This will be at colleges' discretion, based on their circumstances.

■ Schools: Databases

Layla Moran:

[157264]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason he changed the census date for schools from January 2021 to October 2020 for the financial year beginning April 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The move to using the October census for pupil premium funding will provide both schools and the Department with greater certainty around future funding levels earlier in the year. The majority of schools' funding is already calculated by using data from the October census.

Per pupil funding rates for the pupil premium in the 2021-22 financial year will be the same as in the 2020-21 financial year, which is expected to increase pupil premium funding to more than £2.5 billion in 2021-22 as more children have become eligible for free school meals.

Pupil premium will continue to be based on "Ever6 FSM", whereby all pupils eligible for free school meals at the time of the October census, or at any point in the previous 6 years, will attract pupil premium funding. As a result, we expect a typical school to see an increase in pupil premium funding from 2020-21 to 2021-22 as more children have become eligible for free school meals as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Further information on this administrative change can be found on gov.uk under “allocation changes from 2021 to 2022” on:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>.

■ Schools: Finance

Anne Marie Morris:

[158926]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will provide a map of school funding for England at (a) county level and (b) for each school.

Nick Gibb:

The schools national funding formula (NFF) is the way the Government decides how much core funding to allocate for mainstream, state-funded schools in England.

Each year, we publish tables showing NFF funding allocations to local authorities and notional school-level allocations for the coming financial year. The latest publication was on 20 July 2020, which shows funding allocations for the 2021-22 financial year, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-funding-formula-tables-for-schools-and-high-needs-2021-to-2022>.

The funding rates for local authorities determined through the NFF are multiplied by the latest pupil numbers in the autumn school census to provide final allocations to local authorities for the coming financial year, through the Dedicated Schools Grant. Final funding amounts for the 2021-22 financial year were published on 17 December 2020, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2021-to-2022>.

It should be noted that school level figures are notional because local authorities continue to set a local formula to distribute final funding to schools in their area. The actual amounts that schools attract through local formulae are also published once a year, and 2020-21 amounts are available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-funding-statistics/2020-21>.

The Government will, in the coming months, put forward proposals to move to a ‘hard’ NFF in future, where schools’ budgets will be determined on the basis of the single NFF.

■ Schools: Travel

Daniel Kawczynski:

[156310]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what specific support is available for the school travel sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

Since September 2020, the Department has allocated more than £98 million to local transport authorities (LTA) to procure additional dedicated home to school and college transport, enabling children and young people to use alternatives to public transport while social distancing remains in place. LTAs have flexibility in how they

use this funding to meet the needs of local families, including hiring extra coaches. The Department is reviewing funding arrangements for the summer term.

The main central government contribution to the costs of providing school transport (special educational needs and mainstream) is currently met from the Local Government Finance Settlement, administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

■ **Sixth Form Education: Finance**

Robert Halfon:

[\[156340\]](#)

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

Gillian Keegan:

The government is investing an additional £291 million in 16 to 19 education in 2021 to 2022. This is in addition to the £400 million awarded in the 2019 Spending Review, which was the biggest injection of new money into 16-19 education in a single year since 2010. This has allowed us to raise the base rate of funding for all providers of 16-19 education, including school sixth forms and sixth form colleges, for the first time since the current funding system was introduced in 2013 – from £4,000 in each academic year up to 2019/20, to £4,188 this year and next year – as well as to make further funding increases targeted on high value and high cost programmes.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Autism**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[158894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure that children with (a) autism and (b) high-functioning autism (i) have access to therapy while schools are closed and (ii) will continue to have access to that therapy once schools re-open as part of the education route map.

Vicky Ford:

During periods of national lockdown, settings have remained open to vulnerable children and young people, including those with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Our guidance clearly states that therapists and other professionals have been able to continue to visit education settings to provide therapies and support during this period. We have worked with health partners to promote collaborative working between education settings, local authorities, clinical commissioning groups and health providers to agree appropriate support throughout this period.

Where children and young people with EHC plans are not attending their education setting, multi-agency professionals should collaborate to agree how the provision set out in the EHC plan can be delivered. This may include face-to-face visits to the home, or virtual support by means of video, telephone calls or email.

When schools and colleges open more widely they should, along with the local authority and health partners, work with families to co-produce arrangements for delivering all therapies and support that would normally be in place, including for those with autism.

In addition, the Department has provided £600,000 in 2020-21 to the Autism Education Trust to deliver autism training and good practice support to the education workforce. This includes a dedicated COVID-19 information hub which contains guidance, tools and information for education staff and families.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Jack Lopresti:

[\[156344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support university students facing financial hardship as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is aware of the disproportionate impact the crisis 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 providers in December 2020.

Providers will have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to students, in a way that will best prioritise those in greatest need. 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 higher education providers are able draw on this academic year towards student hardship funds.

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.

On 13 January 2021, I wrote to the Office for Students, the regulator for higher education providers in England and outlined government expectations of the higher education 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.

■ Students: Mental Health Services

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[158887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the provision of mental health services for students at university.

Michelle Donelan:

Protecting student and staff wellbeing is vital during these difficult times and it is important students can still access the mental health and wellbeing support they need. We recognise that many students are facing additional mental health challenges due to the disruption and uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

It is for higher education (HE) providers as autonomous bodies to identify and address the needs of their student body and decide what mental health and wellbeing support to put in place. HE providers have a duty of care towards their staff and students, including legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010, to take all reasonable steps to protect the health and safety and welfare of students to prevent harm. HE providers are best placed to understand and cater for their student body including providing mental health support for lower-level needs.

The Department of Health and Social Care has overall policy responsibility for young people's mental health. We continue to work closely with them to take steps to develop mental health and wellbeing support.

The government is committed, through the NHS Long Term Plan, to investing at least £2.3 billion of extra funding a year into mental health services by financial year 2023-24. This will see an additional 345,000 children and young people, and adults, able to access support through NHS-funded services. This year the NHS will receive around an additional £500 million, to address waiting times for mental health services, give more people the mental health support they need, and invest in the NHS workforce. More detail will be provided in due course.

We have also worked with the Office for Students (OfS) to provide Student Space, which has been funded by up to £3 million by the OfS. Student Space is a mental health and wellbeing platform designed to bridge any gaps in support for students arising from this unprecedented situation and works alongside existing services. I am delighted they have extended the platform to support students for the whole 2020/21 academic year.

■ Summer Schools: Coronavirus**Wes Streeting:**[\[158129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how he plans to allocate the Government's £200 million funding for face-to-face secondary summer school provision; and if he will publish those allocations for each school by (a) constituency and (b) local authority area.

Nick Gibb:

£200 million will be specifically available to secondary schools to deliver a face to face summer programme. Evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation shows that summer schools can help pupils make up 2 months' additional progress. We are investing in summer schools as part of the targeted offer to young people who will most benefit.

Schools will be able to target provision based on pupils' needs although we suggest they may want initially to target incoming Year 7 pupils. This is alongside wider

support funded through our Holiday Activities and Food Programme across the country.

The Department will ensure that funding is available for all secondary schools that wish to run a summer school provision, including middle schools and we will apply extra weighting to fund special and alternative provision schools.

The Department will provide details of how the funds will be allocated in due course, ensuring that schools have adequate time to plan ahead for the summer provision.

■ Teachers: Vetting

Daisy Cooper:

[155402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department will be providing to Local Education Authorities and schools on the safeguarding checks required following the announcement that from 1 January 2021 professional regulators in the EEA will no longer share information on sanctions imposed on EEA teachers with the Teaching Regulation Agency.

Nick Gibb:

The Department updated part three, the safer recruitment section, of our statutory safeguarding guidance 'keeping children safe in education 2020' on 18 January 2021 to reflect legal changes following the UK's exit from the European Union, including guidance on checking the past conduct of individuals who have lived or worked overseas. Further details on this statutory safeguarding guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>.

■ Universities: Admissions

Colleen Fletcher:

[158955]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to reduce barriers to university for people from disadvantaged backgrounds in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

Michelle Donelan:

It is more crucial than ever before that we tap into the brilliant talent that our country has to offer, and make sure that university places are available to all who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so.

All higher education (HE) providers wanting to charge higher level fees must have an Access and Participation Plan agreed by the Office for Students (OfS), in which they set out the measures they intend to take to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups to access and succeed in higher education.

In our latest strategic guidance to the OfS we asked them to urge providers to do more to ensure that all students, particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, are recruited on to courses that will deliver good outcomes. Too many students are being let down by courses with low completion rates and courses which

have no real labour market demand and therefore do not lead them into skilled employment.

We want to help disadvantaged students by driving up standards, not by levelling down. True social mobility is when we put students and their needs and career ambitions first, be that HE, further education or apprenticeships.

■ Vocational Education: Qualifications

Robert Halfon:

[\[156339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent progress has been made on the Government's consultation on the future of newly-reformed Applied General Qualifications.

Gillian Keegan:

The Department has consulted in 2 stages on proposals for the review of post-16 qualifications at level 3, which includes Applied General qualifications. The second stage of consultation ran from 23 October 2020 to 31 January 2021 and asked for views on the range of qualifications that will sit alongside A levels and T Levels in future.

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

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Assistance Animals: Travel

Liz Twist:

[\[156506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to ensure that people in Great Britain who use assistance dogs do not face hardship as a result of new administrative requirements when they travel to Northern Ireland.

Victoria Prentis:

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

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

The Government is engaging with the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to explore means to streamline pet travel between Great Britain and Northern Ireland recognising the high standards of animal health that we share. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has also written to the European Vice-President seeking to ensure that an agreement can be made to address the barriers imposed on pet travel between Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Ireland.

In the meantime, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland has recently published guidance on a pragmatic enforcement approach to pets entering from Great Britain. Northern Ireland-based pets and assistance dogs returning to Northern Ireland from Great Britain can continue to use a Northern Ireland-issued EU Pet Passport to re-enter Northern Ireland and will not need an animal health certificate. Pets and assistance dogs entering from Great Britain will not be subject to routine checks until July 2021. Current guidance on pet travel to Northern Ireland is available on DAERA's NIDirect website.

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

■ **Birds: Gough Island**

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[156291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to provide financial support to the Gough Island Restoration project to help save critically endangered and endangered birds there by eradicating mice from the island.

Rebecca Pow:

Gough Island is a UNESCO natural World Heritage site and the UK Government continues to support RSPB's efforts to eradicate invasive non-native mice from Gough Island to save critically endangered seabirds from extinction. The RSPB is proceeding with preparations for the final eradication stage taking place later this year. The UK Government has provided over £2 million in funding to support this project and will give further consideration to providing additional funding for the next financial year.

■ **Chemicals: Regulation**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[157072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that the UK REACH chemicals regulation complies with the terms of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[157073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the compatibility of chemical industry proposals to curtail provision of chemical safety data for UK REACH with the Government's commitment to maintain high environmental standards.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[157074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what criteria his Department will use to assess chemical industry proposals to curtail provision of chemical safety data for UK REACH.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[157075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to undertake public consultation on chemical industry proposals to curtail provision of chemical safety data for UK REACH.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[157076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with public health and environmental organisations on chemical industry proposals to curtail provision of chemical safety data for UK REACH.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[157077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with devolved Administrations on chemical industry proposals to curtail provision of chemical safety data for UK REACH.

Rebecca Pow:

UK REACH retains both the fundamental approach and key principles of REACH with its aims of ensuring a high level of protection of human health and the environment and enhancing competitiveness and innovation. These principles include the "no data, no market" principle, the "last resort" principle on animal testing, access to information for workers and the precautionary principle.

Now we have left the EU we have the freedom to take our own independent regulatory decisions that respond quickly to the circumstances in the UK and globally. For example, we have the ability to take proactive action on the levels of exposure or environmental conditions in the UK. Under UK REACH the ongoing responsibility to demonstrate understanding of hazards and risks and effective risk management lies with industry.

A number of organisations in the chemicals and downstream user sectors have recently written to us about the data provision requirements of UK REACH given the potential costs involved. We are looking into the detail of that proposal very carefully. In doing so we will take account of the benefits and risks of making any changes to the arrangements that are in place now, including the impact it would have in our commitment to maintaining high standards of protection for public health and the environment. We will also consider the impact on our international obligations.

We will involve the devolved administrations in this work as competence for the environment and public health is devolved. As well as discussing the proposal with industry we will also want to hear the views of other interested parties, including public health and environmental organisations.

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

Luke Pollard:

[\[158199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of additional full-time equivalent employees employed by his Department who were temporarily allocated to EU Exit preparation work in the areas of (a) fisheries, (b) farming and (c) chemicals will leave his Department in 2021-22.

Victoria Prentis:

Since April 2018, 176.9 were recruited as full time equivalent on fixed term or temporary appointment to work on EU exit preparation work. 97.9 will leave the department in 2021-22.

Defra is unable to provide information on how many of the 176.9 recruited work in the areas of (a) fisheries, (b) farming and (c) chemicals as this information is not recorded.

■ **Dogs: Licensing**

Dan Jarvis:

[\[158924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to introduce requirements for criminal record checks to the dog licensing process.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[158925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of excluding criminal record checks from the dog licensing process on the safety of (a) animals and (b) local communities.

Victoria Prentis:

Under *The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018* (the 2018 Regulations) anyone who is in the business of breeding and selling dogs requires a valid licence from their local authority. The local authority is responsible for enforcing the 2018 Regulations and has powers to grant, refuse or revoke a licence. Regulation 11 and Schedule 8 of the 2018 Regulations set out restrictions as to who may not hold a licence under the 2018 Regulations and this includes people who have animal related criminal offences under certain legislation, across Great Britain. As required by the 2018 Regulations, we will be reviewing them five years after they came into force (2023). The review of the 2018 Regulations would be a suitable time to consider whether or not background criminal record checks should be included in the licensing process. In the meantime, if anyone suspects a licensee should not be operating because they fall within Regulation 11

and Schedule 8 of the 2018 Regulations, they should report the matter to the relevant local authority which has powers to investigate.

■ Environment Protection

Caroline Lucas:

[\[157065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Government's policy statement on environmental principles published in December 2018, what plans the Government has to publish a public consultation on those principles.

Rebecca Pow:

It is our intention to launch a 12-week consultation this March on a draft policy statement on environmental principles. This will outline how to interpret and proportionately apply the five internationally recognised environmental principles, plus a new duty which will embed these principles in policy making across government. We welcome feedback on the draft statement once published.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[157066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to implement the policy statement on environmental principles published in December 2018.

Rebecca Pow:

It is our intention to share the draft policy statement on the environmental principles through public consultation this March. We will ensure awareness, and support understanding of the duty across government through workshops, training and integration within relevant guidance documents.

■ Fisheries

John Redwood:

[\[156225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support the UK fishing industry access markets.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is working closely with industry and with other Government departments to facilitate market access for UK seafood exports globally, including through negotiating ambitious new free-trade agreements with key markets for seafood such as Japan, and through tackling specific market access barriers as they arise in countries such as Ukraine and China. Defra is also ensuring that the interests of UK seafood businesses are represented in the Government's live trade negotiations with countries including the USA and Norway. Defra also continues to work tirelessly with other government departments, industry and the relevant authorities to ensure smooth trade flow of our goods into and out of the EU and to minimise disruption at the border.

The Defra-led '*Food is GREAT*' campaign also plays a significant part in supporting the industry access new markets and increase its market share. The campaign, run in coordination with the Department for International Trade and Seafish, promotes our excellent UK food and drink exports, including seafood, in international markets. Running between March and April 2021; this will promote UK seafood at trade shows in the US, Canada and Japan; and will develop content and materials to help promote UK seafood in market to buyers, importers and distributors.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[157051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to (a) tackle the decline of freshwater fish and (b) restore freshwater habitats in the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

As fisheries is a devolved matter, this information relates to England only. In England, the Environment Agency (EA) is responsible for ensuring conservation and maintaining the diversity of freshwater fish and conserving their aquatic environment. In order to achieve this, last year the EA worked with over 150 partners and invested nearly £27m in fisheries projects. This work has included improving fish passage, fish stocking, river restoration and improving water quality in line with the Water Framework Directive. In total, around 15,000km of river has been protected or improved since 1995 to benefit fisheries and nature conservation.

■ Flood Control: Finance

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[156311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on increasing financial support for flooding in the upcoming Budget.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government committed at Budget 2020 to a doubling of our investment in the next floods capital programme, providing long term certainty on funding levels up to 2027. Starting from April 2021, we will invest £5.2 billion in a six-year capital investment programme for flood and coastal erosion risk management to build over 2,000 new flood defences. This investment will better protect 336,000 properties, including 290,000 homes, from flooding and coastal erosion by 2027.

In addition, up to £170 million will be spent to accelerate work on 22 shovel-ready flood defence schemes that will begin construction in 2020 or 2021, which will provide an immediate boost to jobs supporting local economies as communities recover from the impact of coronavirus. A further £200 million will be invested in the Innovative Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme. This will help over 25 local areas over six years to take forward wider innovative actions that improve their resilience to flooding and coastal erosion.

■ Flood Control: Maghull

Bill Esterson:

[\[158922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to Answer of 25 February to Question 156364, when the Minister for flooding will meet the hon. Member for Sefton Central.

Rebecca Pow:

A meeting has been scheduled for 25 March.

■ Food Systems Summit

Caroline Lucas:

[\[156327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the Government's priorities are for the UN food systems summit in September; and what activities are taking place (a) across Departments and (b) with civil society to prepare for that summit.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra and FCDO are working closely to ensure that the UK makes a valuable contribution to the UN Food Systems Summit. The UNFSS presents an excellent opportunity to showcase the UK's thought leadership on food systems and serves as a valuable platform to exert our influence internationally.

In particular, the UK is taking a leading role on Action Track 5 on 'Building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses' and we are inputting heavily into Action Track 3 focused on 'Building nature positive production at sufficient scales' where we see clear linkages with our ambitions for COP26.

We are keen to build on the successes of the high-quality engagement with civil society which was done as part of the National Food Strategy and we are consulting colleagues in the Devolved Administrations to ensure that their voice is captured.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[156328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the Government's latest assessment is of the role of dietary change in contributing to (a) the objectives of the UN food systems summit and (b) the UK's policy goals on (i) public health, (ii) biodiversity protection, (iii) climate and (iv) animal welfare.

Victoria Prentis:

The UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) presents an excellent opportunity to showcase the UK's thought leadership on food systems and serves as a valuable platform to exert our influence internationally. Defra and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) are working closely to ensure that the UK makes a valuable contribution on all aspects of the food system, including diets.

The Government fully supports consumer choice. Our priority is to support British farming and encourage sustainable food production to ensure we have a secure, environmentally sustainable and healthy supply of food with improved standards of

animal welfare. The Government's obesity strategy is designed to reshape the food environment by providing people with a healthier choice and encouraging them to take it.

We recognise the contribution to greenhouse gas emissions made by agricultural sectors. Evidence shows that plant-based food products are generally less carbon intensive to produce than livestock products. However, while food choices can have an impact on greenhouse gas emissions, well managed livestock also provide environmental benefits such as supporting biodiversity and protecting the character of the countryside.

The Independent Review of the food system being led by Henry Dimbleby will help the Government to further understand how dietary changes can deliver public policy goals on health and sustainability.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[156329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold discussions with the Secretary of State for International Trade on the alignment of the Government's trade policy objectives with the objectives of the UN food systems summit in September 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra works closely with the Department for International Trade to ensure the Government's trade policy objectives are aligned with our sustainability and environment goals.

Resilience and sustainability should be at the heart of global food production and trade, reflecting the key concerns of the UN Food Systems Summit and the Sustainable Development Goals.

■ Genetically Modified Organisms

Caroline Lucas:

[\[156325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to reply to the letter from Beyond GM, dated 26 January 2021, raising concerns about the process of his Department's Consultation on the Regulation of Genetic Technologies that ends on 17 March 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the hon. Member. A reply has been prepared and will be issued very shortly.

■ Hunting: Foxes

Zarah Sultana:

[\[159045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to amend the Hunting Act 2004 to prohibit trail hunt organisers from (a) organising trail

hunts in close proximity to areas of high density fox populations and (b) using animal-based scents to set trail hunts.

Rebecca Pow:

This government will not amend the Hunting Act 2004 and therefore we have not made any assessment of any potential amendments.

The Hunting Act 2004 makes it an offence to hunt a wild mammal with dogs except where it is carried out in accordance with the exemptions in the Act, and completely bans hare coursing. The full details of the Hunting Act 2004 exemptions are available online at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/37/schedule/1.

Those found guilty under the Act are subject to the full force of the law. Enforcement of the Hunting Act is an operational matter for the police.

■ **Land Drainage**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[156309]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of whether local authority decisions to grant applications to discharge drainage conditions attached to previously approved planning applications in relation to surface water drainage has contributed to flooding.

Rebecca Pow:

There are many factors that contribute to flooding, including but not limited to the built environment. National planning policy supported by planning practice guidance are the responsibility of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in England. This enables the building of new homes and developments which are more resilient to flooding and ensures that there are clear safeguards for protecting people and property.

No development should take place until the developer has had approval, from the local planning authority, of a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme for the site. The drainage scheme shall demonstrate that any surface water (for all rainfall durations and intensities up to and including the climate change adjusted critical 100yr storm) can be accommodated and disposed of without discharging onto the highway and without increasing flood risk on or off-site.

These schemes can include the creation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), which reduce the risk of surface water flooding, as well as delivering water quality, biodiversity and amenity benefits, helping to make great places to live.

Planning policy ensures that SuDS are provided in all new major developments, unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate. This is in addition to requirements that SuDS should be given priority in new developments in flood risk areas. A 2018 review of the application and effectiveness of planning policy for sustainable drainage systems found that 87% of the sample of approved planning applications explicitly stated that SuDS would feature in the proposed development.

Under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) have responsibility for local flood risk management. This means ensuring risks of flooding from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses, where this is no district council, are identified and managed as part of a local flood risk management strategy.

In managing these risks an LLFA will work closely with other Risk Management Authorities. This includes the local highways authorities, who are responsible for highway and gully maintenance and water companies who, under Section 94 of the Water Industry Act 1991, have a duty to maintain public sewers to ensure that their area is effectually drained.

