



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 3 March 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 03 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

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Sarah Olney:

[\[159345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will extend the bounce back interest free period on loans by an additional six months during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Government launched the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) to ensure that the smallest businesses could access loans of up to £50,000 to help businesses through this difficult period. Under BBLs no repayments are due from the borrower for the first 12 months of the loan, giving businesses the breathing space they need during this difficult time. In addition, the Government covers the first 12 months of interest payments charged to the business by the lender.

We have always been clear that businesses are responsible for repaying any finance they take out. However, we recognise that some borrowers will benefit from flexibility for their repayments. That is why we announced the Pay As You Grow measures.

Pay As You Grow was designed to provide Bounce Back Loan borrowers more time and flexibility over their repayments by giving them the option to:

- Extend the length of the loan from six years to ten.
- Make interest-only payments for six months, with the option to use this up to three times throughout the loan.
- Once six payments have been made, have the option of a six-month repayment holiday.

On 8th February, the Government announced that these options would be made more generous – removing the requirement to make six payments before accessing the six-month repayment holiday.

Businesses will be able to use these options either individually or in combination with each other. In addition, they have the option to fully repay their loan early and will face no early repayment charges for doing so.

■ Businesses: Coronavirus

Ian Lavery:

[\[157115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to ensure that businesses receiving Government covid-19-related support do not make staff redundant.

Paul Scully:

Throughout this crisis, the Government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods whilst supporting businesses and public services across the UK.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is specifically designed to protect jobs, and it has been used by 1.2 million employers to support 9.9 million jobs.

The legal position in relation to redundancy and dismissal remains the same whether or not an employee has been furloughed or whether or not the employer has received Government funding. Any redundancy process should be fair and reasonable with appropriate equalities considerations. Employees with the necessary qualifying service who believe that they have been unfairly selected for redundancy, or that the redundancy was unfair in some other way, may be able to complain to an employment tribunal.

■ Copyright**John Nicolson:**[\[157177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will hold discussions with the Intellectual Property Office on the potential role of a national copyright exhaustion regime in supporting the UK's (a) publishing industry and (b) other creative exports.

John Nicolson:[\[157178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will request that the Intellectual Property Office publishes an impact assessment of the potential effect of an international copyright exhaustion regime on the UK's (a) publishing industry and (b) other creative exports.

John Nicolson:[\[157179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will request that the Intellectual Property Office's consultation into the copyright exhaustion regime considers the feasibility of (a) specific arrangements for the publishing sector, (b) other sector specific arrangements and (b) a national exhaustion or international exhaustion outcome.

Amanda Solloway:

The Intellectual Property Office (IPO), an executive agency of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, is already considering the issues that the UK's future exhaustion of intellectual property rights regime needs to address. The IPO will soon be publishing a consultation document that will lay out the options for the UK's exhaustion of IP rights regime and ask for views from all interested parties. The consultation will help government assess the feasibility and potential impact of the different exhaustion of IP rights regimes. This will include consideration of impacts on the publishing industry and cross-border trade of goods in the secondary market, including goods from the creative industries.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Caroline Lucas:**[\[157070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many COVAX covid-19 vaccination doses the Government has (a) purchased to date and (b) plans to purchase in the next 12 months.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government is a strong champion of COVAX – the international initiative to procure and distribute Covid vaccines equitably, including to both higher and lower income countries.

The UK has invested £71 million in the Self-Financing Facility of COVAX, which enables high and upper-middle income countries to pool investments in potential vaccine candidates. This gives us the option to buy vaccines for up to 20% of the UK population - approximately 27 million doses.

We are committed to purchasing approximately 0.5 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine through COVAX.

The Government has separately committed £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, which will distribute 1.3 billion doses of vaccines to developing countries this year as part of COVAX's overall objective of procuring and delivering 2 billion doses globally.

■ Director of Labour Market Enforcement**Justin Madders:**[\[157181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to appoint a new director of labour market enforcement.

Paul Scully:

Cracking down on non-compliance in the labour market is a priority for the Government, and a new Director for Labour Market Enforcement will be appointed as soon as possible.

We have launched a recruitment campaign and are progressing the recruitment process. The outcome will be announced in due course.

■ Energy: Meters**Jonathan Edwards:**[\[159275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support the Government has provided to residents of rural areas who are unable to access the Smart Export Guarantee scheme due to infrastructure weaknesses relating to smart meters to encourage small scale low carbon generation.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Access to Smart Export Guarantee (SEG) tariffs are available across all areas of Great Britain. In order to be eligible for payments, generators must have an export

meter that is capable of taking half-hourly measurements and have an export Meter Point Administration Number (MPAN). However, there is no requirement that it needs to be a smart meter.

Further information on the SEG metering requirements can be found at <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications-and-updates/smart-export-guarantee-guidance-generators>.

■ Intellectual Property

John Nicolson:

[157180]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many of the 900 businesses contacted as part of the IPO's recent Exhaustion of Intellectual Property rights feasibility study (a) responded and (b) were interviewed; and whether he plans to consult businesses further on the matter.

Amanda Solloway:

The IPO commissioned Ernst & Young to assess whether it was possible to measure the scale of parallel trade in the UK. As part of that research, a pilot quantitative survey was conducted. As detailed in the report published in 2019, there were 208 respondents from the 926 initial contacts. Of the 208 respondents, the researchers spoke to 170 respondents about taking part in the survey for this research. Of those, 26 respondents were willing to take part in the survey, but no full interviews were completed due to respondents not passing the initial screening question, respondents being unaware of parallel trade and respondents not engaging in parallel trade.

That being said, the decision on the UK's future exhaustion regime still needs to be made. The IPO is holding a consultation on this matter in the first part of 2021 and the government will be proactively seeking views from businesses and consumers. We would encourage businesses and consumers to respond to this consultation with their views and any evidence.

■ Medicine: Research

Jack Lopresti:

[157086]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the level of research spend by medical research charities; and if he will make a statement.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government is monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on the work of medical research charities through regular discussions on charity-funded research with the Association of Medical Research Charities.

We know the pandemic has been a challenging time for fundraising and we will continue to engage with the Association of Medical Research Charities on the challenges they are facing.

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.

■ Pay: Ethnic Groups

Marsha De Cordova: [\[157267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing mandatory ethnicity pay reporting.

Paul Scully:

In 2018/2019, the Government consulted on options for employer-level ethnicity pay reporting. Following this, the Government met with businesses and representative organisations to understand the barriers to reporting and to explore what information could be published to allow for meaningful action to be taken.