When flooding occurs LLFAs investigate, to the extent that they consider it necessary or appropriate, which Risk Management Authorities have relevant flood risk management functions and whether they have exercised those functions. These are called Section 19 investigations because the duty is set out in Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. LLFAs must publish the results of the investigation and notify the relevant Risk Management Authorities.

■ Rivers: Navigation

Michael Fabricant:

[\[156252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the guidance for riparian owners published by the Environment Agency entitled Living on the Edge, what the legal basis is for the statement in that guide that there is no public right of navigation on most non-tidal watercourses.

Rebecca Pow:

The legal position is complex. It is the Government's view that those seeking to navigate inland rivers for recreational purposes where there is no navigation authority should establish that they have a legal right to do so, either through voluntary agreement with riparian landowners or otherwise.

■ Sugar Beet

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[154655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has undertaken forecasting to predict aphid pest pressures for sugar beet in 2021.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[155068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of recent cold weather on the need for neonicotinoid treatment of sugar beet.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[155069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the results of forecasting to predict aphid pest pressures for 2021 for sugar beet.

Victoria Prentis:

It is well established that over-winter temperatures are a key determinant of aphid populations in the following year. Low temperatures, and in particular sharp frosts, will reduce aphid numbers and so the recent cold weather is likely to ease aphid pressures in 2021.

Temperature effects are built into the long-established Rothamsted model used to forecast virus pressures. That forecast will be made on 1 March and will be used to determine whether the threshold for using the neonicotinoid seed treatment Cruiser SB has been met. Once the virus forecast has been made, the British Beet Research Organisation will publish an advisory bulletin setting this out.

■ Veterinary Services**Ruth Cadbury:**[\[156424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the decision to remove veterinary workers from the critical workers list on the provision of animal welfare services.

Victoria Prentis:

Although veterinary workers providing emergency care in England in non-food chain related roles were removed from the critical workers list when the latest lockdown was announced this January, vets providing services in the food chain are still included as critical workers and have been able to send their children to school. This includes veterinary surgeons working in abattoirs and meat processing plants, at border control posts, and attending to livestock production. Schools in England are scheduled to reopen for all pupils from 8 March 2021. We are not aware of major animal welfare issues arising in relation to the provision of veterinary services during the lockdown.

■ Woodhouse Colliery**Margaret Ferrier:**[\[156422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Woodhouse Colliery project on the UK's Paris Climate Agreement obligations.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK has been leading internationally on the phase out of (unabated) coal fired power generation through its co-leadership of the Powering Past Coal Alliance which has now grown to over 100 members. Through our work under the COP26 Energy Transition Campaign, the UK has been playing a leading role in driving the global transition from coal fired power generation to clean energy. The UK is also working internationally, including through its leadership of Mission Innovation, the global initiative working to accelerate clean energy *innovation*. As part of this we are developing technology solutions that will enable more rapid decarbonisation of the

industrial sector and only a few months ago we ended direct government support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas.

As this is a live litigation matter it would not be appropriate to comment on the application.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Chris Clarkson:

[\[912773\]](#)

What diplomatic steps he has taken to support a peace settlement in Cyprus.

Wendy Morton:

The Foreign Secretary has been actively engaged in the run-up to UN talks at the end of April in support of a just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus issue. He visited Cyprus on 4 February and met with the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Communities and encouraged them to show flexibility at the talks and to engage without preconditions. The UK fully supports the UN's approach to negotiations.

The Foreign Secretary also delivered similar messages to Greek Foreign Minister Dendias and Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu on 2 and 3 February. He has engaged the UN Secretary General on how we make the most of the current opportunity and discussed this further with the UN Special Representative for Cyprus on 4 February.

■ Afghanistan: Peace Negotiations

Dan Jarvis:

[\[912767\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the Afghan peace process.

Nigel Adams:

The UK works closely with the Afghan government, US and NATO allies and other international partners for a more secure and stable future for Afghan people and the region.

When they spoke on 26 February, the Prime Minister reaffirmed to the President of Afghanistan UK support for Afghanistan, including through NATO, the importance of making progress on peace and preserving gains in rights and freedoms.

■ Asia: Gambling

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[156463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his international counterparts on restricting the sponsorship of UK sport Asian gambling operators marketing illegal products.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary has not made any representations to Governments in Asian countries on the sponsorship of UK sport by Asian gambling operators.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Legal Opinion**Stephen Doughty:**[\[157126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 153250 on British Indian Ocean Territory: Legal Opinion, if he will publish the costs broken down by (a) Government Legal Department costs, as well as counsel fees, in respect of the arbitral proceedings brought by Mauritius under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, (b) the advisory proceedings before the International Court of Justice, (c) relevant domestic litigation and (d) the UK's contribution to the cost of the tribunal established for the arbitral proceedings brought by Mauritius.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: According to the available records, the FCDO has spent £5,841,662 on external legal services relating to disputes concerning the British Indian Ocean Territory.

This cost is broken down as follows:

- (a) £681,220 in Counsel fees in respect of the arbitral proceedings brought by Mauritius under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea;
- (b) £311,942.31 in Counsel fees and £15,173.69 in Government Legal Department (GLD) costs in respect of the advisory proceedings before the International Court of Justice;
- (c) £4,008,826 in GLD costs, including Counsel fees, in respect of relevant domestic litigation; and
- (d) £824,500 as the UK's contribution to the cost of the tribunal established for the arbitral proceedings brought by Mauritius.

■ British Nationals Abroad: EU Countries**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[157321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to have further discussions with his EU counterparts on changing the rule which allows UK nationals to visit Europe without a visa for 90 days in a 180-day period to reflect the rule allowing EU nationals to visit the UK.

Wendy Morton:

The Government discussed arrangements with the EU for British Citizens travelling to the Schengen Area. Regrettably, the EU consistently maintained that British Citizens will be treated as third-country nationals under the Schengen Borders Code from 1 January 2021. This means that British Citizens are able to travel visa-free for short stays for up to 90 days in a rolling 180-day period. This is the standard length of stay

that EU offers to nationals of eligible third countries that offer visa-free travel for EU citizens, in line with existing EU legislation.

British Citizens planning to stay longer will need permission from the relevant Member State(s). This may require applying for a visa and/or permit. Information about travel to Europe is available on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/visit-europe-1-january-2021>

The UK's Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU confirms that both the UK and EU currently provide for visa-free travel for short-term visits for each other's nationals in accordance with their respective laws. The detail of those arrangements is set by domestic law. The Government does not typically enter into bilateral agreements on visa-free travel. The UK keeps its visa system under regular review, and the new points-based immigration system has been developed in the national interest. The Government also keeps arrangements and advice for British Citizens travelling abroad under regular review.

■ **Chen Quanguo**

Margaret Ferrier:

[157156]

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

Nigel Adams:

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

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

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Caroline Lucas:

[157069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Government announcement to donate surplus Covid-19 vaccine doses to other countries, whether the Government plans to charge receiving countries for UK surplus vaccines; and if he will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

The Prime Minister has confirmed that the UK will share the majority of any future excess COVID-19 vaccines from our supply with the COVAX international vaccine

procurement pool. However, it is still too soon to say when we will have any surplus doses.

Our current priorities are ensuring the safety of the UK population, and making sure that COVAX, the multilateral facility responsible for distributing COVID-19 vaccines, is able to allocate vaccines where they are most needed. We will set out details on the funding mechanisms, and any cost recovery in due course.

■ Democratic Republic of the Congo: Famine

Paul Blomfield:

[\[156359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support people threatened with famine in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

James Duddridge:

Responding to severe food insecurity is one of the UK's key objectives in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). UK aid has provided access to food for over 1.7 million people since 2017.

The UK is leading a global call to action on the risk of famine. We have appointed Nick Dyer as the UK's first Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs, and pledged £180 million in 2020 to provide aid to more than 7 million vulnerable people in some of the world's most fragile places, including the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

During my visit to the DRC in November 2020, I discussed with the Government of DRC the need to address the insecurity and conflict in the East which one of the key drivers of the humanitarian crisis. I also met with food insecure people who had fled violence, and visited a hospital where malnourished children were given lifesaving treatment.

■ Developing Countries: Females

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[912772\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the effect of the proposed reduction in the Official Development Assistance budget on (a) universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and (b) women and girls in the global south.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is proud to defend universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights; these are fundamental to the empowerment of women and girls. Between 2019 and 2020 alone, UK aid helped over 25 million women and girls use modern methods of contraception.

Advancing gender equality and women's rights are a core part of the UK Government's work on development, including enabling girls to fulfil 12 years of quality education.

We are working through the implications of the ODA reductions for individual programmes and activities. No decisions on individual country or sectoral budgets have been made yet.

■ Developing Countries: Gender Equality

Ruth Jones:

[\[158208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps the Government has taken to help achieve gender equality in the Global South.

Wendy Morton:

Promoting gender equality and advancing women and girls' rights around the world is a priority for the UK Government. Between 2015 and 2020, we supported 8.1 million girls gain access to a decent education. In 2019-20 alone we provided 25.4 million women and girls with modern methods of family planning, saving 8,100 women's lives.

Our leadership on gender equality has become increasingly vital as we work with partners to build back better and more inclusively after COVID-19. We are preparing to take full advantage of the many opportunities that 2021 offers to advance gender equality in the Global South. We are putting gender equality at the heart of our G7 Presidency, co-leading the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence, hosting the Global Partnership for Education and recognising the importance of gender to be effective in the fight against climate change.

■ Developing Countries: Health Services

Stuart Anderson:

[\[912764\]](#)

What steps he is taking to strengthen health systems in developing countries.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has been at the forefront of the international response to COVID-19, pledging up to £1.3 billion to address the health, humanitarian, and socio-economic impacts. We are working to strengthen global health security against future pandemics through the Prime Minister's Five-Point Plan, and to end preventable deaths of mothers, newborn babies and children. We recently announced £340 million core contribution to WHO (2020-24), to support WHO's work including on maternal and child health and strengthening health systems.

The UK is also a leading donor to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria and Gavi which are helping to keep essential health services going during the pandemic. Our investments in the Global Financing Facility are helping strengthen health systems alongside the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines.

■ Global Partnership for Education

Bim Afolami:

[\[912766\]](#)

What plans he has to ensure that the UK and other donors contribute funding to the Global Partnership for Education replenishment in 2021.

Wendy Morton:

The UK helped found the GPE and we have been its largest donor, having contributed \$1.6 billion since 2002. Since its creation, the GPE has contributed to the largest expansion of primary and lower secondary schooling in history.

Global education will be a key focus of the UK's G7 Presidency and we call on all donors to step up with ambitious pledges to help the GPE secure its target of up to \$5 billion. No decision has been taken yet on the UK's next contribution to GPE, and details will follow in due course.

■ India: Foreign Relations

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[912779\]](#)

What diplomatic steps he is taking to improve UK engagement with India.

Nigel Adams:

We look forward to an ambitious PM visit that will deliver on shared priorities, and multi-lateral collaboration with India as a guest at the G7, and as a non-permanent member of the UNSC.

In December, the Foreign Secretary visited India to deepen our bilateral strategic partnership and demonstrate our commitment to closer partnership with the region as a whole. In February, the Trade Secretary visited India to push forward delivery of an Enhanced Trade Partnership, as a springboard for a future FTA. The visit secured 1,500 jobs and investment in UK vaccine manufacturing. Ahead of UK COP26 Presidency, Alok Sharma visited India in February, meeting with PM Modi to increase momentum for UK-India climate collaboration.

■ Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:

[\[155172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government has taken to consult representatives of civil society in conflict-affected communities as part of the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

James Cleverly:

The Integrated Review is informed by a strong and diverse evidence base. FCDO officials have had regular discussions about the Review and its themes with domestic and international contacts. This has supported wider external engagement across Government on key themes as they emerged during the Integrated Review's process.

In addition, the Government launched a Call for Evidence last year to inform the Integrated Review. This was open to anyone with an interest and role in our nation's security and prosperity, and in tackling the global challenges the UK will face over the coming years. We are pleased to have received a diverse range of over 450 submissions covering multiple themes, including conflict.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Sarah Champion: [\[156408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will call on the Israeli military authorities to cease arresting, detaining and charging Palestinian university students for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression.

James Cleverly:

We continue to urge the Israeli Government to fully respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of human rights defenders and organisations, including reiterating the importance of freedom of speech. We have also raised concerns with the Palestinian Authority about the narrowing of space for civil society to operate in the West Bank.

■ Israel: Political Prisoners

Sarah Champion: [\[156407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 146899 on Israel: Political Prisoners, if he will call for the immediate release of Ms Layan Kayed, Ms Elyaa Abu Hijla and Ms Ruba Asi.

James Cleverly:

We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law and either charge or release detainees.

■ Myanmar: Elections

Ruth Jones: [\[157287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what most recent representations he has made to the Government of Myanmar on the recent election in that country.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is clear that the results of the November 2020 election should be respected. We will continue to reiterate to the military regime that they should hand back power to the democratically elected government and release all those detained arbitrarily.

I [Minister Adams] formally summoned the Myanmar Ambassador on 1 and 22 February, and reiterated that the democratic wishes of the people of Myanmar must be respected, those detained arbitrarily be released, peaceful protest permitted and the elected National Assembly peacefully re-convened. Additionally, HMA Yangon

attended an Ambassadors' briefing with the military appointed Foreign Minister. He used this opportunity to unequivocally condemn the coup and call for the release of those in arbitrary detention.

■ Myanmar: Politics and Government

Ruth Jones:

[157288]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the security situation in Myanmar.

Nigel Adams:

We are deeply concerned about the security situation in Myanmar which has deteriorated significantly since the coup. We urgently convened the UN Security Council following the coup and secured a unanimous statement expressing concern at the situation. The UK condemns the military coup in Myanmar and the detention of members of the civilian Government, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, civil society and foreign nationals. The UK firmly condemns the violent crackdown by Myanmar's military on peaceful protests. We urge the military to exercise utmost restraint and respect human rights and international law, and are clear that the right to peaceful protest must be protected.

We are concerned about the recent internet blackouts, which have made information flows in and out of the country more challenging. Internet services must be maintained and freedom of expression protected.

■ North Africa: Foreign Relations

Damien Moore:

[R] [912768]

What assessment he has made of the potential for improved political, trade and economic relations with Tunisia and Libya.

James Cleverly:

I am grateful for the work of my Honourable Friend the Member for Southport, as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy for Libya and Tunisia.

The UK is supporting the UN-led political process in Libya. Peace and stability is the best way to create opportunities for investment and trade. The recent appointment of a new interim executive authority is positive and the Prime Minister has spoken to PM-designate Dabaiba.

The UK works with Tunisia to support political and economic reform. The Bilateral Association Agreement entered into force on 1 January and provides a platform to deepen trade and investment.

■ Occupied Territories: International Criminal Court

Bob Blackman: [\[154987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the February 2021 International Criminal Court ruling on the situation of Palestine.

Bob Blackman: [\[154988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the US Administration on the International Criminal Court's ruling that it has jurisdiction over the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

Bob Blackman: [\[154989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his US counterpart on the International Criminal Court's ruling of 5 February 2021 that it has jurisdiction over the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

James Cleverly:

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

Scott Benton: [\[155428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the International Criminal Court's assertion of legal authority to UN General Assembly resolutions, with reference to the February 2021 ICC pre-trial ruling on the situation of Palestine.

Scott Benton: [\[155429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the February 2021 pre-trial ruling regarding the scope of the ICC's territorial jurisdiction in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, what steps he is taking to prevent politically motivated cases at the International Criminal Court.

James Cleverly:

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

■ Occupied Territories: War Crimes

Andrew Rosindell: [\[153155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with international counterparts on the International Criminal Court's ruling that it has jurisdiction to open a probe into allegations of war crimes in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

James Cleverly:

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

Christian Wakeford:[\[153431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the International Criminal Court's ruling of 5 February 2021 that the Court has jurisdiction over war crimes committed in Palestinian territories.

Christian Wakeford:[\[153432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications of his policies of the February 2021 International Criminal Court ruling on the scope of the ICC's territorial jurisdiction in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

James Cleverly:

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

■ Overseas Aid: Climate Change**Matthew Pennycook:**[\[158147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much of the Government's £5.8 billion pledge for International Climate Finance committed to the period 2016-17 to 2020-21 was spent in each of those financial years; and how much of the £11.6 billion the Government has committed to International Climate Finance between 2021-22 and 2025-26 is planned to be spent in each of those financial years.

James Duddridge:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: Details of UK International Climate Finance (ICF) by calendar year can be found [here](#). Headline figures are below:

| YEAR | AMOUNT (MILLION) |
|------|------------------|
| 2016 | £1,025 |
| 2017 | £903 |
| 2018 | £1,169 |
| 2019 | £1,183 |

The UK Government remains committed to doubling our ICF to £11.6 billion over the next five years. Annual allocations have not been set for the five year period.

■ Palestinians: Coronavirus**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[156542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Israel counterpart to encourage the timely import of vaccines and equipment needed to (a) run immunisation programmes and (b) combat the covid-19 pandemic in the occupied Palestinian territory.

James Cleverly:

Under International Humanitarian Law, Israel, as the Occupying Power, has a duty of ensuring and maintaining public health and hygiene in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), to the fullest extent of the means available and with the cooperation of the local authorities. We also recognise the Palestinian Authority's (PA) responsibilities for vaccinations under the Oslo Accords (under Article 17).

We welcome the steps that the parties have taken so far to coordinate responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and encourage further dialogue in this regard. The UK Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised the issue of vaccines with the Israeli Authorities on 24 February, encouraging the Government of Israel to continue to facilitate the transfer of vaccines to the PA when required. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General in Jerusalem are in regular contact with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities respectively, and will continue to raise timely and appropriate access to COVID-19 vaccines and medical equipment.

■ Palestinians: Elections**Paul Blomfield:**[\[156361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Government of Israel on ensuring that the forthcoming Palestinian elections can take place free of interference and obstruction.

James Cleverly:

We welcome President Abbas' announcement of dates for legislative and Presidential elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territories for the first time since 2006. We encourage the Palestinian leadership to work toward strong, inclusive, accountable and democratic institutions, based on respect for the rule of law and human rights. Free and fair elections are an important and necessary step. The UK will work closely with the Palestinian Authority and international partners to support this. We are supportive of Hamas-Fatah reconciliation attempts, and of the Palestinian Authority returning to resume government functions in Gaza, helping to improve the dire humanitarian and economic situation and restore effective and accountable governance.

■ Special Representative on UK Victims of Gaddafi-sponsored IRA Terrorism**Ian Paisley:**[\[912791\]](#)

What policies he plans to implement in response to the Shawcross Report on UK victims of Qadhafi-sponsored IRA terrorism.

James Cleverly:

I express my deepest sympathies to UK victims of Qadhafi-sponsored IRA terrorism, and all victims of Troubles.

This is an important issue; and I recognise this House takes a close interest.

Ministers across Government are carefully considering the internal scoping report Mr Shawcross has produced in order to do justice to the important and sensitive issues it covers, giving due respect to the victims.

■ Sub-saharan Africa: Health Services**Ruth Jones:****[158205]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what most recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on health systems in sub-Saharan Africa.

Wendy Morton:

COVID-19 continues to result in health systems disruptions and reduced demand for health and nutrition services globally, including in Africa. Analysis by the Africa CDC shows that over 40% of those needing health services during the pandemic missed or delayed their care, due to fear of contracting COVID-19 or reduced availability of services. Over half of countries that responded to a WHO survey reported that they had implemented policies to scale back service provision in response to COVID-19. FCDO continues to monitor the impacts of the pandemic on health and nutrition and we are working with UNICEF and other partners to strengthen data collection and analysis.

The UK's diplomacy, programmes and funding are playing a vital role in mitigating these indirect impacts of the pandemic. The UK has committed up to £1.3bn of UK Aid for the international response to the pandemic, supporting the direct response to COVID-19 and tackling the broader health, humanitarian, and socio-economic impacts. The UK has increased funding to WHO, contributing £340m in core voluntary funding over the next four years. This will help to strengthen health systems in vulnerable countries, together with our bilateral health programmes and funding to other partnerships such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**Daisy Cooper:****[157307]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Government's roadmap on easing lockdown restrictions announced on 22 February 2021, whether his Department plans to adjust its travel advice to a regional as opposed to a whole country basis in advance of international travel being permitted under the provisions of that roadmap.

Nigel Adams:

We keep our travel advice and methodology under constant review including to respond effectively to rapid developments in the COVID-19 pandemic. Our travel advice relating to COVID-19 reflects current expert risk assessments and analysis from Public Health England (PHE) and National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC), supported by the Chief Medical Officer. With a few exceptions, PHE and NaTHNaC do not produce subnational travel risk ratings.

■ **Vietnam: Coronavirus****Hilary Benn:**[\[157010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans the Government has to send surplus vaccine doses to Vietnam.

Nigel Adams:

The Prime Minister has confirmed that the majority of any surplus COVID-19 vaccine doses in the UK's supply will be shared with COVAX. As the multilateral facility responsible for distributing COVID-19 vaccines to ensure global equitable access, it is right that COVAX decide how the vaccines that are provided to it can best be allocated to meet need and to ensure effectiveness and fairness.

The Right Honourable Member for Leeds South's reference to Vietnam reflects the wider importance of global equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. This has been a central part of the government's international response to the pandemic. In addition to committing to sharing our surplus doses with COVAX, we have contributed £548m towards the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, which provides access to vaccines to the 92 most vulnerable economies. Vietnam is eligible for vaccines through the Advance Market Commitment and I [Minister Adams] am pleased to report it has been initially allocated over 4.8m doses of AstraZeneca vaccine, with a delivery target of the second quarter of this year. While the progress made by COVAX is a significant achievement, we are clear this is just a start and the Government will continue to work with our international partners to ensure a strong and effective global response.

■ **Yemen: Armed Conflict****Kate Osamor:**[\[156483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the export of air-to-air refuelling equipment from the UK to Saudi Arabia on the war in Yemen.

Kate Osamor:[\[156485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of restricting arms sales to Saudi Arabia on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

Kate Osamor:

[\[156486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of granting UK Export licenses for arms sales to Saudi Arabia on the UK's development goals in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

The Government takes its export control responsibilities extremely seriously. All applications for export licences are assessed against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria. This is a rigorous assessment process which incorporates expertise from several Government Departments and takes into account a wide range of information from a variety of sources, including the UN and NGOs.

The UK is one of the largest humanitarian donors to Yemen, providing over £1 billion in UK aid since the conflict began. This has helped to make sure millions of vulnerable Yemenis have access to food and sanitation.

Kevin Brennan:

[\[912763\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the prospects for an end to the conflict in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

The UK fully supports the efforts of UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths to resolve the Yemen conflict. I spoke to Martin Griffiths on Monday. He is seeking to secure a ceasefire and the resumption of a comprehensive political process. This comes as the Houthi offensive on Marib threatens these efforts and to displace thousands of civilians.

We are using all our diplomatic and humanitarian expertise to move the peace process forward alongside the UN, the US and our international partners.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion: Surgery

Ian Paisley:

[\[148788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many women received Evacuation of Retained Products of Conception between 30 March and 30 November for this year after having (a) a home medical abortion and (b) a medical abortion where one or both pills were taken in a clinic.

Helen Whately:

This information is not collected or held centrally.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Labelling**Derek Thomas:** [\[155284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to apply the same labelling standards to alcohol products as currently apply to other food and drink products.

Jo Churchill:

Through 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives', published in July 2020, we are committed to consult shortly on our intention to make companies provide calorie labelling on all pre-packaged alcohol they sell. The consultation will also cover introducing calorie labelling on alcoholic drinks sold in the out of home sector, for example bought on draught or by the glass.

■ Blood: Contamination**Stuart C McDonald:** [\[153275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his policy is on placing material related to the contaminated blood scandal at the National Archives; what plans are in place for ensuring appropriate access to the material for the public and for the Infected Blood Inquiry; and whether documents previously declared lost are included and identifiable.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department is obliged by the Public Records Act 1967, as amended, to consider records for permanent preservation at the National Archives, including those related to blood policy. The schedule for transfer is set out in secondary legislation, the Freedom of Information (Definition of Historical Records) (Transitional and Saving Provisions) Order 2012.

The Infected Blood Inquiry has reviewed thousands of files from the Department and has always been free to request access to files they wish to review. We have been transparent in making available documents believed to have been lost but subsequently returned by third party solicitors, having already made these available on the Department's website in 2006.

■ Cancer: Health Services**Elliot Colburn:** [\[149350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what methodology his (a) Department and (b) NHS England have used to calculate the volume of the backlog of cancer patients awaiting (a) screening and (b) treatment that has accrued as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will publish those calculations.

Jo Churchill:

National Health Service screening programmes do not hold waiting lists, therefore there is no published waiting time data. Eligible patients are invited to participate in NHS screening programmes at intervals according to the specific programme.

Data sources used by for cancer treatment include cancer waiting times data which give month by month figures on activity, referrals and waiting times, as well as management information which can provide a week to week view of activity and the current scale of the waiting list. Hospital Episode Statistics, and the secondary uses service are used alongside specific sources of information such as the Radiotherapy Dataset or the Diagnostic Imaging Dataset. Data are considered by geography, provider trust, tumour pathway and treatment modality to pinpoint areas for further action.

From March, local systems will be expected to carry out local plans formed as part of the Cancer Services Recovery Plan and continue the progress that has already been made.

Dean Russell:

[\[152667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking beyond the end of the current Cancer Services Recovery Plan in March 2021 to ensure that people with cancer can access high-quality cancer care.

Jo Churchill:

From March, local systems will be expected to carry out local plans formed as part of the Cancer Services Recovery Plan and carry on with the progress that has already been made.

We have more than doubled the number of Rapid Diagnostic Centres (RDCs) from 20 in March 2020 to 53 at the end of 2020. There are a further 63 RDCs in development. We have established COVID-19 protected surgical hubs for cancer surgery to keep often vulnerable cancer patients safe. All 21 Cancer Alliances across England have arrangements in place for surgical cancer hubs.

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[155077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will extend the Cancer Recovery Plan beyond March 2021.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: There are no plans to extend the Cancer Recovery Plan.

From March, local systems will be expected to carry out local plans formed as part of the Cancer Services Recovery Plan and continue the progress that has already been made.

■ **Cancer: Surgery**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[154777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria is used to determine which cancer surgeries are cancelled or postponed during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

National Health Service staff are working to ensure that, wherever possible, cancer treatment can continue safely. Any decision to reschedule cancer surgery will be a last resort and patients will be given the dates for their new treatment at the earliest opportunity. Doctors will always have the safety of patients at the centre of any decisions they make. NHS England's guidance for clinical staff on prioritising cancer patients is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/Media/Default/About/COVID-19/Specialty-guides/cancer-and-COVID-19.pdf>

■ Cancer: Young People**Conor McGinn:****[155169]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking in conjunction with NHS Hospital Trusts to ensure that young people are able to safely have a companion present for key cancer appointments and treatments during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: We understand the need for young people to be accompanied by their parents and caregivers at appointments and recommend that patients be accompanied where appropriate and necessary. The current guidance, published on 13 October 2020, allows visiting in outpatient and diagnostic settings in a COVID-19 secure way.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus**Helen Hayes:****[91102]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many tests as part of the programme of weekly covid-19 testing for care home workers (a) were carried out and (b) provided an analytical outcome reported to a care home provider for each week between 1 July and 15 September 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: We do not hold data in the format requested.

■ Contact Tracing: Computer Software**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:****[110882]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many contacts have been made via the NHS test and trace app (a) in total and (b) by employment sector.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: As of 17 February 2021 1,764,520 contact tracing alerts have been sent out to app users in England who have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus.

Users of the NHS COVID-19 app are anonymous. Therefore, we do not hold data on the number of contact tracing alerts by employment sector.

■ **Coronavirus: Buildings**

Sir Graham Brady:

[\[154773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 2 September 2020 to Question 75983, on Coronavirus: Shops, if he will publish (a) the studies and (b) other research reports that his Department holds on the presence of viable covid-19 virus in the air in (i) supermarkets, (ii) other large retail settings and (iii) other non-clinical settings.

Edward Argar:

The National Institute for Health Research and UK Research and Innovation jointly awarded over £5.3million for a programme of research of eight projects to understand the routes of transmission of COVID-19 in different environments and groups of people. These projects are 12-15 months in duration and are expected to report findings in the summer of 2021.

■ **Coronavirus: Children**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[155392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of long covid on children.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

On 21 January 2021, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated that during the week commencing 27 December 2020, 301,000 people in England had symptoms that had persisted for between five and 12 weeks. The ONS found that 22.1% of people testing positive for COVID-19 exhibit symptoms for a period of five weeks or longer. That percentage is lower for those between the ages of 2 and 11 years old at 12.9% and 12 to 16 years old at 14.5%.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are developing a case definition and model of care for children with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health.

■ **Coronavirus: Contact Tracing**

Helen Hayes:

[\[149296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure contact tracing services are expanded ahead of a potential relaxation of covid-19 restrictions.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: We are continually monitoring case numbers and reviewing what this means for NHS Test and Trace operations. We have the ability to increase or decrease contact tracer resource provision at speed in response to rising

or falling numbers of cases. In addition, we continue to work with local authorities and other community partners to ensure a systematic approach to tracing and to support the targeting of local public health action.

Barbara Keeley: [90989]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of people who tested positive for covid-19 and were asked to provide details of close contacts by telephone were contacts obtained for within 24 hours of the case details being loaded onto the contract tracing system in each week from 3 August to 13 September 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: The information is not available in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Mr Steve Baker: [109324]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to validate against observed data modelled effects of (a) lockdown on reducing covid-19 virus transmission and (b) lifting lockdown on subsequent covid-19 virus transmission; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and its subgroup SPI-M-O regularly review modelling investigating the effects of non-pharmaceutical interventions. For example, after the current national restrictions were introduced on 5 January 2021, SAGE considered several different modelling scenarios to explore the potential impact of the new measures.

These scenarios investigated the number of hospital admissions, deaths and hospital bed occupancy under a range of different 'R' values. An overview of these scenarios and a comparison to the outturn data can found in SPI-M-O's consensus statements from 13 January and 3 February 2021 which are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spi-m-o-consensus-statement-on-covid-19-13-january-2021>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spi-m-o-consensus-statement-on-covid-19-3-february-2021>

Martyn Day: [113602]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria his Department is using to assess the data security of health passports.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Rt hon. Michael Gove MP) is conducting a review of COVID-19 status certification and whether it could play a role in reopening the economy, reducing restrictions on social

contact and improving safety. The review will inform the future policy of COVID-19 status certification, which would need to include what data security assessments may be required.

The Government will work closely with the National Cyber Security Centre and other partners including the Office of the National Data Guardian and the Information Commissioner's Office to seek their advice and expertise on how best to ensure that robust data security is in place.

John Redwood:

[\[121109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons the decisions on local covid-19 tier restrictions was not made on the basis of unitary authority areas.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

As the prevalence of the virus is widespread across the country, it is important to apply restrictions to broad geographical areas where there are significant interconnected economic and social networks. This approach enables the same restrictions to apply where people are likely to work and socialise.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[146970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what evidence his Department has on the closure of schools reducing the transmission of covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: Multiple data sources including the Office for National Statistics COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS) and pillar 2 test data showed a reduction in transmission in children following schools closing for October half term and transmission rates increasing again after half term. CIS data also showed a substantial decline in positivity in children aged 11 to 16 years old, which was steeper than in older age groups, following schools closing in December 2020. This is supported by the CoMix Social Contact Survey that shows the closing of schools is associated with reduced contact rates and the consensus view across models that estimate schools reopening will increase transmission and 'R' by a factor of 1.1 to 1.5 or 10% to 50%.

■ **Coronavirus: Gyms**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[156318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he undertook an assessment of the potential effect on mental health of closing gyms during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government considers the impact of any new restrictions including the potential impact on mental health, against the risk to public health.

■ Coronavirus: Harrow**Gareth Thomas:**[\[96749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in the London Borough of Harrow have been tested for covid-19 in each of the last 12 weeks; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

For the 12 week period ending 3 February, 114,853 pillar 2 tests were conducted in Harrow.

■ Coronavirus: Health Education**Dawn Butler:**[\[154844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that (a) emergency support and (b) specialised guidance on (i) covid-19 and (ii) covid-19 vaccines are provided to (A) disabled people and (B) people with a learning disability during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: We have provided over £1 million funding to learning disability and autism charities to support their COVID-19 response. We have advised people with specific health conditions, who are deemed to be clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19, to shield and providing direct support to the shielded population by enabling access to the NHS Volunteer Responders programme, which is available to anyone self-isolating.

We are implementing the national Adult Social Care Winter Plan to ensure that high-quality, safe and timely care is provided, whilst protecting people from COVID-19 and increasing access to testing in care homes, launching regular retesting in high risk supported living settings and publishing new guidance on regular testing for domiciliary care staff. We published a range of tailored guidance to help protect people with a learning disability and autistic people during the pandemic. We have also ensured that important health communications are available in alternative, accessible formats.

We have also ensured that support and guidance about getting a COVID-19 vaccine have been made available to disabled people, including people with a learning disability. We have prioritised people with a learning disability who are on a general practitioner learning disability register in priority group six for vaccination, in line with guidance from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation and made available a wide range of accessible and easy read resources on the COVID-19 vaccine.

■ Coronavirus: Health Services

Apsana Begum:

[\[154656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to create NHS Osteopathic units for Long Covid sufferers.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Patients diagnosed with 'long' COVID-19 will be directed into multi-system care pathways, which will be tailored to their specific needs. These care pathways are still in early stages of development and it is unknown whether specific osteopathic units will form a part of this.

■ Coronavirus: Newcastle upon Tyne

Chi Onwurah:

[\[148781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he will be able to estimate where covid-19 transmission is occurring in Newcastle in regard to (a) settings, (b) communities and (c) ages.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies has convened a sub-group to look at routes of transmission across a range of sectors and environments. This group will report their findings later in the year.

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine

Justin Madders:

[\[113131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the contribution of the hon Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston in the Fourth Delegated Legislation Committee on 19 October 2020, Official Report, col 10, whether he has made an assessment of the compatibility of the official Government guidance and the Test and Trace notifications on self-isolation periods.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: Notifications on self-isolation periods are given out by contact tracing staff who have received training for their role on the policies, operating procedures and scripts related to contact tracing. This training is updated in line with any changes to Government policy and guidance. Individuals who feel that they have been incorrectly notified of their self-isolation period are able to raise a dispute and have their case reviewed.

Justin Madders:

[\[137231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on trends in the level of covid-19 transmission rates of reducing the length of the period of self-isolation from 14 days to 10 days.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: While we have not made a specific assessment, the evidence shows a low likelihood of being infectious as a contact after 10 days. We will keep this under constant review.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[154905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of people for whom ineligibility for (a) self-isolation support payments and (b) sick pay has been a barrier to self-isolation during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

We have made no such estimate. The Government continues to work closely with the 314 local authorities in England to monitor the efficacy and payments made under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.

The scheme is now being extended to the summer and funding to local authorities to make discretionary payments to people facing hardship is being increased to £20 million a month, to ensure local authorities can continue to make payments and support people on low incomes to stay at home and self-isolate when required to do so.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Emma Hardy:**[\[108286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many universities have applied for accreditation from his Department under pillar 2 covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: There are currently 183 universities accredited to provide rapid lateral flow tests via asymptomatic test sites.

Jon Trickett:[\[110051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of covid-19 home test kits have produced a result.

Helen Whately:

The Government does not publish data in the format requested. However, we are currently creating a digital solution to capture all home tests not returned by post within seven days.

Tulip Siddiq:[\[114274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the proportion of rapid covid-19 tests that have been shown to have returned accurate results in respect of (a) sensitivity and (b) specificity.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: Lateral flow tests have undergone rigorous testing and evaluation including at Public Health England's research laboratories. The latest figures show a sensitivity of 57.5% generally and 84.3% in people with high

viral loads They are accurate, reliable and successfully identify those with COVID-19 without symptoms and could pass on the virus.

Maria Eagle:

[137883]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether daily lateral flow testing following exposure to a colleague that has tested positive for covid-19 obviates the need for self-isolation for ten days.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 January 2021]: Anyone identified as the close contact of someone who has tested positive must complete their full self-isolation period, regardless of any negative test result during this period. The incubation period for COVID-19 varies from person to person and a test taken during the self-isolation period may not therefore necessarily detect the virus.

Scott Benton:

[139159]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to provide private hospitals providing mental health treatment with access to publicly-funded asymptomatic covid-19 testing kits for patients, staff and visitors.

Helen Whately:

Private hospital settings providing National Health Service commissioned care can access testing through their local commissioning NHS trust or clinical commissioning group. Private hospitals who do not provide NHS-commissioned care may access publicly funded asymptomatic testing through national workplace testing.

Neale Hanvey:

[150961]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2021 to Question 122899 on Coronavirus: screening, in what format his Department (a) presents, (b) holds or (c) publishes data related to the information requested; what clinical or scientific evidence underpins his Department's policy on Innova lateral flow devices; and how much and what proportion of funding allocated to those devices has been disbursed.

Helen Whately:

The Government has published 'Liverpool COVID-19 community testing pilot: interim evaluation report summary', which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/liverpool-covid-19-community-testing-pilot-interim-evaluation-report-summary/liverpool-covid-19-community-testing-pilot-interim-evaluation-report-summary>

This is an interim report from an evaluation led by the University of Liverpool into the pilot of community open-access testing for COVID-19 among those without symptoms. A final assessment and a more detailed report on the effectiveness of mass testing and the data to support will follow in early 2021. The Department cannot comment on individual contracts due to commercial sensitivity.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[152628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the prevalence of falsified NHS covid-19 test certificates; and what steps his Department is taking to tackle that matter.

Helen Whately:

NHS Test and Trace does not issue certificates for test results. All results are notified either by email or by a text message. People who require a negative test certificate, such as for travel purposes where allowed, can purchase a swab test from a private provider. The Department does not hold information on the prevalence of falsified test certificates. The Department is considering how to raise awareness that NHS Test and Trace test results are not designed to be used as a form of certification.

■ Coronavirus: Screening and Vaccination

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[128107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what representations he has received about barriers to covid-19 (a) testing and (b) vaccination resulting from (i) requirements to produce photo ID and (ii) language about such requirements in the terms and conditions of booking.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 15 December 2020]: A search of the Department's Ministerial correspondence database shows that there are approximately 4,817 cases which either contain the term 'testing' or 'vaccination'. In order to determine whether these are representations concerning identification could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Coronavirus: Steroid Drugs

Sir Graham Brady:

[\[153125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the Oxford University study on the efficacy of inhaled Budesonide in preventing the development of severe covid-19 symptoms; and to what extent the use of inhaled steroids could be effective in treating all variants of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

We are aware of the STOIC study on the efficacy of inhaled Budesonide. STOIC is a Phase II trial with 146 participants. Phase II trials can indicate whether a treatment has potential to benefit patients, and positive results are normally followed by larger scale Phase III trials.

The Phase III PRINCIPLE trial, which currently has over 4,200 patients enrolled to date, is also trialling inhaled budesonide as a trial arm, the results for which are imminent. This will help us to assess whether this drug provides an effective way of treating COVID-19 in community settings.

■ Coronavirus: Travel Restrictions

Caroline Lucas:

[156324]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) data and (b) criteria he uses to decide which countries are included on the red list travel ban; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The decision includes countries on the 'red list' is informed by the latest scientific data and public health advice from a world-leading range of experts. Data includes evidence of variants of concern, epidemiology, imported cases and traveller volumes. The list of red list countries is kept under review.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Kate Osborne:

[139153]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will prioritise supermarket workers for the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

If supermarket workers are captured in phase one due to their age, or clinical risk factors they will be prioritised. However the Government, as advised by the JCVI, are not considering vaccinating supermarket workers as a phase one priority at this stage. Prioritisation decisions for next phase delivery are subject to of the surveillance and monitoring data and information from phase one, as well as further input from independent scientific experts such as the JCVI. Phase two may include further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services.

Marsha De Cordova:

[156553]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish data on the proportion of care home residents and staff who have been (a) offered and (b) refused each vaccine dose.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England publishes weekly data on the vaccination of care home residents and staff which is available at the following link:

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

Data on vaccine refusals is not collected.

Apsana Begum:

[156608]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the public health implications of removing from priority in phase two of the vaccine roll-out those people who take steroid inhalers to manage asthma symptoms.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation concluded that only a subset of those with asthma are at clinically higher risk from COVID-19. This group is defined as adults with asthma who require continuous or repeated use of systemic steroids or with previous exacerbations requiring hospital admission and will be vaccinated in priority group six. An individual with a more severe case of asthma may have been included in the clinically extremely vulnerable group, in which case they will be vaccinated in priority group four.

Andrew Gwynne:

[158883]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2021 to Question 134382, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of ensuring that unused covid-19 vaccines are offered to (a) police officers and (b) other key workers.

Nadhim Zahawi:

If there are 'spare' doses available from existing allocations for eligible cohorts, the priority list should be worked through including using the doses starting with those in Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) groups five and six. In very rare instances where no one from any of the JCVI priority groups are available, the spare dose should be administered based on clinical judgement on who is appropriate to receive the dose.

Peter Kyle:

[158987]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to issue guidance to clinicians working with clinically extremely vulnerable children on when it is appropriate to administer a covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that only those children at very high risk of exposure and serious outcomes, such as older children with severe neuro-disabilities that require residential care should be offered a COVID-19 vaccination. The Pfizer vaccine has been approved for use in those aged 16-17 years old.

Children under 16 years of age, even if they are clinically extremely vulnerable, are at low risk of serious morbidity and mortality and given the absence of safety and efficacy data on the vaccine, are not recommended for vaccination. The JCVI has not yet provided any further advice on children under the age of 12 years old. Any further recommendations on vaccinating children with other underlying conditions will be reviewed after the initial phase. At this stage additional data should allow a better assessment of risks and benefits.

■ Dental Services: Children

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[157148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on childhood oral health.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: Currently no such assessment has been made.

The National Dental Epidemiology Programme annual oral health surveys which include children's oral health have been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. On 18 March 2020, the 2019-2020 oral health survey of three-year-olds was suspended following advice regarding social distancing and protecting older people and vulnerable adults. Data that had already been collected will be published in spring 2021. The 2020-2021 survey of five-year-olds has been postponed as a result of COVID-19 and will be carried out in 2021-2022.

■ Dental Services: Coronavirus

Judith Cummins:

[\[107017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of enabling covid-19 testing of patients attending for dental treatment to (a) eliminate the risk of asymptomatic patients attending for treatment and (b) support the recovery of dental treatment services.

Helen Whately:

We will continue to work closely with the dentistry sector to review whether any of the available testing technologies could be appropriately and safely deployed to further eliminate the risk associated with asymptomatic patients attending for treatment.

■ Entertainments: Coronavirus

Jane Hunt:

[\[106516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing (a) amusement arcades and (b) other entertainment venues where no alcohol is served and which have been made covid-19 secure, to remain open beyond 10pm.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have made no such assessment.

■ Haemochromatosis: Screening

Sir John Hayes:

[\[157955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the UK National Screening Committee's review of screening for genetic haemochromatosis in adults including an evaluation of recent medical research published since the committee last considered the matter in 2015.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[157956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what is the timetable for publication of the conclusions of the UK National Screening Committee's review of screening for genetic haemochromatosis in adults.

Jo Churchill:

The United Kingdom National Screening Committee (UK NSC) will be reviewing the evidence alongside comments received from the public consultation on screening for hereditary hemochromatosis at its meeting on 5 March 2021. The UK NSC's recommendation will then be shared with the Department for consideration.

■ **Health Services: Children**

Derek Twigg:

[\[158861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 24 February 2021 to Question 154772, when his Department plans to recommence collecting that data on cancelled operations.

Edward Argar:

NHS England will keep the list and dates of paused publications under review ahead of Quarter 1 of 2021/22 to establish if collections should be reinstated or paused.

■ **Hospitals: Coronavirus**

John Redwood:

[\[156227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much bed capacity has been reduced by to improve infection control in hospitals in England during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The latest data shows that the average daily number of beds open overnight in Quarter 3 2020/21 was 121,524 compared to 128,326 in Quarter 3 2019/20.