Following the consultation, we ran a methodology testing exercise with a broad range of businesses to better understand the complexities outlined in the consultation. This highlighted the genuine difficulties in designing a methodology that will produce accurate figures that facilitate analysis, interpretation and meaningful action.

The Government is continuing to analyse this data. We will respond to the Ethnicity Pay Reporting consultation as soon as we can.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus

Ms Nusrat Ghani: [\[159333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Covid-19 Response: Spring 2021 published on 22 February 2021, what steps he is taking to issue guidance to wedding venues in (a) East Sussex and Wealden and (b) England on the date on which those venues can resume showing couples around their premises.

Paul Scully:

BEIS officials and I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce to discuss and take forward the issue of guidance for the reopening of the wedding industry. On 22nd February, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister published the Government's 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021'. The roadmap is a step-by-step plan to ease restrictions in England cautiously, starting with education. Across the four steps, the roadmap sets out the sequencing and indicative timing for easing restrictions, including those on the wedding sector.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Amazon Web Services: Contracts**

Chi Onwurah: [\[158044\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 153241 on Amazon Web Services: Contracts, whether the Modern Slavery Assessment Tool records Amazon's support or otherwise for (a) labour rights and (b) human rights.

Chi Onwurah: [\[158045\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 153241 on Amazon Web Services: Contracts, whether the Modern Slavery Assessment Tool records Amazon's denial of access to toilets for its Alabama workers.

Chi Onwurah: [\[158046\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 153241 on Amazon Web Services: Contracts, whether it is his policy that the denial of (a) labour rights and (b) human rights is a form of Modern Day Slavery.

Julia Lopez:

The Government is committed to working with its suppliers to tackle modern slavery in supply chains, as part of wider government action to tackle business compliance with the Modern Slavery Act.

The Modern Slavery Assessment Tool (MSAT) helps public sector organisations work in partnership with suppliers to improve the policies, processes and systems they have in place to identify and tackle the risk of modern slavery in supply chains. The MSAT records a broad range of information including risk assessments, due diligence and any training the supplier has undertaken to mitigate modern slavery risks. The government continues to work with its Strategic Suppliers in areas the MSAT has identified can be improved.

AWS's publicly available 'Amazon Supply Chain Standards' policy sets out commitment to both labour and human rights.

■ Cabinet Office: Hanbury Strategy

Tommy Sheppard: [\[156454\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many contracts for polling public attitudes his Department has commissioned from Hanbury Strategy in each of the last three years.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to [PQs 82315 and 82316](#).

Cabinet Office commissioned Hanbury Strategy to carry out work in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. Two contract documents were signed, the first contract is for nil value, and the services provided to the Cabinet Office by Hanbury were delivered under the contract published on Contracts Finder here:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/8c6ca477-cbfc-49b7-bb59-0fb1ce1475c9>. No other contracts have been commissioned in the last three years.

The Government remains committed to scrutiny and transparency. Details of Government contracts above £10,000 are published on Contracts Finder:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk>

■ Census

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[159349\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the ONS contact centre will have staff on the telephone who can speak Punjabi when they open on 1 March 2021.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[159350\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what support the Government plans to provide for people who need help filling in their questionnaire for the 2021 Census.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[159351\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Census Support Centres are planned to be open in time for the Census 2021.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[159352\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the target response rate is for Census 2021; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the (a) digital first policy and (b) covid-19 restrictions affecting visits to households on that target.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. Response to PQs 159349, 159350, 159351, 159352 [Response to PQs 159349, 159350, 159351, 159352.pdf]

■ Coronavirus: Social Distancing

Greg Smith: [\[157311\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish (a) the terms of reference for the social distancing review announced by the Prime Minister on 22 February and (b) the membership of any review committee established.

Penny Mordaunt:

As set out in the COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021, published on 22 February, the Government will review whether COVID-status certification could play a role in reopening our economy, reducing restrictions on social contact and improving safety. The Government will set out its conclusions ahead of Step 4 of the roadmap, which will happen no earlier than 21 June.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Ed Davey:**[\[157949\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the planned timescale is for the review on covid-19 vaccine passports.

Penny Mordaunt:

As set out in the COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021, published on 22 February, the Government will review whether COVID-status certification could play a role in reopening our economy, reducing restrictions on social contact and improving safety. The Government will set out its conclusions ahead of Step 4 of the roadmap, which will happen no earlier than 21 June.

■ Customs: ICT**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[157155\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress has been made on implementing a fully digital trade documentation system to help facilitate the cross-border movement of goods and reduce delays for (a) businesses reliant on just-in-time food supply chains and (b) other businesses.

Penny Mordaunt:

In December 2020, the Government published the 2025 Border Strategy. As we set out in this strategy, we are committed to developing a Single Trade Window for the UK, which will create a single portal through which information required to import and export can be submitted to border agencies. We will invest £16m during 2021-22 to take forward the foundational elements of this project across Government.

Alongside the work to develop the UK's Single Trade Window, we continue to identify and pursue opportunities to digitise border documentation wherever possible, including paperwork which stems from international requirements. Aligned with this, we are identifying opportunities to make permanent a number of digitisation changes which have been implemented as a short term response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

■ Electronic Government**Mr Jonathan Lord:**[\[158035\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to improve online government services.

Julia Lopez:

All public-facing online government services are required to comply with the Service Standard and Technology Code of Practice which ensure that they meet user needs, are accessible and secure.

We are introducing GOV.UK Accounts to meet changing user needs and expectations and make government services more personalised and data-driven. We have established a Data Standards Authority to make sure that data can be used, shared and understood across government, which is the foundation of joined-up and trusted public services.

■ Fish: UK Trade with EU**John Redwood:**[\[147710\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what matters he is raising with the EU in the Joint Committee on impediments to the trade in fish between the UK and the EU.

Penny Mordaunt:

General trade in fish between the UK and the EU is covered by the provisions of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement and therefore matters relating to this would not be raised at the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee.

■ Local Government: Elections**Helen Hayes:**[\[152589\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 147940, how much funding will be allocated to each local authority under his Department's delivery plan for the May 2021 elections.

Helen Hayes:[\[152590\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the (a) level of public awareness of postal voting and (b) the accessibility of the postal voting application process; and what steps he is taking to widen access to postal voting ahead of the May 2021 elections.

Chloe Smith:

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

The Government is working on finalising the funding allocations for the May 2021 elections, and Returning Officers and local authorities will be updated on their funding allocations for the Police and Crime Commissioner and local elections respectively by the end of March.