Hospitals continue to flex their bed capacity as part of planning to meet the demand from both elective and emergency streams. We are working hard with trusts to maximise the number of open beds while maintaining safe care through the pandemic.

■ **Laboratories: Conditions of Employment**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[155196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) pay and (b) terms and conditions will be of the staff employed by each of the megalabs announced by his Department; and how those (i) pay and (ii) terms and conditions have been determined.

Helen Whately:

Medacs Healthcare is a leading healthcare staffing company which are contracted to provide healthcare recruitment services including workforce for the Leamington Spa laboratory. Many employees will therefore be contracted through Medacs terms and

conditions. Individuals applying for roles are vetted and screened to ensure they meet the requirements and have relevant experience in laboratories and clinical environments. We have paused development work on the second laboratory in Scotland until we have further detailed projections on long-term testing demand.

■ **Laboratories: Staff**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[155195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many staff will be employed at each megalab site announced by his Department; and what the occupations will be of those staff employed at each of those sites.

Helen Whately:

When operating at full capacity, the Leamington Spa laboratory will require a multi-skilled workforce of up to 2,000 people.

Specific roles will include data scientists, bioscience leads, shift supervisors, laboratory equipment managers, senior, junior and trainee laboratory technicians, warehouse leads and a range of administrative and facilities management roles.

We have decided to pause development work on the second laboratory in Scotland until we have further detailed projections on long-term testing demand.

■ **Laboratories: West Midlands**

Stuart Anderson:

[\[97723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans are in place to increase the number of biomedical testing laboratories in the West Midlands to expand the national and regional capacity for identifying and responding to (a) existing and (b) future health threats.

Helen Whately:

The Department has announced a new laboratory based in Leamington Spa opening in 2021, cementing the United Kingdom as a world leader in diagnostics. When at full capacity, the laboratory will be able to process up to 300,000 polymerase chain reaction tests per day.

■ **Liver Diseases**

Alex Norris:

[\[141591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to review the costs to the NHS associated with (a) liver disease, (b) alcohol-related liver disease, and (c) non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: Due to the way budgeting data is collected, it is not possible to disaggregate expenditure to show solely liver disease.

■ Liver Diseases: Death

Alex Norris:

[141592]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of (a) premature deaths due to non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in each of the past five years, by local authority, and (b) covid-19 deaths of patients with diagnosed non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: Public Health England does not hold data on premature deaths due to non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in the format requested. PHE publishes data on the number of hospitals admissions and deaths from liver disease, alcohol-related liver disease and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease for local authorities in England.

PHE does not hold data on COVID-19 deaths of patients with diagnosed non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. PHE has published an assessment of excess mortality from liver disease during the COVID-19 pandemic in England from 21 March 2020 to 8 January 2021 and estimated that there were 692 excess deaths from liver disease.

■ Liver Diseases: Health Services

Alex Norris:

[141589]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the support available to liver disease patients (a) prior to and (b) during the covid-19 outbreak; and what support his Department plans to provide those patients after the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

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

During the COVID-19 outbreak, specialty guidance for patient management was published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence to support National Health Service trusts to maintain an Alcohol Care Team (ACT) service. Guidance will be updated as necessary and is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/Media/Default/About/COVID-19/Specialty-guides/Specialty-guide-Alcohol-Dependence-and-coronavirus.pdf>

The NHS Long Term Plan sets out the commitment to optimise ACTs in the hospitals with the highest rates of alcohol dependence related harm. To support patients with all types of liver disease, the NHS RightCare Where to Look packs include a liver disease pathway to help commissioners explore potential opportunities for improvement.

■ Medacs Healthcare: Coronavirus

Jack Dromey:

[154586]

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

Helen Whately:

The Medacs contracts have a maximum approved expenditure of £350 million over two years.

Members: Correspondence**Rosie Cooper:**[\[158890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 8 January 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire on covid-19 vaccinations, reference ZA55034.

Edward Argar:

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

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

Rosie Cooper:[\[158891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 6 November 2020 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, on covid-19 testing for care workers, reference ZA54381.

Edward Argar:

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

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

Mental Health Services: Bolton**Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[156320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the change in the level of funding allocated to the mental health support budget for Bolton has been since 2010.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The information requested is not collected centrally.

Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**Anne Marie Morris:**[\[158928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide a country map of waiting times for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There are no plans to do so. A national access and waiting times standard for children and young people's mental health services in England has not yet been defined.

■ Mental Health Services: Finance**Anne Marie Morris:**[\[158927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide a map of mental health funding allocation for each CCG in England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have no plans to do so as this information is not collected centrally. It is for clinical commissioning groups to allocate funding to meet the mental health needs of their local populations.

■ Mental Health Services: Standards**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[153270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of mental health service provision in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on mental health services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: Mental health services have remained open for business throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, providing support online, by phone and face to face where appropriate. For those with severe needs or in crisis, all National Health Service mental health providers in England, including those in Coventry and the West Midlands, have established 24 hours a day, seven days a week urgent mental health helplines since the start of the pandemic. Over the winter period, as part of our Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Plan for COVID-19, we have committed £50 million to boost capacity and support good quality discharge from inpatient settings for mental health service users, in all systems including those in Coventry and the West Midlands.

■ Mental Health Services: Yorkshire and the Humber**Jon Trickett:**[\[148691\]](#)

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

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: The information is not held centrally in the format requested. NHS England and NHS Improvement hold information on only the mental health beds classified as consultant-led – this does not include beds run by multi-disciplinary teams. In addition, data for Yorkshire and Humber in 2010 is not available due to changes in how the National Health Service regions are defined.

■ Mental Health: Coronavirus

Peter Dowd:

[\[156445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the mental health impacts of the extended closure of the wedding industry on (a) couples and (b) business owners.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment has been made.

■ NHS: Staff

Peter Dowd:

[\[156431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish part 2 of the People Plan; and if he will set out a long-term plan for the NHS workforce.

Helen Whately:

The NHS People Plan is a shared programme of work to increase the workforce, support new ways of working and develop a compassionate and inclusive workplace culture in order to deliver the NHS Long Term Plan. We are working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement, Health Education England, systems and employers to determine our workforce and people priorities beyond April 2021 whilst continuing to support the wellbeing of National Health Service staff.

■ Niraparib

Jim Shannon:

[\[153247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to make niraparib available through the NHS for treatment of ovarian cancer.

Jo Churchill:

In July 2018, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published guidance on niraparib. NICE recommended niraparib for use within the Cancer Drugs Fund (CDF) as an option for treating relapsed, platinum-sensitive high-grade serious epithelial ovarian, fallopian tube or primary peritoneal cancer, that has responded to the most recent course of platinum-based chemotherapy in adults who have had two or more courses of platinum-based chemotherapy. Niraparib is now available to National Health Service patients through the CDF in line with this guidance.

In addition, NICE issued final draft guidance in January 2021 that recommends niraparib for use within the CDF for the maintenance treatment of advanced ovarian, fallopian tube and peritoneal cancer after response to first-line platinum-based chemotherapy. Niraparib is funded through the CDF for eligible patients in line with NICE's final draft recommendations.

■ Nurses: Birmingham**Liam Byrne:****[154791]**

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 identified by the Care Quality Commission in December 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: Individual National Health Service employers deliver their own recruitment policies to meet their local need. However, NHS England and NHS Improvement are continuing to work closely with the trusts to ensure that they have appropriate support in place to address the issues identified and that they make sufficient progress.

■ Obesity: Devolution**Martyn Day:****[158117]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 30 December 2020 to Question 112092 on Obesity: Devolution, whether his Department has discussed, with a focus on obesity in the devolved nations, the delivery of UK-wide measures in the Government's 2020 obesity strategy with (a) patient and (b) professional organisations.

Martyn Day:**[158118]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of the 17 November 2020 to Question 112091 on Obesity, whether the views of (a) people with obesity (b) obesity patient organisations and (c) professional associations for healthcare professionals with a focus on obesity were considered by his Department during its development of plans for implementing the obesity strategy.

Jo Churchill:

We have been careful to consider the views of wide range of stakeholders including individuals, professional bodies and experts from across the United Kingdom as we developed our plans for implementing the healthy weight strategy including in response to specific policy proposals.

Officials in the Department are in regular contact with their counterparts in the devolved administrations on United Kingdom-wide measures in our strategy, such as front of pack nutrition labelling on food and drink.

■ Obesity: Mass Media**Martyn Day:****[158119]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of the 17 November 2020 to Question 112090 on Obesity: Mass Media, whether the Government plans to take steps to reduce the stigma associated with living with overweight or obesity.

Martyn Day:[\[158120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of the 17 November 2020 to Question 112090 on Obesity: Mass Media, whether (a) he and (b) officials of his Department have had discussions with the (i) Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and (ii) officials of that Department on the effect of the media representation of obesity on the stigma associated with living with overweight or obesity.

Martyn Day:[\[158121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to work collaboratively with the devolved administrations in (a) Scotland, (b) Northern Ireland and (c) Wales on reducing the stigma associated with living with overweight or obesity.

Jo Churchill:

We have been careful to consider the views of mental health charities and experts as we developed our plans for implementing the obesity strategy and have published impact assessments alongside each specific policy proposal. We will continue to engage with stakeholders.

Ministers and officials across Government work very closely on reducing obesity and implementing the measures set out in 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives'. This includes ensuring the use of appropriate language across the United Kingdom when associated with unhealthy weight. Hence a preference to refer to a healthy weight strategy.

■ Protective Clothing

Rachel Reeves:[\[158917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the ONS release published on 23 February 2021, entitled Experimental statistics: personal protective equipment distributed for use by health and social care services in England: 15 February to 21 February 2021 and with reference to the 8.6 billion items of PPE that his Department has distributed since February 2020, what the product type categories are for the remaining PPE purchased by the Government; and how much and what proportion of that remaining PPE is usable.

Jo Churchill:

We are working to publish official statistics on the stockpile of personal protective equipment (PPE) as soon as the figures are fully validated.

PPE must be fit for purpose, meeting the necessary essential health and safety requirements of the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2018. We have a robust process in place which ensures that orders are high quality and meet strict safety standards as per the published technical specification for PPE. When faults with PPE are found, immediate action is taken to verify the issue, notify the users and, if necessary, quarantine the stock of the products. Emergency replacements can

be ordered or are distributed through the National Supply Disruption Response unit while investigations are undertaken.

Rachel Reeves: [\[158918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the size of the PPE stockpile as at 25 February 2021; and how much of that PPE is usable within the next (a) month, (b) three months and (c) six months.

Jo Churchill:

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

Rachel Reeves: [\[158919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much and what proportion of the personal protective equipment procured by the Government since September 2020 has been made in the UK.

Rachel Reeves: [\[158920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the Government's timeframe is for meeting the commitment to manufacture 70 per cent of personal protective equipment in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

We have taken steps to reduce our dependence on imported personal protective equipment (PPE) and build sustainable manufacturing of PPE in the United Kingdom. Prior to the pandemic, just 1% of PPE used in the UK was produced domestically. The Government's PPE strategy stated that by 1 December 2020 UK manufacturers would be able to provide 70% of the PPE we expected to use in England through the winter, for all items except gloves. That commitment was met and exceeded by 1 December. The Department is working to publish official statistics to present fully validated figures showing the position as at 1 December 2020 and we expect to publish those figures during March 2021.

■ Public Health: Liverpool

Conor McGinn: [\[105432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what role the (a) Liverpool City Region Combine Authority, (b) Merseyside Resilience Forum, (c) St Helens Council and (d) St Helens CCG play in public health policy and practice.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 October 2020]: Liverpool City Region Combined Authority does not have any specific public health functions, but it has a range of responsibilities which it can act on and interact with people's health including relating to transport, housing and employment. Local resilience fora bring together multi-agency partnerships from local public services including the emergency services and the National Health Service to plan and prepare for localised incidents and emergencies.

Upper tier local authorities, including St Helens Council, have a statutory duty to take steps to improve the health of their population and also play a vital role in protecting health locally. Clinical commissioning groups commission most of the hospital and community NHS services in the local area for which they are responsible.

■ **Schools: Coronavirus**

Layla Moran:

[147035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of lateral flow testing in schools in (a) 2020 and (b) 2021 to date.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: We do not publish data in format requested.

■ **Social Services: Coronavirus**

Marsha De Cordova:

[156546]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the (a) adequacy of (i) transparency and (ii) accountability and (b) compatibility with the Equality Act 2020 of the Care Act easements process created under the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Helen Whately:

In developing the Care Act 2014 easements provision under the Coronavirus Act 2020, the Department engaged with stakeholders to ensure the needs of all groups were considered as part of our Public Sector Equality Duties. We have undertaken reviews of the provision at two-monthly intervals as required by the Act, working closely with the Care Quality Commission, Think Local, Act Personal and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services to understand the impact on individuals. Their feedback has been reflected in my review conclusions and in updates to guidance. To improve transparency, we introduced a mechanism for local authorities to notify us when they are operating under easements and their reasons for doing so. How people access services is determined by individual local authorities, who are responsible for complying with the Equality Act 2020.

■ **Surgical Mesh Implants**

Emma Hardy:

[156529]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the reasons for the discrepancy between the percentage of patients readmitted within 30 days of (a) transvaginal tape and (b) transobturator tape procedures contained in the Hospital Episode Statistics and the British Society of Urogynaecology databases, as highlighted in the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists' Project Report, Hospital Episode Statistics as a source of information on safety and quality in gynaecology to support revalidation, published in May 2012.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment has been made.

Emma Hardy:

[156533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will undertake a review of the cases of women whose records do not accurately reflect whether they have undergone full or partial removal of transvaginal mesh.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There are currently no plans to undertake a review.

■ **Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust: Death**

Andy McDonald:

[149246]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many unexpected deaths have occurred while an individual has been in the care of (a) the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys Foundation NHS Trust, (b) West Lane Hospital and (c) Roseberry Park Adult Service (i) as an inpatient, (ii) while receiving care in the community and (iii) within three months of discharge from care in each year since 2016.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: The information is not held in the format requested as there is no definition of 'unexpected death'. However, NHS England and NHS Improvement publish patient safety incidents reported by trusts, including those reported with a degree of harm of death, which is available at the following links:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/patient-safety/organisation-patient-safety-incident-reports/>

<https://report.nrls.nhs.uk/ExplorerTool/>

■ **Test and Trace Support Payment**

Rachael Maskell:

[136569]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will instruct that receipt of previous overtime payments alongside a salary should be disregarded when determining eligibility for people seeking to claim payments under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.

Helen Whately:

Eligibility for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is based on a number of criteria, including whether an applicant is in receipt of means-tested benefits. An applicant's salary including overtime payments is not assessed.

Alexander Stafford:

[140331]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether local authorities have the discretion to award claims for the Test and Trace Support Payment that have been made later than 14 days after an individual's period of self-isolation has ended.

Helen Whately:

Individuals can apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment up to 28 days after their first day of self-isolation. This cut-off period is the same across all local authorities. In the event a local authority believes there is a legitimate reason an applicant has not been able to apply within the 28-day application period – for example, because they were ill in hospital and could not reasonably have been expected to make an application – they should use their discretion on a case-by-case basis in deciding whether to accept an application after the cut-off point.

Alexander Stafford:[\[148062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy that severely ill or hospitalised people notified to self-isolate by the NHS Test and Trace for Test have a maximum of 14 days after their period of self-isolation ended to make a claim for the Test and Trace Support Payment.

Helen Whately:

People can apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment up to 28 days after the first day of their self-isolation period. A third party such as a family member, a friend or neighbour could help a severely ill or hospitalised person to complete the application.

Alexander Stafford:[\[148063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discretion local authorities have to award a Test and Trace Support Payment to ill or hospitalised people who have been unable to submit a claim by the deadline of 14 days after their period of self-isolation should have ended.

Helen Whately:

People can apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment up to 28 days after the first day of their self-isolation period. A third party such as a family member, a friend or neighbour could help a severely ill or hospitalised person complete the application.

■ Test and Trace Support Payment: Ethnic Groups**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[154903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of ethnic disparities in the rates of (a) application for a covid-19 self-isolation support payment and (b) receipt of such payment.

Helen Whately:

The Department is currently working with local authorities to gather information on the operation and impact of the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme, including an assessment of the ethnicity of those applying for and receiving the payments. The results of the assessment and information covering any ethnic disparities will be published in due course.

■ Travel: Quarantine**Anne Marie Morris:**[\[149240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure travellers stay in their hotel rooms for the isolation period imposed by the hotel quarantine rules.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: We have security in place in and outside accommodation to support people staying there.

■ Veterinary Medicine: Contracts for Services**Jonathan Edwards:**[\[156333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what tests are applied to the new supplier when a contract awarded by the Food Standards Agency for the delivery of Official Veterinary Controls is negotiated; and what role is played by the (a) Treasury and (b) Cabinet Office when awarding such contracts or negotiating intra-contractual rate rises and one-off payments.

Jo Churchill:

Contracts for the delivery of Official Controls are awarded in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations. All tenderers complete a standard pre-qualification envelope which is based on the Cabinet Office template.

As part of the Tender Evaluation process the Food Standards Agency (FSA) undertook a robust and detailed analysis of the financial model each bidder submitted, including the coherence between the financial model and the technical bid submitted and the underlying cost and assumptions of the financial model. The financial submission also included sensitivity analysis against the core financial bid assumptions that were validated by the FSA as part of the tender evaluation.

In accordance with Cabinet Office Spend Controls process, the FSA submitted an Outline Business Case prior to commencing the formal tender process and a Full Business Case prior to awarding the contract to the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury for approval to proceed. Both Businesses Cases underwent robust analysis by the Spend Controls Teams prior to being approved. In line with standard Government processes on such contracts, intra-contractual rate rises and one-off payments defined as special payments require HM Treasury and Cabinet Office consultation.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[156482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25 January 2021 of Question 143017, how much the Government has paid Clearsprings

Ready Homes to manage temporary asylum seeker accommodation during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

Accommodation costs are considered to be commercially confidential, therefore the Home Office does not publish this information. However, total expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ho-annual-reports-and-accounts>.

Stephen Timms:

[158847]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many section 95 asylum seekers were accommodated in dispersal accommodation for the first time in each quarter in each of the last two years, by local authority.

Chris Philp:

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area. These statistics can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#asylum-support>

Data is published on a quarterly basis, with the latest information published 25 February 2021. The next quarterly figures are due to be released in May 2021.

The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of these statistics which disaggregates the number of asylum seekers accommodated in dispersal accommodation for the first time in each quarter in each of the last two years, by local authority. These figures are not available in a reportable format and to provide the information could only be done at disproportionate cost.

■ Biometric Residence Permits

Apsana Begum:

[156605]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of visa applications requiring the distribution of a new or replacement Biometric Resident Permit card have taken longer than her Department's standard processing time.

Apsana Begum:

[156606]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to ensure the timely distribution of Biometric Residence Permit cards during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

UVKI does not hold figures relating to the number of customers who have waited longer than 10 working days to receive their Biometric Resident Permit (BRP) after a positive decision. However, it does have service level agreements with its production provider the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and its secure delivery provider FedEx.

Customers who applied for leave to enter from abroad will usually be expected to collect their BRP from a Post Office or from an Alternative Collection Location (ACL) such as a University International Student Team office. Considering the global pandemic, The Post Office agreed to hold BRPs for up to 90 days from receipt before returning them to UKVI if uncollected to enable delayed travellers to collect their BRP. Usually the Post Office would hold BRPs for 60 days before returning any uncollected BRPs to UKVI.

The DVLA has a target of producing 90% of BRPs within 24 hours of receiving the production request and 100% within 48 hours. For the financial year to date DVLA has achieved 72.4% within 24 hours, 97.4% within 48 hours and 2.6% over 48 hours.

FedEx has a target to attempt first delivery for 99% of BRPs within 48 working hours of collection of the BRP from DVLA. For financial year 2020 to end December 2020 FedEx were achieving 94.4%. UKVI is working closely with FedEx to improve this performance and an improvement plan is in place to achieve this.

Further steps UKVI have taken to improve the timely delivery of BRPs includes introducing an 'Post Arrival Process' for closed university ACLs. This was introduced to enable BRPs for overseas students to be delivered directly to their UK residential address instead of to their ACL for collection. Twenty-one ACLs signed up to the scheme enabling 10,348 BRPs to be produced and delivered.

UKVI has continued to improve the pre-delivery notification messaging we send to customers including the timing of when it is sent. It now includes the BRP reference number, in addition to the FedEx delivery consignment number, delivery post code and clearer instructions relating to help customers organise re-delivery if first delivery fails.

■ Children: Exploitation

Sarah Jones: [\[156513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many handsets or phones from victims of child criminal exploitation seized by police have been subject to forensic analysis of digital evidence in the latest period for which figures are available.

Victoria Atkins:

Police forces do not currently gather the number of digital exhibits submitted for forensic examination by age of device owner.

■ County Lines Working Group

Sarah Jones: [\[156520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many times the County Lines Working Group has met to date.

Kit Malthouse:

In October 2019 the Home Office established the County Lines Task and Finish Group to oversee delivery of the £25m County Lines Programme. The Task and

Finish Group meets regularly to drive forward progress, monitor the impact of the funding, and identify challenges. The Group has met 26 times to date and will continue to meet and oversee delivery of the County Lines programme in 21/22.

■ **Home Office: Lost Working Days**

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[156644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average working days lost was for (a) female and (b) male civil servants in her Department in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The average working days lost was for (a) female and (b) male Home Office staff for 2019 and 2020 is provided in the table below

| Gender | AWDL | |
|--------|--------|--------|
| | Mar-19 | Mar-20 |
| Female | 8.38 | 8.86 |
| Male | 5.70 | 6.21 |

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[156645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average working days lost was for civil servants (a) from BAME backgrounds and (b) recording themselves as White in her Department in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The average working days lost was for Home Office members of staff (a) from BAME backgrounds and (b) recording themselves as White for 2019 and 2020 is provided in the table below.

| Ethnicity | AWDL | |
|-----------|--------|--------|
| | Mar-19 | Mar-20 |
| BAME | 8.70 | 8.97 |
| White | 6.60 | 7.18 |

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[156646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average working days lost was for civil servants aged (a) 30 and younger, (b) 31 to 50, (c) 51 to 60, and (d) over 60 in her Department in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The average working days lost was for Home Office members of staff aged (a) 30 and younger, (b) 31 to 50, (c) 51 to 60, and (d) over 60 for 2019 and 2020 is provided in the table below.

AWDL

| Age Band | Mar-19 | Mar-20 |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| 16-24 | 3.95 | 5.19 |
| 25-29 | 5.08 | 6.31 |
| 30-34 | 7.04 | 7.25 |
| 35-39 | 6.35 | 7.58 |
| 40-44 | 6.94 | 6.90 |
| 45-49 | 7.19 | 7.71 |
| 50-54 | 7.44 | 7.43 |
| 55-59 | 8.33 | 8.65 |
| 60-64 | 9.82 | 10.01 |
| 65+ | 11.03 | 13.70 |

Rachel Hopkins:**[156647]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average working days lost was for civil servants who (a) have declared themselves as having a disability, and (b) have not declared themselves to have a disability in her Department in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The average working days lost was for Home Office members of staff who (a) have declared themselves as having a disability, and (b) have not declared themselves to have a disability

| AWDL | | |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Disability | Mar-19 | Mar-20 |
| Disabled | 13.39 | 12.86 |
| Not Disabled | 6.35 | 6.98 |

■ Immigration: Databases

Stephen Timms:

[\[158848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish the Immigration and Protection data for quarter 4 of 2020.

Chris Philp:

The Q4 2020 Transparency Data, which includes a range of statistics relating to Immigration and Protection, was released on 26th February 2021.

■ Local Government: Cybercrime

Peter Dowd:

[\[156434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the effectiveness of the Computer Misuse Act 1990 in protecting the cyber security of local authorities.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office keeps the Computer Misuse Act (CMA) under regular review.

The Computer Misuse Act is an effective piece of legislation that allows for the prosecution of those responsible for attacks on computer systems.

The Home Office is engaged in ongoing discussions with relevant partners in law enforcement, government and private sector to ensure the legislation continues to remain effective.

■ Overseas Students: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[\[156528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to amend the 6 April date by which international students must be in the UK to be eligible for the new graduate route as a result of the ongoing covid-19-related travel restrictions.

Kevin Foster:

The Government keeps these concessions under review and will not hesitate to act where further support is needed as we recognise Covid-19 has caused significant disruption for international students.

We will update Parliament in due course.

■ Police Community Support Officers

Darren Jones:

[\[156509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what financial support her Department is providing to Police and Crime Commissioners to ensure the continued presence of police community support officers.

Kit Malthouse:

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 which will ensure forces continue to make progress towards recruiting 20,000 additional police officers by March 2023.

Decisions on how to deploy resources are a matter for Chief Constables and locally elected Police & Crime Commissioners.

Refugees: Resettlement**Nickie Aiken:**[\[156562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to launch the new UK Resettlement Scheme; whether the scheme includes the Government's current ambition to resettle 5,000 refugees in its first year; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The UK will continue to welcome refugees through resettlement following the completion of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). We continue to work closely with domestic and international partners on plans to complete the VPRS and to assess the UK's capacity for resettlement activity, as we recover from the pandemic.

Resettlement will continue to play a primary role, alongside a reformed asylum system, which will see us continue to offer safe and legal routes to the UK for vulnerable people in need of protection.

Telephone Services: Fraud**Robert Halfon:**[\[158910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle fraudulent calling.

Robert Halfon:[\[158911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department plans to take to strengthen measures to prevent fraudulent calling.

Robert Halfon:[\[158912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of changes in the level of incidents relating to fraudulent calling during the covid-19 pandemic.

Kevin Foster:

Fraudulent calls can be particularly stressful and damaging for the most vulnerable in society. Nuisance calls and cold calling can be a gateway to scams, with opportunistic criminals targeting potential victims.

The Government has taken a range of actions to reduce the number of these calls - it has banned cold calls from personal injury firms and pensions providers unless the

consumer has explicitly agreed to be contacted. It has introduced director liability for nuisance calls and has supported the National Trading Standards Scams Team to roll out call blocking devices to vulnerable people. DCMS have provided over £1 million in the last 3 years to National Trading Standards for distribution of call blocking devices to vulnerable people. This funding has helped protect some of the most vulnerable in society from nuisance calls and scams, including those originating from overseas.

However, the Government recognises there is more to do and is working closely with industry, regulators and consumer groups to consider further legislative and non-legislative solutions.

The Government is also aware that criminals are exploiting the pandemic to commit opportunistic crimes such as fraud. Although Covid-19 related fraud represents a small proportion of overall fraud reporting, we understand the devastating impact it can have on individuals. Along with partners, we have been implementing measures to ensure the public has the protection and advice needed to shield themselves from these crimes.

We have published guidance for the public to spot potential frauds and the steps they can take to avoid them. This advice can currently be accessed at:

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

■ Violence Reduction Units

Sarah Jones:

[156519]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police analysts are employed in each Violence Reduction Unit by her Department.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not regularly review the number of police analysts employed in each Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). VRUs decide locally on how many analysts are employed to ensure delivery of their VRU.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund

Andrew Rosindell:

[156284]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of using the same criteria to determine the eligibility for the Building Safety Fund as used for the EWS1 system to ensure leaseholders whose buildings who fail the EWS1 scheme can access financial support for remediation work.

Christopher Pincher:

The key eligibility criteria for the Building Safety Fund is the presence of the unsafe non-ACM cladding and the height of the building which should be at least 18 metres, as set out in the prospectus for the Fund at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings>. This reflects the exceptional fire risk that certain cladding products pose at that height, as previously noted by Dame Judith Hackitt observed in her independent report. Government guidance is clear that building safety is the responsibility of building owners and we have given expert advice on a range of safety issues to provide clarity on buildings of all heights.

The EWS1 process is an industry led approach to assess financial risk to inform valuation for mortgage purposes. The EWS1 process is not a safety certificate and a building cannot 'fail' an EWS1 assessment.

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention**Apsana Begum:****[156609]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to make support available to people in buildings deemed unsafe as a result of cladding or other fire safety issues who have seen recent increases in their building insurance premiums.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is aware that some leaseholders in high rise residential buildings are receiving very high building insurance premiums. The Department is working to understand this better and, with the insurance industry, to scope out potential resolutions. The Department has engaged directly with insurers and leaseholders on building insurance

The Minister for Building Safety is due to hold a further roundtable with both insurers and leaseholders later this month to address the issue of unaffordable building insurance specifically.

■ Community Infrastructure Levy**Ms Nusrat Ghani:****[156456]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of the community infrastructure levy and infrastructure levy falling due within 12 months of planning permission being granted to help deliver infrastructure with and in advance of housing.

Christopher Pincher:

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) must be paid within sixty days of works commencing on a development, unless an authority chooses to exercise discretion by setting its own instalment policy allowing payment over a longer term. An authority is also able to make use of temporary flexibilities to defer payments from small or medium enterprises, introduced in response to COVID-19. Overall therefore, CIL

payments can, and often will, be payable, and be available to an authority to fund infrastructure, prior to the completion of the development liable to pay.

However, we intend to reform the current approach to developer contributions by creating a new, single system, the Infrastructure Levy. This new levy would be a flat rate, value-based charge, set nationally, at either a single rate, or at area specific rates, and charged on the final value of a development. We also intend to allow authorities to borrow against revenues from the new levy to better enable them to forward fund infrastructure.

Our proposals were set out in our 'Planning for the Future' consultation which closed on 29 October. We are analysing the consultation feedback thoroughly and holding meetings with industry and local authority representatives to understand the effects of our proposals. We will respond formally as soon as possible.

■ Finance

Kate Hollern:

[\[158947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what criteria his Department uses to assess whether a fund should be (a) competitive or (b) allocated on the basis of need.

Luke Hall:

In designing funding programmes, MHCLG works closely with a range of stakeholders in and outside government to identify the most appropriate method for distributing funding, considering a wide variety of different approaches. Our focus is on ensuring that public funding gets to where it is needed most, and that it is invested in high quality interventions that maximise value for money for the taxpayer.

■ Green Belt: Coventry South

Zarah Sultana:

[\[156592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that greenbelt land surrounding Coventry South constituency is protected from development.

Christopher Pincher:

This Government will continue to support the protection and enhancement of the Green Belt and other valued greenfield land, and to strongly encourage re-use of suitable brownfield land for development, in line with manifesto commitments and our National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework states that most new building is inappropriate in Green Belt and should be refused planning permission unless there are very special circumstances, and that only in exceptional circumstances may a Green Belt boundary be altered. We have been clear in our reform proposals, set out in the White Paper *Planning for the Future*, that existing policy for protecting the Green Belt would remain.

Consultation on the White Paper closed on 29 October 2020. My Department is undertaking further detailed policy development on individual elements of the proposals, and we will announce any next steps as soon as practicable.

■ Help to Buy Scheme: Insulation

Apsana Begum:

[156607]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to extend the interest free period on Help To Buy Loans for leaseholders living in buildings with unsafe cladding.

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

Government will provide grant funding worth over £5 billion for the removal of unsafe cladding on buildings over 18 metres.

Lower-rise buildings between 11 and 18 metres, with a lower risk to safety, will gain new protection from the costs of cladding removal through a generous new financing scheme. 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.

We will publish more details on how these will work alongside existing funds (including the Building Safety Fund (BSF)) soon. There are no plans to extend the interest-free period on Help to Buy Equity Loans.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

Charlotte Nichols:

[156616]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, on what basis the Government took the decision to make leaseholders responsible for removing combustible cladding from tower blocks as opposed to freeholders and developers.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has been clear that it is the building owner or responsible person that is responsible for removing unsafe cladding from their buildings and it is the building owner or responsible person that faces enforcement action if they do not do so. Depending on the terms of individual leases, building owners may be entitled to pass on costs to leaseholders. However, the Government expects building owners to meet remediation 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 unsafe ACM cladding. Where this may not be possible the Government is providing £5 billion of funding to protect leaseholders living in

residential buildings over 18 metres with unsafe cladding from the costs of remediation.

■ Homes England: Finance

Neil O'Brien:

[\[159025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what schemes have been supported by Homes England through the (a) small sites scheme and (b) land assembly fund; and how much Homes England has invested in each of those schemes.

Christopher Pincher:

The £1.3 billion Land Assembly Fund enables Homes England to work alongside private developers to acquire and de-risk sites and make them attractive for private sector firms to rapidly build out homes. This will help release land to deliver 300,000 new homes a year by the mid-2020s. To date, Homes England have acquired 18 sites under the Land Assembly Fund programme.

In line with the Department's plan to bring together existing capital programmes across land and infrastructure into the National Home Building Fund, funds allocated to the Small Sites Fund have been used accordingly across the Department's land funds and other Departmental priorities. This will meet the immediate need to support local economies and protect jobs across the supply chain, and help to build the homes this country needs.

■ Housing: Construction

Mike Amesbury:

[\[159023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many buildings have been converted into Class E use since September 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

We have created a new 'Commercial, business and service' use class (Class E) to give business greater flexibility to change use and thrive. The Commercial, business and service use class encompasses a wide range of uses such as offices and other business uses, shops, cafes, gyms and other uses which are suitable in a town centre.

We do not hold data on how many premises have changed use to Class E since 1 September 2020.

■ Housing: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[158956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to increase the supply of new homes in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

Christopher Pincher:

Approximately £157 million has been spent to support the delivery of new homes in Coventry over the last 10 years, including in excess of £16 million of funding through the Affordable Homes Programme to deliver over 500 new homes. This Government, through a range of funding and interventions, continues to make provisions to increase the supply of new homes in Coventry. Homes England are supporting the Eastern Green development in Coventry which will unlock two parcels of land with the capacity to unlock over 2,000 homes, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) converting commercial properties to provide new homes for first time buyers and key workers in Coventry city centre, and the Agency currently has a planning application with Coventry City Council which includes the site at Whitley Pumping Station which could provide up to 200 new homes. It should be noted that data is not held at constituency level.

■ **Housing: Fire Prevention****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[156283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what financial support is available for leaseholders whose buildings have historical fire safety defects other than cladding and are not eligible for the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

Longstanding independent safety advice has been clear that unsafe cladding poses the greatest risk to buildings because it can act as a fuel to a fire. Our approach prioritises action on the risks of unsafe cladding – the costs for remediating this are high, and the risks posed by it are also high. The package of financial measures announced on 10 February therefore focuses on cladding remediation.

This builds on steps already taken to support leaseholders, including 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.

However, this does not absolve building owners of their responsibility to ensure their buildings are safe. Government guidance is clear that building safety is the responsibility of building owners and we have given expert advice on a range of safety issues to provide clarity.

The Government has also allocated additional funding to the Leasehold Advisory Service (LEASE) to provide independent, free, initial advice to leaseholders on building safety issues to ensure they are aware of their rights and are supported to understand the terms of their leases.

■ **Housing: Wealden****Ms Nusrat Ghani:**[\[156455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason housing allocations in the Wealden district council area are based not on 2018 population projections but on 2014 data used in the Current Standard Method.

Christopher Pincher:

Following consultation last year on the standard method for assessing local housing need, and after a year of uncertainty due to COVID-19, it became apparent that it was particularly important to provide stability and certainty for plan-making and decision-making. This is so local areas can plan based on a method and level of ambition that they are familiar with. The Government therefore carefully considered whether to use the 2018-based household projections and concluded that, in the interests of stability for local planning and for local communities, it will continue to expect only the use of the 2014-based household projections. This gives local areas the best possible chance of meeting the deadline of December 2023, the date by which all authorities are expected to have up-to-date plans.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:[\[156457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has in place to ensure that housing allocations take into account protected areas in Wealden which has no green belt but with the Ashdown Forest and the protected Pevensy Levels is more than 60 per cent AONB.

Christopher Pincher:

The standard method for assessing local housing need is only the starting point in the process of planning for new homes, it is not a housing target. Local authorities will still need to consider the constraints they face locally, to assess how many homes can be delivered in their area.

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Specific strong protections are enshrined for protected areas or assets of particular importance within footnote 6 of the Framework, including, for example, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Green Belt, irreplaceable habitats, and designated heritage assets.

■ Planning Permission: Cultural Heritage**Julian Sturdy:**[\[156369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of strengthening protection for heritage in the planning system.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to the ongoing protection of the historic environment. In our recent Planning for the Future White Paper, we have set out our intention to review and update the planning framework for listed buildings and conservation areas, to ensure their significance is conserved while allowing, where appropriate, sympathetic changes to support their continued use and address climate change.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Finance

Steve Reed: [\[157140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether every region in England will be allocated funding through the proposed levelling up fund.

Steve Reed: [\[157141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether a proportion of the Levelling Up Fund will be pre-committed.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: The Levelling Up Fund will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities. Further details of how the Fund will operate will be announced shortly.

■ Towns Fund

Steve Reed: [\[158067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether it is his policy that remaining Town Deal bids will be assessed by 29 March 2021.

Steve Reed: [\[158068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether successful Town Deal bids are planned to be announced on or before 29 March 2021.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: My officials are currently conducting assessment of the final set of Town Investment Plans and I look forward to making further announcements in due course.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Stephen Farry: [\[156633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that a proportion of the Shared Prosperity Fund will be ringfenced for spending in each of the devolved regions; and whether such sums will reflect historic allocations of Structural Funds based on relative need rather than the Barnett Formula.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers.

The November 2020 Spending Review set out the main strategic elements of the UKSPF in the Heads of Terms. The Government will publish a UK-wide investment framework in 2021 and confirm multiyear funding profiles at the next Spending Review.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Music: Exports****Gareth Thomas:**[\[157948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with Treasury Ministers on future funding allocations to the Music Export Growth Scheme (MEGS); and if she will make a statement.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has not held discussions with Treasury Ministers on future funding of the Music Export Growth Scheme (MEGS). DIT's business planning continues for 2021-22, including export support we can provide for the UK music sector.

On 10 February, DIT, through the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) who administer the scheme, awarded MEGS grants totalling £100,000 to ten UK small and medium-sized music businesses which will go towards growing audiences internationally through digital marketing and other forms of overseas promotion.

■ Trade Agreements: Canada**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[159028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to her oral contribution of 25 February 2021, what discussions she has had with Mary Ng regarding the review of procedures for the resolution of investment disputes between investors and states in the UK-Canada Agreement on Trade Continuity.

Greg Hands:

The Secretary of State is in regular contact with Mary Ng to discuss the bilateral trading relationship as well as the ratification progress in Canada of the UK-Canada Agreement on Trade Continuity. When in force, the Agreement will commit both sides to begin fresh Free Trade Agreement negotiations, which will include a comprehensive review of procedures for the resolution of investment disputes between investors and states. These discussions will enable the UK and Canada to consider dispute settlement mechanisms that are best suited to the bilateral relationship.

■ Trade Promotion: Contracts**Gareth Thomas:**[\[156247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 16 February 2021 to Question 150659 on International Trade: Trade Promotion, if she will publish the performance indicators for each contract; and how many trade advisors are employed on each contract.

Graham Stuart:

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for these contracts are included in already published information regarding the government's most important contracts.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-performance-indicators-kpis-for-governments-most-important-contracts>

Reporting the number of International Trade Advisors (ITAs) is not stipulated in the contracts. The approximate total number of ITAs (275) is published in the Department for International Trade (DIT) Annual Report and Accounts.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-international-trade-annual-report-and-accounts-2019-to-2020>

■ TRIPS Agreement: Coronavirus**Clive Lewis:****[155237]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the evidential basis is for the Government's policy position that the proposed WTO TRIPS Waiver proposal will undermine biomedical innovation.

Greg Hands:

I refer the Hon. Member for Norwich South to the answer I gave to him on 15 February 2021, UIN: 149802.

JUSTICE**■ Child Trust Fund: Learning Disability****Henry Smith:****[156336]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 153196, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of including parent and voluntary sector representation on the cross-government working group that has been established to look at the issues raised in relation to accessing matured Child Trust Funds (CTFs) in light of the Mental Capacity Act.

Alex Chalk:

A cross-government working group has been convened to consider the issues raised in relation to access to matured Child Trust Funds for those who lack mental capacity. The group has representation from Her Majesty's Treasury, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Ministry of Justice. Learning Disability England and MENCAP are also engaged and providing valuable input to this work. We recognise that there are many individuals and advocacy groups who have an interest in this work, and we will ensure that we continue to engage with interested groups as proposals develop.

■ Fraud and Theft: Sentencing

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[156276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the proportionality of sentences for people committing theft or misappropriating funds from bank accounts.

Chris Philp:

Sentencing in individual cases is a matter for our independent courts. When deciding what sentence to impose, within the maximum available for the offence, the courts take into account the circumstances of the offence and any aggravating and mitigating factors. The courts are also required to follow any relevant sentencing guidelines, developed by the independent Sentencing Council. The guidelines assist judges and magistrates in deciding the appropriate sentence for a criminal offence, and help to ensure that sentences are consistent and proportionate.

■ LGBT People: Adultery

Dan Carden:

[\[159016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans the Government has to bring forward legislative proposals to update the definition of adultery to include members of the LGBT+ community.

Alex Chalk:

Parliament considered this definition during passage of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013. Adultery in this context has a longstanding definition and can, within the terms of the 2013 Act, take place only between a man and a woman. A same sex extramarital affair can therefore not be cited in support of the legal fact of adultery for the purpose of a divorce petition under the existing law. People can and do, however, use the fact of behaviour in a divorce petition to cite same sex affairs or other kinds of infidelity that do not meet the legal definition of adultery.

Reforms to be implemented by the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020 will remove the use of adultery and other facts to show irretrievable breakdown in divorce and dissolution proceedings and replace these with a statement that the marriage or civil partnership has broken down irretrievably. There will therefore no longer be a requirement to evidence matters of a personal nature that can introduce or worsen conflict in the legal process to the detriment of any arrangements for the future, particularly about children. The Government is working to an indicative timetable of autumn 2021.

■ Ministry of Justice: Lost Working Days

Paula Barker:

[\[156621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average working days lost was for (a) female and (b) male civil servants in his Department in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Paula Barker:[\[156622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average working days lost was for civil servants (a) from Black, Asian and minority Ethnic background and (b) recording themselves as White in his Department in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Paula Barker:[\[156623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average working days lost was for civil servants aged (a) 30 and younger, (b) 30 to 50 (c) 50 to 60 and (d) over 60 in his Department in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Paula Barker:[\[156624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average working days lost was for civil servants who (a) have and (b) have not declared themselves as having a disability in his Department in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Chris Philp:

Average working days lost for 12 months to the end of December 2019 and 2020 by requested characteristics. Coverage: payroll staff within Ministry of Justice and executive agencies.

| PQ 156621 | 01 JAN TO 31 DEC 2019 | 01 JAN TO 31 DEC 2020 ^P |
|---|------------------------------|---|
| Male | 9.3 | 8.0 |
| Female | 8.7 | 7.4 |
| PQ 156622 | 01 JAN TO 31 DEC 2019 | 01 JAN TO 31 DEC 2020 ^P |
| Black, Asian and minority Ethnic background | 9.7 | 8.9 |
| White | 8.6 | 7.4 |
| Not known/Prefer not to say | 10.0 | 8.2 |
| PQ 156623 | 01 JAN TO 31 DEC 2019 | 01 JAN TO 31 DEC 2020 ^P |
| Under 30 | 8.0 | 6.8 |
| 30-49 | 8.2 | 7.0 |
| 50-59 | 10.3 | 8.6 |
| 60+ | 11.6 | 10.4 |

| PQ 156624 | 01 JAN TO 31 DEC 2019 | 01 JAN TO 31 DEC 2020 ^P |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Declared disabled | 16.7 | 12.7 |
| Declared not disabled | 7.9 | 6.6 |
| Not known/Prefer not to say | 8.8 | 8.6 |

The MoJ is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of all of its employees, and to reducing sickness absence levels.

(^P) Figures relating to current financial year (April to December 2020) are provisional and may be subject to change in future.

■ Prison Officers: Pay

Grahame Morris:

[158908]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 24 February 2021 to Question 154966, Prison Officers: Pay, if he will place in the Library a copy of the equalities impact assessment that was conducted and considered in reaching the decision to reject recommendation 3.