There will be an estimated £92 million of government funding that will be provided to local authorities for the elections; of this, £31 million is an uplift to directly address costs associated with making the elections covid-secure.

For the Police and Crime Commissioner elections, Returning Officers will be reimbursed for expenses necessarily incurred for the smooth running of those polls via the usual process. Further detail of the potential fees and charges that Returning Officers can claim for in relation to any additional measures required to ensure covid-secure Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May is set out in guidance provided by the Cabinet Office to Returning Officers.

■ **Public First: Coronavirus**

Rachel Reeves: [\[157093\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to consider Public First as a candidate for future covid-19 contracts.

Rachel Reeves: [\[158020\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of Public First's performance in its contracts relating to the covid-19 response.

Julia Lopez:

Further to my answer to [PQ 77727](#) on 6 October 2020, public sector procurement is subject to a legal framework which encourages fair and open competition and value for money, in line with internationally and nationally agreed obligations and regulations. Public sector procurers are required to assess value for money using criteria linked to the subject matter of the contract, including compliance with the published specification.

Cabinet Office, like all departments, is responsible for the monitoring of its contracts. This research has helped us to understand public attitudes and behaviours to inform our vitally important public health messages and policies during the pandemic.

■ **Shipping: Quarantine**

Bob Blackman: [\[145778\]](#)

To ask the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what representations her Department has received on the potential exemption of maritime key workers from covid-19 quarantine restrictions, in line with previous exemptions granted.

Penny Mordaunt:

Maritime workers regularly enter the country in the course of their work which is critical to the continued supply of goods into the UK. Restrictions on the movement of seafarers are likely to undermine effective UK freight supply, the attractiveness to trade, and with it both post-EU UK economic objectives and pandemic response.

Seamen and masters (as defined in the Merchant Shipping Act 1995) and inspectors and surveyors of ships (as defined in the Merchant Shipping Act 1995) in the United Kingdom (including the Devolved Administrations) have exemptions from 10 day self isolation when entering the UK.

■ UK Trade with EU**Sarah Champion:** [\[155049\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to resolve delays to UK exports in reaching their final destination in the EU.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Government has been supporting businesses to follow the new rules and processes which apply now that the UK has left the EU customs union and Single Market. The support available includes helplines, regular webinars with policy experts, and the Brexit Checker Tool on GOV.UK which gives businesses a personalised list of actions that they need to take.

Officials have regular operational contact to identify and resolve technical border issues with Dutch, French, Irish and Spanish counterparts. We also co-operate with Member State officials on events to provide technical awareness and guidance of procedures and systems on key routes for EU and UK audiences.

Ruth Jones: [\[157290\]](#)

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

Ruth Jones: [\[157291\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the trading arrangements between the UK and the EU.

Ruth Jones: [\[157292\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of trading arrangements between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Hon. Member to the [answers](#) given in Oral Questions for the Cabinet Office on 11 February. Guidance and published information are available on gov.uk. (<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-02-11/debates/6E3520D6-EB1E-4576-9D40-954A467494C9/TradeUKAndEU>)

Ian Murray: [\[158907\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what effect the UK-EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement has had on the (a) costs and (b) timescales of shipping from the UK to the EU since the end of the transition period.

Penny Mordaunt:

On costs, I refer the Hon. Member to the [answers](#) given at Oral Questions for the Cabinet Office on 11 February.

Freight flows through GB ports are now nearly at the normal levels we would expect for this time of year.

DEFENCE

■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[158862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of UK involvement in the Joint Strike Fighter programme in meeting the Government's defence objectives.

Jeremy Quin:

The operational Lightning marks a step change in UK Combat Air capability. Lightning is a next generation multi-role combat aircraft equipped with advanced sensors, mission systems and stealth technology. It is delivering a cutting-edge expeditionary capability for the UK from both the land and sea.

The UK is an influential partner in the Lightning programme: the Royal Navy and RAF are partners of choice to our Allies. By taking this collaborative approach, the UK has gained valuable experience as it re-generates its Carrier Strike capability.

It is also the world's largest defence programme. UK industry provides approximately 15% by value of every F-35 aircraft to be built and is responsible for manufacturing and assembling significant elements of the F-35 aircraft.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Film and TV Production Restart Scheme

Stephen Morgan:

[\[159356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many registrations his Department has received to the Film & TV Production Restart Scheme to date; how many claims have been made; and how much has been paid out on those claims.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Government's Film & TV Production Restart Scheme was launched on 16 October 2020 to provide support for production companies across the UK who would otherwise have been unable to film due to the lack of insurance covering covid-related risks.

There are now over 200 production companies registered to receive support from the scheme in the event of delay or disruption due to coronavirus. This means that the scheme is protecting over 22,000 jobs and over £780 million of production spend in the UK.

So far, over 50 claims have been made and these are being assessed. The scheme has now paid out on the initial claims.

■ **Mass Media: Obesity**

Martyn Day: [\[158122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect of the media representation of obesity on the stigma associated with living with overweight or obesity.

Caroline Dinenge:

The Government's 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives' sets out an ambitious strategy for reducing obesity and includes ensuring the use of appropriate language when associated with unhealthy weight.

In January The Minister of State for Digital and Culture provided evidence to the Women and Equalities Select Committee concerning how media representations can contribute to poor body image. Ministers and officials in my department are committed to reviewing this issue as part of the Online Advertising Programme Review, later this year.

My department also works closely with the Advertising Standards Authority to ensure advertising presenting misleading, exaggerated and irresponsible content is taken down. In 2019 the Advertising Standards Association enhanced their standards through the inclusion of a new rule prohibiting negative gender stereotypes. Ads which pressure the audience to conform to an idealised gender-stereotypical body shape or physical features are likely to breach this rule.

■ **Ofcom: Public Appointments**

Patrick Grady: [\[159324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the Government plans to appoint a new permanent chair of Ofcom.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The process to appoint a new permanent Chair of Ofcom is underway and has been open for applications since 12th February. The campaign will be open to applications until Friday 26 March, and we encourage all qualified candidates, from a diverse range of backgrounds, to come forward.

The recruitment process will be fair and open, in line with the Governance Code for Public Appointments and will be regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

EDUCATION**■ Academic Year and School Day****Jonathan Gullis:**[\[157325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) extending the school day and (b) shortening the summer holiday as part of wider reforms to education in England.

Nick Gibb:

The Government recognises that COVID-19 and associated education restrictions have had an impact on children and young people's education.

In February 2021, the Department appointed Sir Kevan Collins as Education Recovery Commissioner to advise how to help pupils make up their lost education over the course of this Parliament.