Lucy Frazer:

We value the dedication and hard work of our prison officers who have worked tirelessly during the pandemic to keep the public safe. That's why we awarded all staff an above-inflation pay rise for a third year running while balancing the need to keep these in step with other public sector workers.

The 20/21 Prison Service Pay Review Body report was received on 5 June 2020 and included a recommendation, recommendation 3, to uplift the pay of Band 3 prison staff on modernised terms and conditions by £3,000. This recommendation was not accepted by the Government, on the basis of the exceptional costs associated with implementing the recommendation, the impact on the overall prison service pay structure, and the changing labour market conditions due to the exceptional economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision regarding this recommendation was announced on 10 December 2020 (<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-12-10/hcws638>).

An Equality Impact Assessment was conducted and considered in reaching the decision to reject recommendation 3. This considered the demographics of staff and how the decision to reject the recommendation would impact eliminating unlawful discrimination and advancing equality of opportunity. It concluded that any risks would be mitigated by our longer-term strategy to close the gap between those on modernised / Fair & Sustainable terms and conditions and those on closed-grades term and conditions. In line with the practice of successive administrations, the Government does not routinely publish Equality Impact Assessments. Furthermore, the full assessment contains legal advice which is not usually disclosed in this way. However, the key statistics from this analysis are as follows:

Workforce demographics:

This equality analysis assessed the impact of the PSPRB proposed 2020/21 pay award on protected characteristics, based on the demographics of the workforce as at 31st March 2020, and the type of pay award.

There are particular differences between the demographics of staff on Closed Grades and on Fair and Sustainable (F&S):

- There is a higher percentage of females than males on F&S (43% compared with 37%)
- There is a higher percentage of part-time staff than full-time staff on Closed Grades (24% compared with 7%) (this is likely to include partially retired staff)
- Age is a more complex demographic to analyse due to the multiple age ranges, however by assessing staff groups under the age of 40 and over age 40:
 - o F&S is more evenly split with 54% under the age of 40, and 46% over the age of 40
 - o Closed Grades generally have older staff, 12% are under the age of 40 and 88% are over the age of 40
- Since 2019, there has been a substantial increase in ethnicity declaration rates in this group and the overall percentage of staff who do not declare their ethnicity has reduced from 30 % to 17%.
- The current percentage of staff who declare their Ethnicity as BAME is slightly higher in F&S (9%) compared to in Closed Grades (8%).
- Since 2019, the percentage of staff in minority groups has increased for all protected characteristics analysed.

■ Prisoners: Death**Ms Lyn Brown:****[158895]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, COVID-19 PPO Fatal Incident Investigations, published on 23 February 2021, what steps he plans to take to implement the recommendations of that report.

Lucy Frazer:

We will carefully consider the report's findings, which are based on investigations into the first wave of Covid-19 related deaths in prisons, as we continue to review and learn from our response throughout the pandemic. We will carry on working hard to protect the lives of staff and prisoners and cut crime behind bars. All our actions have been informed by the advice of experts from PHE and will be kept under constant review.

While the reports highlights some areas where responses could be improved, we note that the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman acknowledges the care and compassion prisoners and family members received from prison and healthcare staff.

■ Prisons: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[156314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Report on a scrutiny visit to HMP Birmingham by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 16 February 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure reverse cohorting units keep prisoners arriving at different times separate from one another for the entire period necessary to prevent the spread of covid-19 into the general prison population.

Lucy Frazer:

To manage Covid-19 in prisons, we implemented the HMPPS Cohorting and Compartmentalisation strategy during the first wave of the pandemic. The purpose is to quarantine new arrivals, isolate the symptomatic and positive and shield the vulnerable. The strategy was developed in collaboration with both Public Health England and Public Health Wales, and has been revised and refreshed based on COVID-19 learning on multiple occasions.

The purpose of quarantining is to keep new individuals separate from the wider population to reduce the risk of virus incursion. Cohorting guidelines, developed with PHE, allow for establishments to either quarantine prisoners on a dedicated wing/unit or manage them in a regular cell location but provide a separate regime to ensure there is no mixing between cohorts. In order to manage the risk of incursion, establishments are asked to house new prisoners either in single cells, or in a multiple occupancy cell with individuals who arrived on the same day. This is dependent on security risk assessment. Whilst it is our preferable to do this in all cases, is not always operational deliverable, and establishments are asked to make defensible decisions and record these locally. Sites are able to work with their local outbreak control team or Health protection team to inform these decisions, and with appropriate safeguards such as testing in place.

Cohorting is in operation in all establishments and the vast majority of prisoners are fully quarantined on arrival and transfer. In addition to cohorting, we have also rolled out testing of prisoners on reception and transfer at all establishments.

■ Social Security and Child Support Tribunal

Mark Tami:

[\[156263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, for what reasons the HM Courts and Tribunals Service workload weekly management information for SSCS Tribunals has not been published in the last 12 months.

Mark Tami:

[\[156264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when his Department plans to publish the HM Courts and Tribunals Service workload weekly management information for SSCS Tribunals for the period from December 2019 onwards.

Chris Philp:

Following a move to a new operational system, new data extracts are under development to facilitate the production of Social Security and Child Support Tribunal datasets. These new datasets are currently undergoing stringent quality assurance checks before the data can be released into the public domain.

Once this data assurance has been completed these datasets will be released in the Ministry of Justice Official Published Statistics and in the published Management Information as they become available.

■ Stalking: Sentencing**Dan Jarvis:****[158923]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people convicted of a stalking offence received a custodial sentence in the last 24 months.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on convictions and sentences for stalking offences in England and Wales, up to December 2019, available in the 'Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code' data tool, which can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938554/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx.

In the data tool linked above, use the 'Offence code' filter to select each/all of the following offences:

- 00856 - Racially or religiously aggravated stalking without violence
- 00858 - Racially or religiously aggravated stalking with fear of violence
- 00865 - Stalking involving fear of violence
- 00866 - Stalking involving serious alarm/distress
- 00874 - Breach of stalking order / interim stalking order
- 06816 - Various offences under sect 11(1)(A) & (2) of the Stalking Protection Act 2019
- 19512 - Pursue course of conduct in breach of S.1(1) of Protection from Harassment Act 1997 which amounts to stalking.

Number of convictions will populate Row 32; number of immediate custodial sentences will populate Row 41.

PRIME MINISTER■ **Dominic Cummings****Daisy Cooper:**[\[156572\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, whether he sought (a) scientific and (b) other advice when deciding to support the actions of Dominic Cummings in relocating his family to County Durham at the end of March 2020.

Boris Johnson:

I refer the Hon Member to my comments of 27 May 2020 at the Liaison Committee, HC 322. The matter is now closed.

TRANSPORT■ **Airspace****Angus Brendan MacNeil:**[\[158893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has plans to mandate controlled airspace at air traffic control airports.

Robert Courts:

The Government has no such plans. Any proposal to amend the specific classification of UK airspace must follow the Civil Aviation Authority's CAP1616 airspace change process. This requires active engagement and consultation with stakeholders and the airspace change sponsor must be able to demonstrate that its proposal is safe and consistent with relevant UK aviation policy such as the Airspace Modernisation Strategy.

■ **Bridges: Pont Llanio****Ben Lake:**[\[156511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether officials in his department have held discussions with representatives of Ceredigion County Council on the Highways England proposal to undertake infilling work to the bridge at Pont Llanio, Ceredigion.

Ben Lake:[\[156512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether officials in his Department have held discussions with the Welsh Government on Highways England's proposal to undertake infilling work to the bridge at Pont Llanio, Ceredigion.

Rachel Maclean:

No discussions have taken place with either the Welsh Government or with representatives of Ceredigion County Council as there are no proposals by Highways England to undertake infilling work to the bridge at Pont Llanio, Ceredigion.

■ Cars

Neil Parish:

[\[156367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the future of UK car mileage in the context of (a) the National Travel Survey finding that 25 per cent of car mileage is for commuting purposes and (b) ONS data from April 2020 showing that 47 per cent of people did some work at home.

Rachel Maclean:

There is significant uncertainty about the impact of COVID-19 on road travel demand. The Department continues to closely monitor the impact of the pandemic and to develop tools to understand and present this uncertainty alongside other drivers of future demand such as technological change and population change.

The Department has commissioned a programme of social and behavioural research to understand the impacts of the pandemic on people's travel behavior. This includes changes in the behaviours that drive travel demand, such as working from home, and a longitudinal survey to track changes in behaviour during the pandemic as well as people's intentions going forward.

■ Cycling and Walking

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[156423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to run a national communications campaign to promote the effect of active travel on (a) public health, (b) mental health and (c) support for local high streets.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government supports various campaigns to encourage people to walk and cycle, all of which help to promote and unlock the benefits of active travel. They include the Big Bike Revival programme delivered by Cycling UK, the Walk to School Outreach programme delivered by Living Streets, and local programmes delivered by local authorities through the Department's £20 million per annum Access Fund. There are no plans for a national communications campaign, but Government will continue to work with stakeholders to consider the best ways of promoting the benefits of active travel.

■ Driving Instruction: Training

Mike Amesbury:

[\[159024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the need to prioritise potential driving instructors (PDI) for PDI tests to enable people who pass to help meet demand for driving lessons when covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency will prioritise the approved driving instructor (ADI) Part 2: practical test of driving ability, and the ADI Part 3: practical test of instructional ability, when it is safe to resume services.

Potential driving instructors (PDI) are already able to provide driving lessons as part of their preparation for the ADI Part 3 test if they have been granted a trainee licence under section 129 of the Road Traffic Act 1988.

■ Driving Licences: Foreign Nationals**Marsha De Cordova:****[157270]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to extend the grace period for non-GB driving licence holders so they can continue to drive in the UK while driving tests have been suspended.

Rachel Maclean:

There are no plans to extend the 12-month period for which holders of foreign driving licences can drive in Great Britain using that licence. To continue driving after the 12-month period the driver must either exchange their licence, if it was issued by a country which has been [designated for licence exchange purposes](#), or apply for a provisional driving licence and pass both a theory and practical driving test.

In line with the government's recent roadmap announcement, practical and theory driving tests will resume no earlier than 12 April. Driving test candidates affected by the suspension in testing are automatically being booked onto the next available test at their chosen centre. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) will increase the number of driving tests available through extended operating hours and prioritising practical driving tests. A recruitment campaign is also underway to increase the number of driving examiners.

The DVSA is currently offering a very limited testing service for mobile emergency workers who are required to drive in their role.

■ Driving Tests**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:****[156458]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency on increasing the number of available bookings for driving theory tests.

Rachel Maclean:

Since theory tests re-started in August last year, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has implemented measures to provide additional testing capacity. This included extending opening and closing times where possible, and extending the booking window from three months to four months to give candidates more choice of available dates.

Once testing can resume safely, the DVSA will continue to work closely with its theory test provider, Pearson, to monitor demand and explore ways in which it can further expand theory testing capacity and reduce the waiting times for theory tests.

■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus

Justin Madders: [\[158097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many critical workers have had driving tests cancelled during the third national lockdown.

Justin Madders: [\[158098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the effect on critical workers of the ban on driving tests during the third national lockdown.

Justin Madders: [\[158099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that critical workers have effective access to driving tests after the end of the national lockdown.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) does not hold data on a candidate's occupation, or reason for taking a test, when they apply for a routine theory or practical test.

During the current lockdown, the DVSA is offering a limited theory test and practical test service in England and Wales to NHS health and social care workers, emergency services and local council workers who need to both drive as part of their job and respond to 'threats to life' as part of their job. Mobile emergency workers who have a valid compulsory basic training (CBT) certificate and wish to apply for a motorcycle licence would also be eligible.

The DVSA has not cancelled any mobile emergency worker tests.

No assessment has been made because the national restrictions have been implemented to protect the NHS and save lives.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement of the national lockdown in England, all routine theory and practical tests have been suspended. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency is offering a limited theory test and practical test service in England and Wales to NHS health and social care workers, emergency services and local council workers who need to both drive as part of their job and respond to 'threats to life' as part of their job. Mobile emergency workers who have a valid compulsory basic training (CBT) certificate and wish to apply for a motorcycle licence would also be eligible.

Mobile emergency worker tests cannot be currently offered in Scotland due to Covid restrictions.

The DVSA will continue to offer mobile emergency worker tests once the current lockdown restrictions have been lifted, and will keep that service under review.

■ Electric Scooters

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[157272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment the Government has made of the effect of e-scooters on the safety of blind and partially sighted people.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department continues to work closely with all local authorities and e-scooter operators in areas where e-scooters are being trialed. We know there are concerns about e-scooter use, particularly for blind and visually impaired people.

Local authorities must engage with local groups that represent the interests of disabled people before submitting a proposal to hold a trial. This is to allow concerns to be raised and, where possible, mitigated before trials commence. We have rejected proposals where this engagement has not taken place. Local authorities must also ensure that plans are in place to continue with this engagement during the trials.

and officials have engaged with a range of key stakeholders, including representatives from: Guide Dogs, the RNIB, and the National Federation of the Blind of the UK.

We have sought to limit any potentially negative impacts of e-scooters on blind and partially sighted people by requiring local authorities, working with e-scooter operators, to design trials in a way that takes account of their needs.

In all trial areas there needs to be sufficient parking provision. If a dockless operating model is being used, local authorities should ensure that e-scooters do not become an obstruction to other road users and pedestrians, particularly disabled people.

Following our consultation last year, and feedback from subsequent stakeholder activities, we have required all e-scooters used in trials to have a horn or bell so that users can make others aware of their presence.

We have also asked operators to develop more robust geo-fencing to tackle pavement riding and other anti-social behaviour. We have also asked local authorities and operators to ensure that trials are launched in a controlled way, with a small number of e-scooters and that trials are scaled up gradually as demand increases.

We will continue to take account of the needs of blind and partially sighted people as the trials progress.

■ Electric Scooters: Pedestrian Areas

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[157227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to prohibit adults from using e-scooters on pavements.

Rachel Maclean:

It is illegal to use an e-scooter on the public highway – including pavements - anywhere outside of a government endorsed e-scooter trial area. Enforcement is a

matter for the police. Within trial areas e-scooters must not be used on pavements and following feedback at the start of the trials we have asked operators to use geo-fencing to help tackle pavement riding and other anti-social behaviour. We have also asked local areas and operators to ensure that users are made fully aware of the rules and that trials are launched and managed in a controlled way.

Local authorities run the trials and are able to control how the trials run in their areas. This includes limiting the number e-scooters that are available, prohibiting them from some areas, and specifying where they should be parked or docked. E-scooter operators can also use their technology to minimise the impacts of e-scooters and make sure they are used legally.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Streethay

Michael Fabricant:

[\[157950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether HS2 Ltd still plans to tunnel the railway under the A38 immediately east of Streethay near Lichfield.

Andrew Stephenson:

The alignment of the new railway is unchanged from when Parliament passed the High Speed Rail (London - West Midlands) Act in 2017.

Please note that whilst the railway itself is all below ground level, it is not a “tunnel” under the A38 as such; an overbridge will be constructed to take the dual carriageway over the new railway, which will pass under the A38 immediately to the east of Streethay housing, just at the point where the slip roads to/from Burton Road meet the dual carriageway.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Steve Reed:

[\[158938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many bids to funds for transport infrastructure improvements offered by his Department have Ministers directed councils to submit as bids to the Levelling Up Fund.

Rachel Maclean:

The Levelling Up Fund announced at the spending review will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities, including investing in local transport schemes. Further details on how the Fund will operate will be published in the prospectus shortly – including who can bid, the types of projects eligible for funding, and the criteria for assessing proposals.

■ Motor Vehicles: Technology

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[158869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the Society for Automotive Engineer's Six Levels of Vehicle Autonomy and the level of current Automated Lane Keeping Systems in England (ALKS); and how his Department plans to

determine ALKS technology's compliance with Section 8 of the Automated and Electric Vehicles Act before listing ALKS vehicles as automated.

Rachel Maclean:

No assessment has been made against the Society of Automotive Engineers' (SAE) levels and how they relate to Automated Lane Keeping Systems (ALKS). In a Call for Evidence held in 2020, the Department sought views on the "monitoring and control tests" to inform the Secretary of State's decision on whether vehicles with ALKS technology meet the definition of automation under the Automated and Electric Vehicles Act 2018. There was strong support for the criteria set out and the Department will publish a response outlining the process for making decisions in due course.

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[158870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with (a) manufacturers, (b) insurers and (c) enforcement authorities on the need to balance technical capability and public safety in the approach to Automated Lane Keeping System deployment.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government takes the need to balance technical capability and public safety in the deployment of Automated Lane Keeping Systems (ALKS) seriously. I met with Craig Tracey MP (Chair of the insurance APPG) and representatives of the insurance sector (Association of British Insurers, Thatcham Research and members of individual companies) on 11 February to discuss this. In addition, the department's officials are in regular contact with manufacturers, insurers and enforcement authorities on this subject and have already held a number of meetings with them in 2021.

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[158871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the timeframe for the deployment of Automated Lane Keeping System vehicles on UK roads.

Rachel Maclean:

Based on the latest available information, Department for Transport (DfT) officials are not expecting vehicles with Automated Lane Keeping System (ALKS) to reach the UK before late 2021, and are developing amendments to legislation, the Highway Code and procedures in Great Britain to be ready by the Autumn. DfT officials are maintaining dialogue with manufacturers to understand their plans and timescales.

■ **Motorcycles: Driving Instruction**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[156556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the economic effect of not extending CBT certificates for motorcyclists and moped drivers who rely on driving for their work; and what steps he plans to take to ensure that all drivers have access to the vehicles and certification that they need for work.

Rachel Maclean:

The two-year validity period of a CBT certificate is set out in legislation. It is in place to ensure learner moped and motorcycle riders can ride safely on their own, with L-plates, while they practise for a full moped or motorcycle test. That includes critical workers. Mobile emergency workers who hold a valid CBT certificate are able to take a motorcycle test during the current restrictions if put forward by their employer.

The DVSA has measures in place to increase testing availability for all drivers, including offering overtime to examiners and buying back annual leave, asking around 240 warrant card holders who are qualified to conduct tests but do not do so as part of their current day job to return to conducting tests, and conducting out of hours testing (such as on public holidays). It also launched a national recruitment campaign on Wednesday 10 February for around 300 new driving examiners to increase the overall number of examiners available for testing. The agency will continue to assess further options for increasing testing capacity and reducing the backlog as quickly as possible. Ensuring a COVID-secure service is maintained for employees, trainers and candidates remains a top priority.

■ **Motorways****Sarah Champion:**[\[158937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many incidents in which a vehicle was stranded in a live lane have taken place between junctions 32 and 35A of the M1 since March 2017.

Rachel Maclean:

The *Smart Motorway Safety Evidence Stocktake and Action Plan*, published in March 2020 considered the number of breakdown incidents by Strategic Road Network (SRN) road type. At a national level, conventional motorways had on an average annual basis 129,991 breakdowns (over 2017-2018), while All Lane Running (ALR) motorways had a total of 22,963 breakdowns over the same period.

The table below records all breakdown incidents that have been recorded in a live lane between junctions 32 and 35A of the M1, in both directions.

| MONTH/YEAR | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| January | | 70 | 59 | 75 | 81 |
| February | | 76 | 59 | 67 | |
| March | 51 | 102 | 69 | 40 | |
| April | 53 | 69 | 59 | 29 | |
| May | 63 | 88 | 81 | 32 | |
| June | 77 | 80 | 57 | 61 | |

| MONTH/YEAR | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| July | 67 | 82 | 83 | 80 | |
| August | 64 | 79 | 68 | 80 | |
| September | 49 | 74 | 63 | 66 | |
| October | 66 | 80 | 79 | 58 | |
| November | 71 | 93 | 75 | 62 | |
| December | 68 | 84 | 71 | 60 | |

There has been significant interest in the number of live lane breakdowns on motorways. It is important to note that live lane breakdown data is not a reliable safety indicator to correlate with serious or fatal casualties.

■ Music: Freight

Ms Harriet Harman:

[\[156240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Government plans to take additional steps to ensure that specialist music concert hauliers continue to operate from the UK over the next 12 months.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport is aware of the issues faced by specialist haulage operators. During UK-EU negotiations, specific arrangements for the specialist haulage sector were discussed in detail as part of negotiations, but the EU was unwilling to agree more flexible arrangements. We are in regular contact with the Road Haulage Association and Logistics UK to help the industry understand market access provisions under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement. We are also working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy who are considering support to enable touring by the creative industries sector to resume once restrictions on large performances are eased under the roadmap announced by the Prime Minister on 22 February.

The Government announced £4.6 billion in lockdown grants to support business and protect jobs in January 2021. This was on top of the extension of the furlough scheme to April 2021, £250 million in grants under the Culture Recovery Fund Second Round and extension of the coronavirus loan schemes to March 2021. The Budget, which will take place on 3 March, will set out the next phase of the plan to tackle the virus and protect jobs.

■ Northern Transport Acceleration Council

Julian Sturdy:

[\[156371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of basing the Northern Transport Acceleration Council in the north of England.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department has established the Northern Transport Acceleration Council, an advisory forum to progress and unblock existing priority transport projects, to speed up the delivery of vital infrastructure projects and connect communities across the North's towns and cities. It has successfully brought together leaders from across the north of England to meet and engage with Ministers.

Given the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings have so far been held online. However, we look forward to engaging with leaders in the North in person as soon as it is safe to do so.

The council is supported by a small secretariat team of officials based in the North. They work alongside regionally based area leads and DfT's Acceleration Unit to connect with local transport authorities and northern leaders.

■ Public Transport: Protective Clothing

Philip Davies:

[\[157045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to review the mandatory use of face coverings on public transport.

Rachel Maclean:

Since 15 June, passengers travelling on the public transport network have been required to wear a face covering, unless exempt. On 14 December, the Secretary of State reviewed the regulations and deemed that this requirement remained necessary and proportionate in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. As set out in the roadmap, the Government will complete a review of social distancing and other long-term measures, which will inform decisions on the timing and circumstances under which the wearing of face coverings and other measures may be lifted. We have seen continued high compliance with face covering regulations and the latest evidence indicates that face coverings are likely to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 where used correctly. As such their continued use is important to ensure that those who need to travel now and in the future are able to do so in safety and with confidence.