As an immediate step, we have invested a further £700 million to support education recovery measures (bringing total investment in catch up to over £1.7 billion), including for tutoring, summer schools in 2021 and additional support for schools.

The Education Recovery Commissioner will engage with parents, pupils and teachers in the development of this broader approach which will examine a range of options to help schools use evidence-based interventions to support their pupils to make up lost learning. We will share further details in due course.

■ Alternative Education and Special Educational Needs: Finance**Justin Madders:**[\[158089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when the Government plans to respond to its Call for evidence on the financial arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and disability and those who need alternative provision, which closed on 31 July 2019.

Vicky Ford:

Following the 2019 call for evidence on the funding of provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those requiring alternative provision, we have been clear that there are a number of aspects of the current funding arrangements that would merit further consideration; for example, the expectation that mainstream schools meet costs up to £6,000 of supporting a pupil with SEND from their core budget, the level of the £10,000 per place funding for special schools and the funding arrangements for young people with SEND in further education.

The evidence collected has been taken into account by the department and will be addressed both as part of the SEND review and in further consultations. In addition, we are currently consulting on a number of small technical changes to the high needs national funding formula for the financial year 2022-23, and the consultation can be

accessed at this link: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/high-needs-nff-proposed-changes/>.

■ Assessments: Coronavirus

Stephanie Peacock: [\[157251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support help ensure an equitable approach to assessing (a) BTEC and (b) apprenticeship qualifications and (c) other courses with formal assessments in the 2020-21 academic year.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[157252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to develop an equitable system for awarding exam results for the 2020-21 academic year.

Nick Gibb:

GCSE, AS and A levels

Students have worked hard in preparation for their exams this year and teachers have made tremendous efforts to provide high quality remote education. Given the ongoing disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, we announced in January that GCSE, AS and A level exams 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 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>.

Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs)

On 25 February, the outcome of the Department for Education's joint consultation with Ofqual on the arrangements for awarding Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs) including BTECs, as well as the approach to awarding other general qualifications was also published.

The diverse nature of VTQs and other general qualifications means that one approach to awarding cannot be taken to all these qualifications. Different approaches should be taken to three groups of VTQs. However, it is important that there is as much fairness as possible between VTQ students and students taking GCSEs, AS and A levels.

The first group are qualifications used to support progression to further or higher education, which includes many Pearson BTEC qualifications. These will be awarded through teacher assessed grades similar to those being implemented for GCSE and AS/A level awarding.

The second group are VTQs used to enter directly into employment. Exams or assessments will continue where they are critical to demonstrate occupational or professional competence and can be delivered in line with public health measures. However, where the assessment cannot take place safely it will be delayed.

The third group are smaller qualifications that are used for progression to further or higher education but are not like GCSEs or A levels in their structure, such as Functional Skills Qualifications and English for Speakers of Other Languages. Exams and assessments for these will continue in line with public health measures, including remotely, but with alternative arrangements available for those who cannot access the assessments.

Apprenticeships

Apprentices working towards mandatory qualifications as part of their apprenticeship framework or standard are assessed in the same way as students taking those same qualifications through other routes.

Additionally, apprenticeship end-point assessments can continue and should take place remotely wherever possible, in line with the guidance from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education on the delivery of assessment. Our intention is to safeguard the quality of apprenticeships, and end-point assessment is an integral part of that. We do not consider that it would be appropriate to estimate an apprentice's occupational competence by other means.

To support students taking qualifications used to enter directly into employment and apprentices nearing completion, face-to-face training and learning can take place in schools and colleges where it is essential to enable students and apprentices to prepare for and undertake their exams, assessments and end-point assessments. Furthermore, on 22 February it was announced that all school and further education students will be able to return from 8 March. This means that students taking qualifications which confer occupational competence and apprentices can get back to face-to-face teaching and training, which we know is important for their mental health and educational achievement.

■ **Coronavirus Catch-up Premium**

Wes Streeting:

[\[158130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria his Department plans to use to determine each school's allocation of covid-19 catch up premium funding.

Nick Gibb:

Schools' allocations from the Recovery Premium are calculated based on the numbers of their pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. This will provide each

mainstream school with a total of £145 for each eligible pupil and special, alternative provision, hospital schools and special units within mainstream schools, with £290 for each eligible pupil, across the 2021/22 academic year. We have applied additional weighting to specialist settings, recognising the significantly higher per pupil costs they face.

Recognising the uneven distribution of pupil premium eligible pupils, we have also ensured that no primary school will receive less than £2,000 and no secondary school will receive less than £6,000. The average primary school will receive almost £6,000 and the average secondary school just over £22,000

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Philip Davies: [\[157047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the (a) benefits and (b) harms of children wearing face masks in school; and if he will publish the scientific evidence upon which that assessment is based.

Philip Davies: [\[157982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the scientific evidence which shows that mask wearing among school children prevents transmission of covid-19 in a real world setting.

Nick Gibb:

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

The Department has recently published updated guidance to support the full opening to education from 8 March, which includes updated advice on face coverings. The guidance can be found here:

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

The Department has also published its evidence summary on COVID-19 – children, young people and education settings, which can be found here:

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

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

In addition, from 8 March, the Department now also recommends that in those schools and colleges where pupils and students in Year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn in classrooms unless social distancing can be maintained.

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

The best available scientific evidence is that, when used correctly, wearing a face covering may reduce the spread of COVID-19 droplets in certain circumstances, helping to protect others.

The Department recognises that the wearing of face coverings may impact communication. However, on balance, increased use of face coverings will strengthen the current safety measures in place in schools and colleges and support the return to face-to-face education.

The Department is recommending these precautionary measures for a limited time during this period of high COVID-19 prevalence in the community. These measures will be in place until Easter, and as with all measures, we will keep this under review and update guidance at that point.

■ Department for Education: Coronavirus

Liam Byrne:

[153130]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) policies and (b) grant and funding programmes his Department has introduced to provide support to individuals and organisations in response to the covid-19 outbreak; and what funding has been allocated to each of those programmes in the 2020-21 financial year.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is continuing to fund nurseries and schools as normal and provide 16-19 funding allocations to further education (FE) colleges as usual throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

A) Policies

Schools

This has been a challenging time for teachers and school leaders, and the Government has supported them since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak. We have regularly published and updated guidance to ensure that it reflects the most up-to-date medical and scientific information to make sure that teachers, parents, and young people are as well informed as possible in the current rapidly changing circumstances. The latest guidance for schools is available here:

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

On 3 February 2021, the Government confirmed the appointment of Sir Kevan Collins as the education recovery commissioner. He will advise on the approach for education recovery, with a particular focus on helping students catch up on education lost because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

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

Vulnerable Children

During the period of national lockdown announced on 4 January 2021, primary, secondary, alternative provision, special schools, and FE colleges have remained open to vulnerable children and young people. We expected schools to offer a place to all vulnerable children. Those who are vulnerable include those who have a social worker, those with an education health and care plan or those who have been deemed to be otherwise vulnerable by local authorities or education providers.