■ Railways

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[158165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 148875, what recent steps he has taken to help ensure that no community loses its connectivity.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is committed to ensuring all communities continue to have suitable access to the rail network. Officials constantly monitor the situation and are looking at ways to ensure connectivity is maintained by working with existing franchises and Open Access Operators to provide appropriate levels of services. In recent months this approach has seen various Train Operating Companies augment their services to ensure continued access to the local community when some Open Access Operators were in periods of hibernation.

Railways: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[158168]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 148874, what assessment he has made of the effect of longer-term changes in behaviour as a result of the covid-19 pandemic on rail services.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department continues to actively work to understand the impact of coronavirus and other factors on rail demand. As part of this we are ensuring that we use a range of rail demand scenarios based on a series of factors that could drive rail demand over the short and long term to influence decisions. These include economic forecasts and behavioural factors. The Department continues to monitor evidence on behaviour changes as a result of the pandemic.

Given the considerable uncertainty that the pandemic has caused, these scenarios cannot be used as forecasts. However, they do reflect some of the possible impacts of the pandemic on future rail demand.

Railways: North of England**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[158166]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 147963, what (a) lines and (b) stations he plans to restore in the North that had been previously closed during the Beeching cuts.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

One element of the Restoring Your Railway Fund is the Ideas Fund, which is providing development funding for early-stage ideas to explore options to restore lost rail connections to communities.

We are currently funding 10 schemes based in the North to develop business cases to restore lines and stations, as well as investing £34m to progress work on reopening the Northumberland line. These schemes have been published on GOV.UK and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/restoring-your-railway-fund-successful-bids>.

Bids are currently being accepted for the third round of the Ideas Fund and submissions will be accepted until 5 March 2021.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[158167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 147963, what assessment he has made of the potential level of disruption during the Transpennine route upgrade.

Andrew Stephenson:

TRU is a major upgrade which will provide significant benefits to passengers in the North. Delivering the upgrade will mean that passenger and freight services on the route will be disrupted. Network Rail are reviewing the Strategic Access Plan principles for TRU and engaging with industry stakeholders to examine how different access agreements may be of benefit in limiting disruption where possible. A TRU Customer Manifesto has been developed to assist the train operating companies in developing and delivery of effective customer management plans, including a commitment to keeping passengers on a train as often as possible, moving on time and in comfort. We aim to provide as much notice as possible for any disruption along the route.

■ Railways: Voucher Schemes

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[158163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 8 February 2021 to Question 147965, what the timescale is for a decision to be made on whether to extend the validity of Rail Travel Vouchers.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department and rail industry continue to consider the validity of Rail Travel Vouchers in the context of local and national travel restrictions due to COVID-19.

When this matter has been considered fully any decisions and changes will be made available on the GOV.UK website and I will write to the Hon. Gentleman to let him know.

■ River Thames: Hammersmith Bridge

Sarah Olney:

[\[158997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what representations he has made to the Port of London Authority to re-open the River Thames at Hammersmith Bridge for commercial traffic to support the river economy, jobs and businesses.

Rachel Maclean:

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, as the bridge owner, took the decision to close Hammersmith Bridge to river traffic in August 2020, as advised within the Case for Continued Safe Operation. The Government wants to see the bridge reopened to pedestrians, cyclists and river traffic as soon as it is safe to do so.

For some time, the Department for Transport and the Port of London Authority have been in discussion with the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham on the possibility of revisiting the Case for Continued Safe Operation to allow river traffic

when engineers are not working on the bridge. Controlled transits are now allowed at specific times every Sunday, and discussion continues on how a greater number of transits can be permitted, in line with increased demand as the river community emerges from both winter and COVID-19 lockdown.

■ Road Traffic Offences

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[157247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that local authorities have the resources they need to tackle (a) speeding and (b) anti-social behaviour on roads.

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[157248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government is taking to ensure a coordinated inter-departmental approach to tackling (a) speeding and (b) anti-social behaviour on roads.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government believes that any form of dangerous or inconsiderate driving behaviour is a serious road safety issue. All available research shows a link between excessive speed and the risk of collisions.

Enforcement of road traffic laws is for the police. Last autumn the Department for Transport launched a Call for Evidence, part of a wider roads policing review, a thorough examination of roads policing in England and Wales and its relevance to road safety. Responses to the Call for Evidence will inform the action plan that is being developed by the roads policing review governance board. This is jointly chaired by officials from the Home Office and the Department for Transport. The Call for Evidence closed in October and we are planning to publish our response later this year.

The Road Safety Statement, 'A Lifetime of Road Safety', published in July 2019, describes many actions that will contribute towards safer driving and riding all round. By improving the training of new drivers, exposing them to a better understanding of hazards on the road and explaining road safety message through 'THINK!' campaigns, we aim to produce novice drivers with a better understanding of the importance of sensible speeds.

The Department has allocated £500 million for the period 2020/21 to 2021/22 to local highways authorities in England, outside of London, through the Integrated Transport Block for small scale transport schemes, including road safety measures. The Integrated Transport Block is not ring-fenced, allowing authorities to spend their allocations according to their own priorities. It is therefore for each authority to decide how it allocates its resources and which transport improvement projects to support.

TREASURY■ **Alcoholic Drinks: Taxation**

Kenny MacAskill: [\[159034\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits for public health of introducing scaled taxation for alcohol where stronger alcohol products are taxed more per unit of alcohol than lower strength products.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Treasury is considering the merits of various taxation methods as part of its alcohol duty review. We are currently in the early stages of analysis and will provide further updates in due course.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[159035\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing scaled taxation for alcohol, where stronger products are taxed more per unit of alcohol than lower strength products, to encourage reformulation and increase the availability of lower strength products.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Treasury is considering the merits of various taxation methods as part of its alcohol duty review. We are currently in the early stages of analysis and will provide further updates in due course.

■ **Aviation: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Rachel Hopkins: [\[158239\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme beyond 30 April 2021 to protect viable jobs in the aviation sector.

Jesse Norman:

The Government will set out the next phase of the plan to tackle the virus and protect jobs at Budget 2021.

■ **Bicycles: UK Trade with EU**

Emily Thornberry: [\[156302\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what evidence is required to prove that a bike has been assembled with 55 per cent UK or EU content for the purposes of tariff-free import to the UK from the EU.

Jesse Norman:

HM Revenue and Customs advise that, in order to import tariff-free from the EU, evidence held by the importer that a bike has been assembled to meet the rules of origin can be either:

- A statement of the origin of the goods provided by the EU exporter on the invoice or other commercial document that describes the goods, or

- Documentary evidence obtained by the importer (known as 'Importer's knowledge'), that shows the bike has been assembled to the 55% threshold in the rule of origin. This documentary evidence should include the ex-works value of the bike as well as the value of all the originating and non-originating materials used in the production of that bike.

■ Business Premises: Non-domestic Rates

Daisy Cooper:

[\[156573\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the request from the Flexible Space Association for a 12-month business rates holiday for business centres.

Jesse Norman:

This year, due to the direct adverse effects of COVID-19, the Government has provided an unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties. The Government has also frozen the business rates multiplier for all businesses for 2021-22.

The Government has provided various schemes to support firms, including flexible workspaces, including Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans, Bounce Back Loans, grants and VAT deferrals.

The Budget will set out the next phase of the Government's plans to tackle the virus, protect jobs and support business.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Mike Amesbury:

[\[156541\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing further Government support for businesses registered for VAT where turnover has fallen below the £85,000 threshold.

Jesse Norman:

Businesses can ask HMRC to cancel their registration if their VAT taxable turnover falls below the deregistration threshold of £83,000. Businesses that are below the VAT threshold and are not voluntarily registered do not account for VAT on their supplies.

In light of COVID-19, the Government has announced a significant support package to help businesses from a whole range of sectors through the winter months, which includes an extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, an extension of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant, and an extension of the application window for the Government-backed loan schemes.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Justin Madders:

[158102]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people employed in sectors unable to open due to covid-19 restrictions who have been excluded from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme since November 2020.

Jesse Norman:

An estimate of the number of people employed in sectors unable to open due to COVID-19 restrictions who are not eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme since November 2020 is not available.

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) publish statistics on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on GOV.UK. The latest release was published on 25 February 2021: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-february-2021>.

■ Coronavirus: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher:

[158952]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support his Department is providing to people in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry who are clinically extremely vulnerable and unable to work from home.

Kemi Badenoch:

People who are clinically extremely vulnerable and unable to work from home can be furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, subject to wider eligibility criteria. Provisional HMRC statistics indicate that there were 7,300 people furloughed in Coventry North East constituency and 20,200 in Coventry as of 31 January. People ineligible for furlough may be able to access Statutory Sick Pay, Universal Credit, or Employment and Support Allowance.

The government has also provided local authorities with additional funding to support people who are clinically extremely vulnerable. This funding can be used to provide support such as food parcels and medicines delivery for those shielding.

The government is committed to supporting all groups in society, including the most vulnerable, with the challenges caused by COVID-19. This is why we have put in place an unprecedented package of support by boosting the generosity of the welfare system by £7.4 billion in 2020-21, including a temporary £20 increase in the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element. Individuals and families have also benefited from enhanced statutory sick pay, a stay on repossession proceedings and mortgage holidays.

■ Cost Benefit Analysis

Richard Fuller:

[158240]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Green Book Supplementary Document: Social discount rates for Cost-Benefit Analysis: A Report for HM Treasury,

published 16 November 2020, what assessment he has made of the effect of the proposed changes to social discount rates on (a) productivity of the economy and (b) other key economic factors.

Steve Barclay:

The Green Book Social Time Preference Rate (STPR), or discount rate, is applied by all government departments in the formulation of policy appraisal. The rate has been set at 3.5% since 2003 and has been regularly reviewed by independent academic experts. There are no proposed changes to this headline discount rate, which will continue to be regularly reviewed in line with the evolution of appropriate evidence.

As part of the Green Book Review 2020, we have committed to an expert review into the application of the discount rate for environmental impacts. This will scrutinise the current guidance on environmental valuation and discounting and investigate the case for using the same discount rate as currently applied to the valuation of life and health effects. We have no proposals for changes to this rate at present.

The paper referenced, "Social discount rates for Cost-Benefit Analysis: A Report for HM Treasury", was originally published in 2018. As noted in the paper, the views displayed in this document are those of the authors and do not reflect those of HM Treasury.

■ **Directors: Coronavirus**

Henry Smith:

[\[156335\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will review self-certification tax declaration rules which currently prevent small company directors being able to access covid-19 support packages.

Jesse Norman:

Company directors who are also owner managers can earn a salary and receive shareholder dividends from their company as part of their total remuneration package. Company directors who pay themselves a salary through PAYE are eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), but neither the CJRS nor the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) cover dividends or other investment income.

The SEISS relies on the information provided through tax returns to determine eligibility for the scheme and to calculate the grant amount. These returns are also used to protect the scheme from abuse by organised crime groups and fraudulent operators; when an individual applies to the SEISS, HMRC can cross-check the person's SEISS application against their tax returns.

It is not possible under current reporting mechanisms for HMRC to distinguish between dividends paid in lieu of employment income and those paid as returns on investment in the company. The Government has considered proposals under which company directors would be allowed to self-certify how much of their dividends are in lieu of salary, and then claim SEISS based on that self-certification. However, it is

clear that this would open up the scheme to an unacceptable risk of opportunistic fraud and criminal activity.

Those not eligible for the CJRS and SEISS may still be eligible for other elements of the support available. The Universal Credit standard allowance has been temporarily increased for 2020-21 and the Minimum Income Floor relaxed for the duration of the crisis, so that where self-employed claimants' earnings have fallen significantly, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings. In addition to this, they may also have access to other elements of the package, including Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

■ EU Grants and Loans

Ruth Jones:

[\[157278\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing funding for organisations that were in receipt of EU funds following the UK's departure from the EU.

Steve Barclay:

Taking into account the financial settlement with the EU, the Government has determined how an additional £14.6 billion of spending by 2024-25 can be allocated to its domestic priorities, rather than be sent in contributions to the EU. This additional spending was included in the overall spending plans that the government set out at Spending Review 2020, which prioritised funding to support the government's response to Covid-19, invest in the UK's recovery for all nations and regions and deliver on promises to the British people.

As part of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement published on 24 December 2020, the UK has agreed to participate in certain EU programmes for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) including Horizon Europe, Euratom Research and Training and Copernicus. UK entities will be able to participate and bid for EU funds through these programmes.

In addition, the Withdrawal Agreement provides for continued UK participation in programmes funded under the 2014-2020 MFF until their closure. This means that the vast majority of programmes will continue to receive EU funding across the programme's lifetime, including where this lasts beyond 2020. UK organisations can also continue to bid for grant funding under the 2014-2020 MFF.

■ Gratuities: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Apsana Begum:

[\[156601\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will include tronc payments with the furlough for the remainder of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Apsana Begum:

[\[156602\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the financial effect on hospitality sector workers of not having had their tronc payments included in the calculation of their furlough payments.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) aims to enable employers to keep people in employment. In order to achieve this, the CJRS grants compensate employers for the payments that they are contractually obliged to make in order to avoid the need for redundancies. Covering payments made at the discretion of the employer or a client such as tips, including those distributed through tronc payments, would go beyond the objectives of the scheme.

The Government recognises that for some employees, the pay in scope for this emergency grant package will be less than the overall sum they usually receive. The Government is supporting people on low incomes who need to rely on the welfare system through a significant package of temporary measures introduced in March 2020. This includes a £20 per week increase to the 2020-21 Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element and almost £1 billion of additional support for private renters claiming Universal Credit or Housing Benefit in 2020/21 following the increase of the local housing allowance rate to the 30th percentile. These changes are benefitting new and existing claimants.

■ Hospitality Industry and Tourism: VAT

Gary Sambrook:

[\[156564\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of a return to a 20 per cent VAT rate for the hospitality and tourism sectors on the ability of those sectors to compete in a global marketplace.

Jesse Norman:

Raising £130 billion in 2019/20, VAT is an important source of revenue and is vital for funding public services such as health, education and defence.

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors, and is due to run until 31 March 2021. This measure is aimed at helping businesses recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

The Government keeps all taxes under review, and any future tax decisions will be made at Budget.

■ Imports: Customs

Emily Thornberry:

[\[156303\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps UK importers should take in circumstances where they are unable to complete rules of origin paperwork that rely on the disclosure of profit margins for preferential rates.

Jesse Norman:

HM Revenue and Customs advise that UK importers may still claim a preferential rate if they can obtain a Statement on Origin from the exporter.

■ **Innovation and Research****Seema Malhotra:**[\[158929\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support long term R&D innovation (a) for all regions and nations of the UK and (b) to support the industries and jobs of the future.

Kemi Badenoch:

Looking ahead, this Government is determined to build back better with an ambitious target to raise total investment in research and development to 2.4% of UK GDP by 2027.

Already this year, to forge the UK's future as a global scientific superpower, the government is investing £14.6bn in research and development in 21-22. This funding will be allocated on a UK-wide basis and will therefore help locations across the UK, by:

- Supporting business-led innovation to drive productivity and competitiveness, with at least £490m in 21-22 for Innovate UK to support high tech innovation.
- Funding to address global challenges, including £128 million in 21-22 for Covid-19 Vaccines R&D and over £280 million in 21-22 for net zero innovation, helping the economy to build back stronger and greener.

As much of this will be allocated competitively, it is difficult to predict beneficiaries, however:

- The Net Zero Innovation Portfolio is expected to have a strong regional impact due to the localised and distributed nature of energy production and infrastructure. This will build on the current energy innovation programme, which included the UK's first Carbon Capture & Use plant in Cheshire and tested the world's largest offshore wind turbine blade in Northumberland.
- As part of public investment in transport innovation, the government is investing £3 million in the Tees Valley Hydrogen Transport Hub and £20 million in a new Clean Maritime Demonstration Programme, which will include feasibility studies on key sites such as Orkney and Teesside.

Further information on allocations will be determined in due course.

■ **Local Housing Allowance****Kirsten Oswald:**[\[158085\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make available funding to increase local housing allowance to cover average rents.

Steve Barclay:

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates have been relinked to the 30th percentile for 2020-21, at a cost of almost £1 billion. Over 1.5 million households have gained just over £600 per year on average this year in additional support, while for people renting in the highest demand areas the gain will be even higher, for example, around 500,000 claimants had an increase of more than £100 per month. We are maintaining LHA rates at the same cash level next year to ensure that claimants continue to benefit from this increase, rather than reverting back to previous rates, which were significantly less generous.

For claimants with higher rents, additional support is also available through Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs). Local authorities have a combined budget of £180m for DHPs for this financial year.

■ Parents: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[156552\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report published by the Women and Equalities Committee, Unequal impact: Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact, HC 385, what assessment he has made of (a) the implications for his policies of that report and (b) the recommendation in that report to guarantee parents the right to furlough.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is considering the Committee's report carefully and will respond to their recommendations in due course. The Government appreciates the work of the Committee on these important issues, and the contributions of all those who gave evidence.

The Treasury has rigorous processes in place to ensure that it complies with its legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010. The Treasury considers carefully the equality impacts of individual policies on those sharing protected characteristics, including gender, in line with both its legal obligations and with its strong commitment to equality. As the Government considers further policies as part of the response to coronavirus, these processes ensure impacts on all are taken into account appropriately.

In relation to the specific recommendation related to parents' right to furlough, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is available to the employers of anyone who is unable to work, including from home, due to caring responsibilities arising from COVID-19, such as caring for children who are at home as a result of school and childcare facilities closing. However, the furloughing of staff through the CJRS is a voluntary arrangement, entered at the employers' discretion and agreed by employees. It is not for the Government to decide whether an individual firm should put its staff on furlough.

■ Public Sector: Pay**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[159033\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will announce a pay rise for NHS staff and other public sector workers in Budget 2021.

Steve Barclay:

In order to protect jobs and ensure fairness, we confirmed at the Spending Review (2020) that there will be a pause to headline pay rises for the majority of public sector workforces in 2021-22.

Given the unique impact of Covid-19 on our health service, Government will continue to provide for pay rises for over 1 million NHS workers. The NHS and Doctor and Dentists' Pay Review Bodies will report as usual for 2021/22, and the Government will respond to their recommendations. The government will also prioritise the lowest paid, with public sector workers earning less than £24,000 in basic pay receiving a minimum £250 pro-rata increase. The Pay Review Bodies will advise on how this should be implemented for the relevant workforces.

■ Revenue and Customs: Lost Working Days**Chris Stephens:**[\[158974\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the Average Working Days Lost was in HMRC for civil servants who have (a) declared themselves as having a disability and (b) not declared themselves to have a disability in the calendar year (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The average working days lost for civil servants working in HMRC was as follows:

Disability declared

January 2019 – December 2019 = 12.18 days average

January 2020 – December 2020 = 10.73 days average

Disability not declared

January 2019 – December 2019 = 6.64 days average

January 2020 – December 2020 = 5.90 days average

Chris Stephens:[\[158975\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the Average Working Days Lost was in HMRC for civil servants (a) from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and (b) recording themselves as White in the calendar year (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The average working days lost for civil servants working in HMRC was as follows:

Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority

January 2019 – December 2019 = 6.51 days average

January 2020 – December 2020 = 6.78 days average

White

January 2019 – December 2019 = 6.38 days average

January 2020 – December 2020 = 5.52 days average

■ Revenue and Customs: Recruitment

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[156429\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many temporary workers have been recruited by HMRC in the last twelve months; and what roles those workers have performed.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC have recruited c.3,794 temporary workers into the department over the last twelve months. The largest proportion, 2,564, relates to workers recruited to supplement the existing workforce to support UK Transition and COVID-19 schemes.

The table below provides a breakdown;

| AREA | BUSINESS UNIT | TEMPORARY WORKERS | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|------|
| | Covid19 and UKT Schemes (Bulk) | CSG/CCG | 1588 |
| Borders Design to Delivery | 976 | | |
| | Digital / Technology | CDIO | 198 |
| RCDTS | 100 | | |
| CSTD | 40 | | |
| Operational Delivery | Customer Services | 671 | |
| | Finance / Tax / Legal | Solicitors Office | 33 |
| CFO | 31 | | |
| Compliance | CCG | 75 | |
| | Other | Communications | 1 |
| CPO | 52 | | |
| HR | 17 | | |
| Transformation | 2 | | |
| UK Transition | 4 | | |
| Customs Border Design | 6 | | |
| Total | 3794 | | |

■ Revenue and Customs: Redundancy**Stuart C McDonald:**[\[156428\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many staff have been made redundant as part of HMRC's Building our future programme to date; and what recent estimate he has made of what the total number of redundancies will be under that programme.

Jesse Norman:

Since the commencement of HMRC's Location Programme activity, 45,158 people have been invited to undertake a one-to-one discussion to determine whether or not they are able to migrate to a future HMRC location and/or opt-in to move. Of those people, 5,251 have subsequently left HMRC on an exit package. A further 204 people have accepted Voluntary Redundancy offers and are due to leave HMRC by 30 June 2021.

Learning from HMRC's experience during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has given the department the opportunity to look at what flexibilities HMRC can allow to help people to stay working in HMRC, HMRC will review their approach for the remainder of the programme.

■ Revenue and Customs: Scotland**Stuart C McDonald:**[\[156427\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what impact assessment has been carried out on the effect on staff at HMRC's office in Cumbernauld of requiring those employees to travel to a new office in Glasgow; and if he will publish that assessment.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC undertake People Equality Impact Assessments (PEIA) on a regular basis at national and regional levels, covering all the impacts on employees as a result of their Locations Programme. The impact on employees in Cumbernauld who will be required to travel to a new office in Glasgow will be included in the wider PEIA for the Glasgow Region and will be updated later this year. HMRC publish national PEIAs externally; the regional PEIAs are published internally and made available to all employees.

HMRC provided the Honourable Member with the most recent Glasgow Regional PEIA, which included Cumbernauld, in December 2020.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme**Clive Lewis:**[\[156470\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on eligible self-employed people's livelihoods of the time taken by the Government to announce the details of the fourth Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, covering February to April 2021, in the 2021 Budget on 3 March 2021.

Jesse Norman:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given to UIN 153300 on 22 February 2021.