Where vulnerable children and young people cannot attend education provision (including post-16), we have asked local authorities, schools, and colleges to ensure they have systems in place to keep in touch with them.

Throughout all restrictions to date, children's social care services and early help services have continued to support vulnerable children and young people and their families. We will continue to ensure this is the case during this period of national restrictions.

Temporary secondary legislation was laid in April 2020 to support the delivery of services and allow local authorities to focus on child protection issues. As the COVID-19 outbreak continued and following public consultation, a small number of flexibilities from those regulations remained in place from 25 September 2020. These regulations are due to expire on 31 March 2021. A public consultation seeking views on extending the flexibilities for a further six months ran until 28 February 2021.

B) Grant and Funding Programmes

Early Years

We are funding nurseries as usual and all children are able to attend their nurseries in all parts of England. Where nurseries do see a drop in income from either parent-paid fees or income from the Department for Education, they are able to use the furlough scheme.

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

We have provided £5.3 million to existing early years voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners on the home learning environment and EYSEND to support disadvantaged early children's development and well-being and early years providers to help children catch up and transition back into early education in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak.

We have invested £9 million on improving the language skills of reception age children who need it most this academic year. Working with the Education Endowment Foundation, we are providing training and resources for the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI), free of charge, to schools that would particularly benefit.

In January 2021, we announced £18 million to support language development in the early years next academic year – £8 million to offer the NELI to many more schools and £10 million for a pre-reception early language catch up programme.

Schools and Catch up

The Government is providing a comprehensive package of support, including the £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme, enabling councils to support those families in need.

The Government announced a significant expansion of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme with funding of up to £220 million, reaching all local authority areas from Easter 2021.

Last year Edenred reported that over £380 million worth of voucher codes had been redeemed into supermarket eGift cards by schools and families through the scheme as of 19 August 2020.

Edenred also reported that over 20,350 schools placed orders for the scheme.

During the period of school opening restrictions, schools have continued to provide meal options for all pupils who are in school. Meals should be available free of charge to all infant pupils and pupils who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals who are in school. Schools are also continuing to provide free school meal support to pupils who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals and who are learning at home.

We have been providing £3.50 top-up funding per eligible pupil per week for schools providing lunch parcels and £15 per eligible child per week for vouchers. Extra costs incurred will be claimed retrospectively by schools and all valid claims will be paid in full.

In June 2020 we announced a catch-up package worth £1 billion, including a 'Catch Up Premium' worth a total of £650 million to support schools to make up for lost teaching time and £350m for the National Tutoring Programme.

In January 2021 we also committed to a further programme of catch up which will involve £300 million of new money to early years, schools and providers of 16-19 further education for high-quality tutoring.

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

As of Monday 1 March, over 1.2 million laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, trusts, local authorities, and further education colleges.

The Government has set out further measures to support education recovery in the written ministerial statement of Wednesday 24 February, which 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.

Further Education

16-19

Part of the skills recovery package included the high value courses for school and college leavers one year offer for 18- and 19-year-olds. This is to encourage and support delivery of selected Level 2 and 3 qualifications in specific subjects and sectors that enable a more productive economy and support young people to remain engaged with education, employment and training. This is a one-off intervention in response to the COVID-19 outbreak and supports 18- to 19-year-olds leaving school or college to find work in high-demand sectors like engineering, construction, and social care. We will provide £100 million to create more places on Level 2 and 3 courses for the 2020-21 academic year.

We are supporting the largest ever expansion of traineeships, providing an additional 30,000 places in the 2020-21 academic year, to ensure that more young people have access to high-quality training. To encourage this, we have introduced £1,000 incentive payments for employers who offer traineeship work placement opportunities between 1 September 2020 and 31 July 2021. As part of the Plan for Jobs, an additional £111 million has been made available for traineeships in the 2020-21 financial year.

The 16 to 19 tuition fund was set up to provide one-off funding, for the 2020-21 academic year only. We are providing £37 million to support the 16-19 tuition fund for the remainder of the 2020-21 academic year as part of the wider COVID-19 catch up package. This is ring fenced funding for schools, colleges and all other 16-19 providers to help mitigate the disruption to learning arising from COVID-19.

19+

We are continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) £1.34 billion in 2020-21.

In response to COVID-19, we have introduced a change to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) AEB Funding Rules for the 2020-21 academic year, to enable providers to use their learner support funds to purchase IT devices for students (aged 19+) and to help them meet students' IT connectivity costs, where these costs are a barrier to accessing or continuing in their training.

Last year, due to COVID-19, we lowered the AEB reconciliation threshold for grant funded providers to 68%, based on provider's average delivery during the 2019-20 academic year. In view of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, including the transfer to remote education and the reduced attendance on-site with effect from 5 January, we are currently reviewing the end of year reconciliation position for 2020-21. Any changes to the published arrangements will be communicated in the ESFA's Weekly Update (published on gov.uk) in due course.

We welcome my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's announcement of an additional £17 million in the 2020-21 financial year to support an increase in the number of sector-based work academy programme (SWAP) placements. In England, the pre-employment training element of SWAPs is generally funded by the Department for Education through the AEB, which in several regions is managed by the relevant mayoral combined authority (MCA).

In devolved areas, it is for MCAs (or the Greater London Authority) to determine funding arrangements for adult education for their residents.

Higher Education

We recognised that the COVID-19 outbreak would make this a challenging year for higher education (HE). This is why, alongside access to the business support schemes, we brought forward £2 billion+ worth of tuition fee payments, provided £280 million grant funding for research and established a loan scheme to cover up to 80% of a university's income losses from international students for the academic year 2020-21 up to the value of their non-publicly funded research activity support research.

The Department has worked with the Office for Students (OfS) to clarify that universities are able to use existing funds, worth around £256 million for academic year 2020-21, towards hardship support. We are also making available an additional £50 million of hardship funding this financial year. In total we have made £70 million of funding available for student hardship including the £20 million made available to universities in December. Alongside this we have worked with the OfS to provide student space, which has been funded by up to £3 million by the OfS to support student mental health.

Apprenticeships

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, we introduced policy flexibilities to support apprentices and employers to continue with, and complete, their programmes and we encouraged providers and assessment organisations to deliver training and assessments flexibly, including remotely, to enable this. Our guidance provides further detail: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-apprenticeship-programme-response>.

To help employers offer new apprenticeships, as part of the Government's Plan for Jobs, they are able to claim £2,000 for every apprentice they hire as a new employee under the age of 25, and £1,500 for new apprentices aged 25 and over between 1

August 2020 and 31 March 2021. Incentive payments are funded from the overall annual, apprenticeship budget. In the 2020-21 financial year, funding available for investment in apprenticeships in England is almost £2.5 billion, double what was spent in the 2010-11 financial year.

Vulnerable Children

The Government has provided £4.6 billion of funding to support councils through the COVID-19 outbreak, this is part of an unprecedented level of additional financial support in recent times. The Government has also allocated funding to children's voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. This funding aims to ensure charities can continue to provide services that safeguard vulnerable children and protect them from harm.

The Government has provided £40.8 million this year for the Family Fund to help over 80,000 low-income families who have children with disabilities or serious illnesses. This includes £13.5 million specifically in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ **Department for Education: Telephone Services**

Tulip Siddiq: [\[153314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the average waiting time to speak to an adviser on his Department's helpline in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Nick Gibb:

The Department for Education general enquiries helpline does not hold data on the average waiting time. During the period of 1 September 2020 to 12 February 2021, the helpline received 18,183 calls, of which 94% were answered. The system allows helpline managers to see the number of callers in the queue to speak to an adviser and managers are able to deploy extra resource to answer calls.

During the same period, the Department for Education COVID-19 helpline, received 61,709 calls of which 97% were answered with an average wait time of 290 seconds (4 min 50 sec). The COVID-19 helpline uses different call handling system and provides additional data.

■ **Faith Schools: Admissions**

Sir Edward Leigh: [\[157004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to remove the 50 per cent cap on faith-based admissions to religious schools.

Nick Gibb:

The Government strongly supports schools with a religious character and recognises that they are often high performing and popular with parents.

We are pleased that the Voluntary-Aided scheme has allowed the creation of new Catholic and Church of England schools, but we recognise that some groups,

including the Catholic Church, feel unable to participate in the free schools programme because of the 50% cap on faith admissions.

We will continue to keep the 50% cap under review and are open to discussing this issue with groups who provide schools with a religious character, including the Catholic Church.

■ Family Hubs

Fiona Bruce: [\[159279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress has been made on developing a national centre for Family Hubs.

Fiona Bruce: [\[159280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to rollout Family Hubs across the country; and what resources are being provided by his Department for that rollout.

Fiona Bruce: [\[159281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to strengthen families.

Fiona Bruce: [\[159282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of strengthening families on promoting social mobility.

Fiona Bruce: [\[159283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support and promote stable and secure family life to ensure that children have the best start.

Vicky Ford:

Families play a critical role in caring for and educating their children; and the COVID-19 outbreak has highlighted the need for cross-government collaboration to provide support to families. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education is driving forward this government's focus on improving outcomes for families' and has appointed a Departmental Policy Adviser on families.

On family hubs, the department is investing over £14 million and is taking steps to champion this approach. We expect to have completed the procurement of a National Centre for family hubs by March 2021 and for the centre to be up and running by spring 2021. We are also investing in an evaluation innovation fund, and work to develop data and digital products to help professionals collaborate and plan with families in the early years.

To support and strengthen families, and to ensure children have the best start, the department has:

- launched an Independent Review of Children's Social Care, on 15 January 2021;

- announced that the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) will continue for a further year up to March 2022 (£185 million has been made available through the core ASF to help pay for essential therapeutic services for over 65,000 adoptive and eligible special guardianship families since 2015);
- launched the cross government special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) review to strengthen the support available to children and young people, and their families;
- continued to deliver 30 hours childcare places to nearly 350,000 children in January 2020, with over one million disadvantaged two-year-olds having benefitted from 15 hours free childcare since the entitlement began in 2013;
- commenced reform of the early years foundation stage to improve outcomes for all children at age five, especially disadvantaged children, and to reduce the workload so practitioners and teachers can spend more time teaching children;
- introduced the Nuffield Early Language Intervention to 40% of primary schools in the 2020-21 academic year to address the education recovery needs of reception-age children;
- continued to work with voluntary and community sector partners and deliver online resources to help parents engage in home learning activities with under-fives to support early language, literacy and numeracy development, and parent and child mental health and wellbeing, and to support children with SEND;
- worked in partnership with Public Health England, the Local Government Association and the Early Intervention Foundation to secure improved early language outcomes for disadvantaged children through effective integration of local services;
- spent more than £18 billion since 2011 – and another £2.4 billion this year – through the pupil premium to tackle educational inequality;
- supported families through free school meals (FSM) - under the benefits-related criteria there are currently around 1.4 million pupils eligible for and claiming FSM, saving families around £400 a year for each child. In addition, the Holiday Activity and Food programme will expand in 2021 so that disadvantaged children across England will be offered free healthy meals and enriching activities over the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays through a £220 million investment.

■ Incontinence: Females

Rosie Cooper:

[159256]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether girls between the ages of 13-16 receive formal pelvic floor health education to help avoid future incontinence.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[159257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether a new module on the importance of pelvic floor health education can be introduced into the school curriculum targeting girls between the ages of 13-16.

Nick Gibb:

Pupils need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal, and social lives in a positive way. That is why we have made Health Education compulsory in all state-funded schools in England alongside Relationships Education (in primary schools) and Relationships and Sex Education (in secondary schools). Health education gives schools the opportunity to drive up the consistency and quality of pupils' physical health knowledge by delivering clear content through evidence-based teaching. The aim of teaching pupils about physical health and mental wellbeing is to give them the information they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing, recognise issues in themselves and others and, when issues arise, seek support as early as possible from appropriate sources.

The Department is committed to supporting schools in their preparations and has published non-statutory implementation guidance alongside teacher training materials. Both are designed to provide teachers with further clarity and practical advice on how to implement the Relationships, Sex and Health Education curriculum, to help all teachers increase their confidence and quality of teaching. The support is available on a one-stop page for teachers on GOV.UK. This covers all the teaching requirements in the statutory guidance including the importance of developing and maintaining good muscular and skeletal health through regular exercise; and the main changes which take place in males and females, and the implications for emotional and physical health.