■ **Self-Employment Income Support Scheme**

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[158962\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will amend the earnings criteria for the Self Employed Income Support Scheme in the context of the periods of lockdown that have taken place since the commencement of that scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government recognises the impact that periods of lockdown across the country have had on the self-employed and remains committed to supporting them through the impact of the virus.

The self-employed are very diverse and have a wide mix of turnover and profits, with monthly and annual variations even in normal times, and in some cases with substantial alternative forms of income too. The design of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), including the eligibility requirement that an individual's trading profits must be no more than £50,000 and at least equal to their non-trading income, means it is targeted at those who need it the most, and who are most reliant on their self-employment income.

The SEISS has already provided generous support to self-employed individuals, with claims across the first three grants totalling over £19.7 billion. The Government has also confirmed that there will be a fourth SEISS grant, covering the period from February to April 2021.

Further details of the SEISS, including the fourth grant, will be released on 3 March.

■ **Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Coventry**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[158077\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to support self-employed people in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry ineligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided, and will continue to provide, generous support to eligible self-employed individuals through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), with claims from the first three grants totalling over £19.7 billion, including over £70 million paid out to claimants within the Coventry Unitary Authority. There will also be a fourth SEISS grant covering the period from February to April 2021. Further details on the SEISS, including the fourth grant, will be released on 3 March.

The Government does recognise that some of the rules, criteria and conditions that were vital to ensuring that the SEISS worked for the vast majority meant that some people did not qualify.

Those who are ineligible for the SEISS may still be eligible for other elements of the £280 billion package of support available. The Universal Credit standard allowance has been temporarily increased for 2020-21 and the Minimum Income Floor relaxed, so that where self-employed claimants' earnings have fallen significantly, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings. In addition to this, they may also have access to other elements of the package, including tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

■ Social Security Benefits

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[158086\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make available funding to abolish the household benefit cap.

Steve Barclay:

The Government firmly believes that there has to be a limit on working-age benefits the state should provide to households. It is not reasonable or fair for taxpayers to pay for people to live on out of work benefits at higher incomes than they themselves receive from work. Exemptions to the cap apply for those in work and the most vulnerable claimants. £180 million has been made available for Local Authorities in 2020/21 to use Discretionary Housing Payments to address shortfalls arising from the benefit cap where they deem this justified.

DWP Secretary of State has a statutory obligation to review the levels of the benefit cap at least once in each Parliament unless an early election is called, as in 2019. A review will take place at an appropriate point in the future.

■ Stamp Duties

Julian Sturdy:

[\[156372\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of retrospectively applying the temporarily reduced rates of stamp duty to house purchases completed between 23 March and 7 July 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary SDLT relief was designed to stimulate immediate momentum in a property market where property transactions fell by as much as 50 per cent during the COVID-19 lockdown in March. This has also supported the jobs of people whose employment relies on custom from the property industry, such as retailers and tradespeople.

The relief applies to sales that have been completed or substantially performed before 31 March 2021 and will not be backdated for those who purchased a property before the relief was introduced.

■ Stamp Duty Land Tax

James Wild:

[156594]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue has accrued to the public purse from higher rate additional dwelling stamp duty land tax in (a) England and (b) the North West Norfolk constituency broken down by (i) total amount and (ii) the 3 per cent surcharge proportion in each year since 2016.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested has been published on a financial year basis up to the end of 2019-20 as part of HM Revenue and Customs 'UK Stamp Statistics' report:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-stamp-tax-statistics>. Data for 2020-21 will not be available until late Autumn 2021.

■ Students: Taxation

Stephen Farry:

[156635]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to ask the Chancellor what assessment he has made of the potential merits of creating a unique tax code for the current student cohort to enable the application of covid-19 related tax deductions with regards to future earnings.

Jesse Norman:

The UK's economic response to COVID-19 is one of the most generous and comprehensive in the world. The Government is monitoring closely the impact of measures, having regard to the need to support public services, businesses, and individuals, and will keep all policies under review.

The Government recognises that this academic year has been extremely difficult for students and that, as a result of these exceptional circumstances, some students are facing financial hardship. To this end, the Department for Education has announced a further £50 million to support students in England with financial pressures from the pandemic, in addition to the £20 million announced in December.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus

Peter Dowd:

[156443]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending business rates exemptions and the temporary VAT reduction to businesses in the wedding industry.

Jesse Norman:

This year, due to the direct adverse effects of COVID-19, the Government has provided an unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties. The Government has also frozen the business rates multiplier for all businesses for 2021-22.

The temporary VAT reduced rate came into effect on 15 July 2020 and was initially scheduled to end on 12 January 2021. The Government extended the reduced rate of VAT (five per cent) until 31 March 2021.

The Government has provided various schemes to support firms, including those in the wedding industry, including Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans, Bounce Back Loans, grants and VAT deferrals.

The Budget will set out the next phase of the Government's plans to tackle the virus, protect jobs and support business.

■ Weddings: VAT

Gary Sambrook:

[\[156565\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to apply the reduced rate of VAT to wedding venues.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors, and is due to run until 31 March 2021. Hospitality for the purposes of this relief includes the supply of food and non-alcoholic beverages from restaurants, cafes, pubs and similar establishments for consumption on these premises. It also includes the supply of hot food and non-alcoholic hot beverages to take away.

The Government has also announced a significant support package to help businesses from a whole range of sectors through the winter months, which includes an extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, an extension of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant, and an extension of the application window for the Government-backed loan schemes.

The Government keeps all taxes under review, and any future tax decisions will be made at Budget.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Coronavirus: Communication

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[156545\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the Government's accessible communication during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to PQs [115573](#), [115574](#), [115575](#) answered on 19 November 2020.

■ Discrimination

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[156567\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department is taking to tackle hair discrimination in (a) dress code policies in schools and (b) places of work.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Equality Act 2010 covers both education and employment settings.

In formulating its school uniform policy, a school must consider its obligations not to discriminate unlawfully under equality law. The Department for Education provides guidance to help schools understand how the Equality Act affects them and how to fulfil their duties under the Act. The guidance makes clear to schools that decisions related to appearance, including on hair, must be made in accordance with their responsibilities under the Equality Act.

In the workplace, any absolute ban on someone's ability to manifest their religious beliefs through a chosen hairstyle could constitute direct discrimination because of religion and therefore would be likely to be unlawful, while a ban on hairstyles associated with a particular ethnicity could constitute indirect discrimination because of race which would require the employer imposing the ban to justify why it was necessary, for instance because of health and safety reasons.

■ Ethnic Groups: Coronavirus

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[156547\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the implications for the Government's policies of the findings published by the BBC on 9 February 2020 entitled Covid: South Asian death rates still alarming; and what steps her Department is taking to help (a) protect ethnic minority communities from the health and economic effects of covid-19 and (b) encourage covid-19 vaccine uptake in those communities.

Kemi Badenoch:

The government continues to assess all of the latest data and evidence about the impact of COVID-19 on different ethnic groups, including the findings of the Office for National Statistics' analysis on which the BBC article of 9 February was based. This has been summarised in my latest report to the Prime Minister and Health Secretary, which I sent to you on Friday 26 February.

We have taken a number of steps to improve health outcomes for ethnic minority groups, including providing additional funding to the Public Health England *Better Health* campaign in order to reach Black African, Black Caribbean, Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups. This is in addition to existing efforts within the COVID-19 campaign to engage ethnic minorities. To mitigate the economic effects of COVID-19 we introduced an unprecedented package of support – including boosts to Universal Credit, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Self-Employment

Income Support Scheme and the Kick-start Scheme – helping to protect incomes, jobs, and support those most in need.

Uptake of vaccines is the best way to protect people from COVID-19 and will save thousands of lives. The government has launched a multi-channel communications campaign to encourage uptake of vaccines among ethnic minority groups and to counter misinformation. We have also provided over £23m in funding to the Community Champions scheme which is enabling local authorities to use trusted local voices to encourage vaccine uptake.

■ Gender Recognition: Refuges

Apsana Begum:

[\[156599\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to ensure that providers of women-only domestic and sexual violence support services abide by the Equality Act 2010 by supporting transgender women.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is committed to supporting all victims of sexual assault and domestic abuse, including through the provisions of the Domestic Abuse Bill. We continue to work closely with domestic abuse organisations, including those representing LGBT victims, to assess ongoing needs and ensure that commissioning of services is fully inclusive.

The government believes that the protection of single-sex spaces, as provided for in the Equality Act, is important. The Equality Act makes it clear that providers have the right to restrict use of spaces on the basis of sex, and to exclude transgender people from those spaces, where this is justified. This position is unchanged since 2010 and we believe it strikes the right balance. All victims, regardless of their gender, have the right to access victim support services and be treated with respect, dignity, sensitivity and compassion.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Carer's Allowance

Patricia Gibson:

[\[158972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of introducing a £20 a week supplement to carers with an entitlement to Carer's Allowance.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave on the 24th February 2021 to question number [155395](#).

■ Cohabitation: Death

Stuart Anderson:

[\[159365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps are being taken to support bereaved partners who were not married or in a civil partnership.

Guy Opperman:

We intend to take forward a Remedial Order to remove the incompatibilities from the legislation governing Widowed Parent's Allowance and Bereavement Support Payment by extending these benefits to cohabitants with children. The Order will be laid before the House in due course.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Written Questions

Andy McDonald:

[\[158940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to answer Questions 155052 and 155053 on Employment: Coronavirus tabled by the hon. Member for Middlesbrough.

Mims Davies:

The questions were answered on 26 February and can be found at: [155052](#) and [155053](#).

■ Employment and Support Allowance

Paul Blomfield:

[\[156358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to implement alternative arrangements for face-to-face assessments for employment and support allowance.

Justin Tomlinson:

We continue to complete paper based assessments where possible and are now carrying out telephone Work Capability Assessments from which all outcomes are available. We are also trialling video assessments. Once completed the trial will be evaluated and a decision made on the feasibility to roll-out wider.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Steve McCabe:

[\[157951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many young people have been given a placement on the Kickstart Scheme (a) in the UK and (b) by each parliamentary constituency.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to PQ [145013](#). There have been over 2,000 young people who have started a Kickstart job since the scheme began.

■ Natural Gas: Safety**Chi Onwurah:** [\[156391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential economic benefits for home owners of requiring gas certificates to carry the Unique Property Reference Number in the next Gas Safe bidding round.

Mims Davies:

There has been no assessment of the potential economic benefits for homeowners of requiring gas certificates to carry the Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN). Under the Gas Safety Installation and Use Regulations (GSIUR) only landlords have a duty to carry out annual gas safety checks and retain a record of these. The Regulations already contain a requirement for the details of the properties address to be included on the gas safety check record (regulation 36(3)(c)(ii) refers), and there are no current plans to change or expand these requirements to include the UPRN.

■ P and J Moore: Contracts**Steve McCabe:** [\[157952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if P&J Moore Ltd, who operate Kickstart Portal, are contracted by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: P&J Moore Ltd are not contracted by the Department for Work and Pensions.

■ Personal Independence Payment**Mark Tami:** [\[156258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reasons it is her Department's policy that claimants with an award of personal independence payments from a tribunal are required to make a new claim at the end of the award rather than going through the renewal process.

Justin Tomlinson:

A tribunal considering an appeal against a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) decision also considers the length of any award it may make. The length of award will be based on the individual's needs and the likelihood of those changing. If it gives a short, fixed-term award then it is indicating that the claimant's limitations are likely to improve to the point they would not be entitled at the end of their award. Accordingly, the Secretary of State implements the Tribunal's decision on the award end date and does not schedule a review.

Mark Tami: [\[156259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants of personal independence payments whose award was made by a tribunal (a) made a new claim before the end of the award that came into payment with no break in the payment cycle and (b) made a new claim before the end of the award but a decision on the new claim

had not been made by her Department before the last day of the previous award in each of the last three years.

Mark Tami: [\[156260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants of personal independence payments whose award was made by a tribunal made a new claim in a period between one day and one year after the end of their previous entitlement in each of the last three years.

Mark Tami: [\[156261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the (a) mean, (b) median and (c) longest waiting period was experienced by claimants of personal independence payments whose award was made by a tribunal between that award and their following award where (i) the subsequent new claim was submitted before the last day of the previous tribunal-made award, (ii) a decision had not been made on the new claim by her Department by the final day of the previous award, (iii) the decision on the new award was to award at least the standard rate of at least one component and (iv) the decision on the new award was not subject to mandatory reconsideration or appeal in each of the last three years.

Mark Tami: [\[156262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the (a) mean, (b) median and (c) longest waiting period was experienced by claimants of personal independence payments whose award was made by a tribunal between that award and their following award where (i) the subsequent new claim was submitted before the last day of the previous tribunal-made award, (ii) a decision had not been made on the new claim by her Department by the final day of the previous award, (iii) the decision on the new award was to award neither the standard nor enhanced rate of either component and (iv) the decision on the new award was subject to appeal to a tribunal which awarded at least the standard rate of at least one component in each of the last three years.

Justin Tomlinson:

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

■ Social Security Benefits: Computers

Seema Malhotra: [\[158932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, to ask the Secretary of State, how many claimants her Department has provided with a laptop or computer in each of the last twelve months; and what recent estimate she has made of the number of claimants without online access to their journal.

Mims Davies:

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

Throughout the pandemic, jobcentres have remained open for anyone who needs face-to-face support and cannot be helped in any other way. To help keep customers and staff as safe as possible in the latest phase of the pandemic, jobcentre opening hours have changed to 10am to 2pm. This temporary change means we can continue providing safe, essential services for those who need to come into the Jobcentre and who are unable to interact with us on the phone or digitally. The opening hours of our phone lines remain as they were.

All Jobcentre Plus offices across the country have Wi-Fi and computers available for claimants to access the internet.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[156379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment his department has made of the potential merits of (a) reducing and (b) suspending benefit sanctions for (i) disabled people and (ii) people with severe mental illness during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

We have not made an assessment of the potential merits of either reducing or suspending benefit sanctions for these groups.

For those with health conditions, who are expected to move towards or enter employment, Work Coaches will continue to ensure claimant commitments are tailored to a claimants' circumstances, including any health conditions, allowing them to continue to adhere to Covid-19 public health advice. Should there be a doubt, a decision maker will take into account any evidence of good reason, including restrictions due to health conditions, before deciding if a sanction is warranted.

Those who are not expected to look for work, such as those with severe health conditions, including mental health conditions, are not subject to requirements or sanctions.

■ Support for Mortgage Interest

Claire Hanna:

[\[159056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will bring forward proposals to change Support for Mortgage Interest from a loan to a grant.

Guy Opperman:

The Department has no plans to change Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) from a loan to a grant.

■ Universal Credit: Deductions

Chris Stephens:

[156460]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the (a) total and (b) average size was of deductions from universal credit claimants; and how many claimants had deductions taken, in the most recent month for which data is available.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 25 February 2021]: Deductions are currently capped at 30% of the claimant's standard allowance down from 40% previously. This is due to reduce further to 25% of the claimant's standard allowance in October this year

For Universal Credit claims with a payment due during November 2020, 2,128,000 (44% of all claims) had a deduction. The total amount deducted was £166,330,000 (around 5% of the total amount of UC paid during November 2020), with an average of £78 deducted per claim.

Notes:

1. Deductions include advance repayments, third party deductions and other deductions but exclude sanctions and fraud penalties which are reductions of benefit rather than deductions.
2. Number of claims rounded to the nearest 1,000, total deducted rounded to the nearest £10,000.
3. Amount of Universal Credit paid reflects the amount of money paid to claimants and their landlords as part of their award, including the amount which they would have been entitled to had it not been deducted. It does not include other payments such as advances and hardship payments.
4. Figures are affected by the impact of the temporary suspension of some deduction types due to Covid-19. During April 2020, government deductions were temporarily suspended and only began to be reinstated from July. As of November, these had not been fully returned.
5. Figures are provisional and are subject to retrospective change as later data becomes available.
6. Claim numbers may not match official statistics caseloads due to small methodological differences.

■ West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust: Coronavirus

Sir Mike Penning:

[152431]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the level of compliance of West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust with the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers covid-19 guidance on ventilation in buildings.

Mims Davies:

[The Workplace \(Health, Safety & Welfare\) Regulations 1992, as amended](#), requires employers to ensure an adequate supply of fresh air in the workplace. In common with a lot of health and safety legislation, this is a goal setting requirement and therefore does not prescribe how to meet this duty.

As each workplace is different, it is the responsibility of the employer to determine how to achieve this requirement and implement the appropriate measures.

To assist employers the Health and Safety Executive updated their guidance on [ventilation during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#) in December 2020. The guidance provides simple ways to identify areas of the workplace that may be poorly ventilated and provides steps that can be taken to improve ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature. It refers those with complex ventilation system, to the [Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers \(CIBSE\)](#) website.

The [CIBSE covid-19 guidance on ventilation in buildings](#) is a best practice guide primarily intended for application in non-domestic buildings and it specifically excludes health care and hospital buildings, advising that NHS and PHE guidance should be sought.

The relevant guidance for healthcare providers is contained in the [Engineering Health Technical Memoranda best practice guidance](#) published by the Department of Health and Social Care (Estates and Facilities Division). The documents give comprehensive advice and guidance to healthcare management, design engineers, estates managers and operations managers on the legal requirements, design implications and maintenance of specialised ventilation in all types of healthcare premises.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **National Security and Investment: Sectors in Scope of the Mandatory Notification Regime Consultation Response**

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng):
[\[HCWS815\]](#)

Today, the Government published its response to the consultation on secondary legislation to define the sectors subject to mandatory notification under the National Security and Investment Bill.

This Government is a champion for free trade, recognising that inward investment is economically highly beneficial. Investment in UK plc boosts productivity by backing businesses to create good jobs and develop skills and will help support our economic recovery from COVID-19. The UK is open for investment, but not for exploitation.

An open approach to international investment must also include appropriate safeguards to protect our national security and the safety of our citizens. The UK and our allies face continued and broad-ranging hostile activity from foreign intelligence agencies and others, who seek to compromise our national security. When it comes to investment, we are seeing novel means to undermine the UK's national security that go beyond traditional mergers and acquisitions and also go beyond the reach of our current powers; such as structuring deals to obscure who is behind them. Such behaviour, left unchecked, can leave sensitive UK businesses vulnerable to disruption and espionage. It is crucial that the Government is able to fully combat these threats.

The National Security and Investment Bill creates a new screening mechanism enabling the government to intervene in acquisitions resulting in control over entities and assets that may pose a risk to national security.

Proposed acquirers of certain shares or voting rights in specified qualifying entities in the most sensitive sectors of the economy will be required to notify the Secretary of State and receive clearance before completing their acquisition. This is to ensure that the Government is informed of potentially sensitive acquisitions before they take place and thus able to take action ahead of time to address any risk to national security that would arise on completion. This 'mandatory regime' is supported by a voluntary notification option for relevant acquisitions across the rest of the economy and a power for the Secretary of State to scrutinise qualifying acquisitions that have not been notified.

The overwhelming majority of transactions will, though, be unaffected by these new powers. We estimate that less than 1% of all mergers and acquisitions and asset transactions will result in a notification to Government.

The consultation invited views on the sectors in scope of mandatory notification, sought responses on whether the definitions provided sufficiently clear parameters to inform businesses and investors of the need to notify, and whether the definitions were

proportionate. The consultation set out the draft definitions of 17 sectors in which national security risks are more likely to rise than in the wider economy.

These sectors are:

- Advanced Materials
- Advanced Robotics
- Artificial Intelligence
- Civil Nuclear
- Communications
- Computing Hardware
- Critical Suppliers to Government
- Critical Suppliers to the Emergency Services
- Cryptographic Authentication
- Data Infrastructure
- Defence
- Energy
- Military and Dual-Use
- Quantum Technologies
- Satellite and Space Technologies
- Synthetic Biology
- Transport

Responses to this consultation suggested that many of the sector definitions were broad in scope and would require further specificity to enable acquirers to identify whether they would be in scope of mandatory notification. After careful consideration of all the responses, the Government intends to refine the definitions and has produced the next iteration of the definitions in today's publication.

The Government intends to carry out further, targeted engagement with certain sectors to finalise these definitions. The final definitions will be set out in regulations following Royal Assent to the Bill.

This approach will ensure that the regime is targeted and proportionate and keeps Britain firmly open for business. It will bring us into line with other countries, such as the USA, whose Committee on Foreign Investment also operates a mandatory notification model that investors will be familiar with and build on the best practice established around the world by like-minded countries.

In summary, it will deliver a balanced regime that provides the Government with the flexible powers it needs while keeping our country firmly open to investment.

I will place a copy of the Consultation Response in the Libraries of the House.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Report from the Trade and Agriculture Commission

Secretary of State for International Trade (Elizabeth Truss):

[\[HCWS814\]](#)

Last year, the Government established the independent Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC) to place UK farming at the heart of our trade policy.

Today the Commission publishes its advisory report on trade and agriculture. The report makes recommendations covering:

- The strong action needed to maximise export promotion opportunities for the agri-food sector.
- The UK leadership required at the WTO to change international framework rules on trade and standards, to tackle global issues like climate change and environmental degradation.
- The UK promoting free and fair trade whilst maintaining high standards in areas such as animal welfare, ethical standards, and the environment.
- The UK being particularly supportive of developing countries to access the full benefits of the global trading system.
- Welcoming the statutory Trade and Agriculture Commission to help uphold effective scrutiny of trade deals.

In compiling this advisory report, the Commission sought evidence from trade and agriculture experts from across our four nations, including from local farmers, businesses, the National Farmers' Unions and Parliamentarians.

I am grateful to all those who contributed evidence and expertise during this challenging time. I thank the chair, Tim Smith, and all Commission members for delivering this incisive advisory report and I look forward to carefully considering the recommendations and will respond in due course.

To continue the excellent work that the Commission has started, we are now putting the Commission onto a statutory footing and evolving its role to boost scrutiny of new free trade deals. We will seek to appoint new members in due course.

In addition, last week I launched our Open Doors campaign to help farmers and producers take advantage of the 64 trade deals we have done to date, to sell more around the world including fast-growing markets in the Americas and Asia Pacific.

A copy of the advisory report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and has been published on GOV.UK