As with other aspects of the curriculum, schools have flexibility over how they deliver these subjects so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs and background of their pupils. This could include, for example, choosing to teach about the importance of pelvic floor health education to girls between the ages of 11 and 13. The Department has provided advice on choosing resources in the non-statutory implementation guidance "Plan your Relationships, Sex and Health Curriculum". We are working with Public Health England to make sure good quality teaching resources are available for teachers delivering health education.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mr John Baron:

[\[156266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 10 December 2020, 12 January 2021 and 9 February 2021 on a constituency case, reference JB30327.

Nick Gibb:

I can confirm that a response has been sent to the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay.

Afzal Khan:

[159358]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to respond to correspondence from the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton of 14 January 2021 on the situation facing special schools and those education settings supporting children with special educational needs during the covid-19 lockdown.

Nick Gibb:

I can confirm that a response has been sent to the letter dated 14 January from the hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton.

■ National Tutoring Programme: Staffordshire

Jonathan Gullis:

[157324]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children in (a) Stoke-on-Trent, (b) Kidsgrove and (c) Talke are involved in the National Tutoring Programme.

Nick Gibb:

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) provides additional, targeted support to disadvantaged pupils and is being delivered for the Department by the Education Endowment Foundation and Teach First.

The Department does not hold the information requested. However, we are working to ensure that there is a high level of awareness amongst schools of the support available, particularly in areas with high numbers of disadvantaged pupils.

There is still availability for schools to access high-quality tuition, subsidised at 75% by the Department, through the Tuition Partners. We would encourage all schools in Stoke-on-Trent to review the support available to them from Tuition Partners to provide additional, targeted support for disadvantaged pupils. This will help ensure that the NTP can support as many pupils as possible. Further information and sign-up details are here: <https://nationaltutoring.org.uk/ntp-tuition-partners>.

■ Outdoor Education: Coronavirus

Tim Farron:

[159265]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Government's Covid-19 Response: Spring 2021 roadmap, on what date Outdoor Education services are expected to open for (a) day visits and non-residential activities and (b) overnight residential stays.

Nick Gibb:

Schools are advised against all educational visits at this time. The Department will issue advice to schools on the planning and booking of residential trips when it is safe to do so and in line with the Government's roadmap to recovery, as set out in: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021>.

■ Overseas Students: Coronavirus**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[157052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Migrants' Rights Network report of the 10 August 2020, entitled The Effects of Covid-19 on Tier 4 International Students, what support tier 4 international students are eligible for.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[157054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Migrants' Rights Network report of 10 August 2020, entitled The Effects of Covid-19 on Tier 4 International Students, if he will make an assessment of the effect of the hardship experienced by many international students on the UK's international reputation for education.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[157055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an estimate of the number of international students who have used food banks as a result of financial difficulties associated with the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[157056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an estimate of the number of international students that are falling into rent arrears as a result of financial difficulties associated with the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the government has put in place many measures to support individuals impacted by financial hardship, including international students. These measures include protection for renters from eviction, safety net support from local authorities regardless of immigration status, as well as a series of bespoke visa concessions for international students to mitigate against the impact of COVID-19. The government keeps these concessions under review and will not hesitate to act where further support is needed. £3.2 billion has been allocated to local authorities during the COVID-19 outbreak to support vulnerable groups, irrespective of their immigration status.

The department has also made available an additional £70 million of hardship funding for higher education students in England for this financial year. Providers have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to students, in a way that best prioritises those in greatest need. This is available for providers to distribute to a wide range of students, including international. This money is in addition to the £256 million of Student Premium funding higher education (HE) providers are able to draw on this academic year towards student hardship funds and mental health support.

I have been clear that student welfare remains one of my top priorities and the department has worked closely with the HE sector throughout the COVID-19 outbreak to increase communications and messaging around hardship for students; I recently discussed this with a number of sector representatives at a taskforce meeting.

I would encourage all students, wherever they are learning, who need assistance to reach out to their HE provider's student support and welfare teams as soon as possible, as these services are likely to be an important source of support. Many HE providers have bolstered their existing student welfare and mental health services and have adapted delivery mechanisms including reaching out to students who may be more vulnerable. For example, over £9 million has been provided by the government to leading mental health charities to help them to expand, and international students can also utilise Student Space – a mental health and wellbeing platform that aims to bridge any gaps in support for students arising during the COVID-19 outbreak – which has been funded by up to £3 million by the Office for Students.

The department does not hold data on the number of international students in rent arrears. We believe that some international students in need of support may not be contacting their universities to ask for assistance if they find themselves experiencing hardship. I have written to international students directly, providing information regarding the support available for mental health, wellbeing, and hardship at this time, and have asked the sector to further raise awareness and encourage international students to seek assistance as necessary.

The UK was one of the first countries to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak by introducing comprehensive immigration flexibility for international students, and the government has implemented several concessions to support visa holders. If an international student needs to request access to hardship funds through their provider due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, they can be confident that they can express these concerns to their provider without any impact on their immigration status.

■ Pupils: Coronavirus

Robert Halfon: [\[159284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the scientific basis is for his Department's guidance on the policy that it will not be mandatory for pupils to wear face masks when they return to school premises from 8 March 2021.

Robert Halfon: [\[159285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether headteachers can enforce the wearing of face masks by all (a) pupils and (b) school staff when school premises are reopened during the covid-19 outbreak from 8 March 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The Department continues to work closely with other Government departments throughout its response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including Public Health England (PHE) and the Department of Health and Social Care, as well as stakeholders across the sector. We continue to work to ensure that our policy is based on the latest scientific and medical advice, in order to develop comprehensive guidance based on

the PHE-endorsed 'system of controls' and to understand the effect of these measures on staff, pupils and parents.

The Department has recently published updated guidance to support the full opening of education from 8 March, which includes updated advice on face coverings. This guidance can be found here:

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

Face coverings are not compulsory, and the recently updated guidance does not create any new legal obligations. They are recommended in some circumstances for public health reasons as advised by PHE, whilst some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings altogether. The same exemptions will apply in schools and childcare facilities, and staff and others should be sensitive to those needs.

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

In addition, from 8 March, the Department now also recommends that in schools where pupils in Year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn in classrooms unless social distancing can be maintained. The Department is recommending these additional precautionary measures for a time limited period until Easter. As with all measures, we will keep this under review and update guidance, as necessary.

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

Schools should use standard behaviour management to enforce the system of controls, as necessary. No pupil should be denied education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering.

■ Pupils: Hearing Impairment

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[156990]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will update guidance for schools and colleges on the use of face coverings when teaching deaf students.

Tulip Siddiq:

[157225]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that children who are (a) deaf or (b) hard of hearing can access education when masks are introduced in classrooms from March 8th.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[157226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions his Department had with (a) families of children with hearing problems and (b) groups representing them on the decision to make face masks compulsory in secondary schools from March 8th.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[158178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the covid-19 advice on face coverings in educational settings, what steps he is taking to support students who rely on lip reading.

Nick Gibb:

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

The Department has recently published updated guidance to support the full opening to education from 8 March, which includes updated advice on face coverings. The guidance can be found here:

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

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

In addition, from 8 March, we now also recommend that in schools and colleges where pupils and students in year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn in classrooms unless social distancing can be maintained.

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

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

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

transparent face coverings, but they may be effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19.

The Department is recommending these precautionary measures for a limited time during this period of high COVID-19 prevalence in the community. These measures will be in place until Easter, and as with all measures, we will keep this under close review.

■ Pupils: Mental Health Services

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[157253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support the mental health and wellbeing of school and college students during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

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

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

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

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

We have also put in place a £1 billion COVID "catch-up" package with £650 million shared across early years, schools and 16 to 19 providers over the 2020/21 academic year to support education settings to put the right catch-up and pastoral

support in place. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) have published a COVID-19 support guide to support schools to direct this funding, which includes further information about interventions to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing.

In addition to this, the return to school for all pupils from 8 March will be supported with a new £700 million package, which includes a new one-off Recovery Premium for state primary, secondary and special schools to use as they see best to support disadvantaged students. This will help schools to provide their disadvantaged pupils with a one-off boost to the support, both academic and pastoral, that has been proved most effective in helping them recover from the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. Further details are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-education-recovery-package-for-children-and-young-people>.

For further education (FE) we are also committed to providing and signposting wellbeing guidance and support, and ensuring that specialist mental health support is available for all students and staff in FE who need it. The FE operational guidance includes a specific section on supporting the mental health of staff and students in addition to signposting providers to additional resources, such as webinars and online platforms. This is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision>.

The department's College Collaboration Fund (CCF) is a £5.4 million grant funding programme open to all statutory FE colleges, to be delivered in the financial year 2020/21. We particularly welcomed applications that address one of five specific quality improvement needs. Five of the funded projects are designed to provide remote/online mental health and wellbeing support to students and/or staff.

We have worked closely with the Office for Students (OfS), providing up to £3 million to fund the mental health platform Student Space in response to COVID-19, and have asked the OfS to allocate an additional £15 million towards student mental health, through proposed reforms to Teaching grant funding. 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. Ensuring students have access to quality mental health support is a top priority, which is why we asked the OfS to look at extending the platform. I am delighted they have been able to extend the platform to support students for the whole 2020/21 academic year.

For students that need specialist support the government continues to invest in and prioritise mental health. The NHS will receive around an additional £500 million this year, to address waiting times for mental health services, give more people the mental health support they need, and invest in the NHS workforce.

The department and the Department of Health and Social Care have convened a Mental Health in Education Action Group. The purpose of the Action Group is to look

across the age ranges at the impact of COVID-19 on children, young people and staff in nurseries, schools, colleges, and universities.

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

■ Remote Education: Computer Software

Chi Onwurah:

[\[157108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his department has taken to ensure the suggested digital education platforms in the Contingency framework: education and childcare settings guidance, updated on 22 February 2021, includes the full range of platforms commonly used by schools.

Nick Gibb:

The 'Contingency framework: education and childcare settings guidance' provides information about the Department's funded programme to provide expert technical support for schools and colleges to set up secure user accounts for Google and Microsoft's education platforms.

The Microsoft and Google platforms were chosen as they are free to use to the education sector and provide the unified technology to support effective remote education delivery.

Schools are free to consider other providers with chargeable services in this area to deliver specific elements of online education, where they see fit.

■ Remote Education: Disadvantaged

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[157250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the digital divide in access to remote learning for school and college students.

Nick Gibb:

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

The Department are making deliveries all the time and expect to achieve our overall commitment of delivering 1.3 million devices by the end of the spring term. 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.

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

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

The Department is 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 and continue to invite a range of mobile network providers to support the offer.

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

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[157223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure schools and colleges are adequately ventilated.

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 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 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', in use throughout the COVID-19 outbreak set out in our published guidance and which includes ventilation, continues to be the appropriate set of 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 fully implement these controls. 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>.

More generally, in 2018, the Department published Building Bulletin 101 (BB101), which is guidance for school design on ventilation, thermal comfort and indoor air quality. This guidance sets out the World Health Organisation's air quality guidelines and Air Quality Standards Regulation 2010 for indoor air quality. BB101 requires the indoor environment of new or refurbished school buildings to be monitored by recording temperature and levels of carbon dioxide.

■ Schools: Mental Health Services

Stephanie Peacock:

[157254]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support the mental health and wellbeing of school and college staff during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department recognises the pressure that teachers and leaders in schools and colleges are under, and is enormously grateful to them for their efforts, resilience, and service as we continue to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Department has worked in partnership with the sector and mental health experts to provide a range of support for mental health and wellbeing. This includes improving access to resources and the development of the first ever wellbeing charter for staff which the Department intends to publish in the coming months.

The Department has taken action to respond to the mental health needs of school leaders as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak by launching a £95,000 pilot led by Education Support to provide online support and telephone supervision from experts to around 250 school leaders. This service has now been extended until March 2021. The outcome of the pilot will inform future wellbeing support. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-mental-health-support-for-pupils-and-teachers>.

The £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return training programme continues to support staff in schools and colleges to respond to the additional pressures children and young people may be feeling as a direct result of the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as to any emotional response they or their teachers may be experiencing. Additional support can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/supporting-pupils-wellbeing>. The Government has also provided over £10 million funding to mental health charities – including Mind, the Samaritans, Young Minds, and Bipolar UK to help them adapt, expand, and reach those who are most vulnerable.

Following my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education's announcement on 13 January 2021, the Department is also convening a new Mental Health in Education Action Group, chaired by my hon. Friend, the Minister for Children and Families, and my hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Universities. This group will look at how we support young people and staff with their wellbeing as they return to school and university. On 4 February my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister appointed Dr Alex George as Youth Mental Health Ambassador to advise government and raise the profile of mental health education and wellbeing in schools, colleges and universities. He will be joining the new Mental Health in Education Action Group.

As well as providing additional COVID-19 specific mental health advice and support for children and young people, our Relationships, Health and Sex Education curriculum includes mental health and wellbeing. We have a host of online training materials and implementation guides, which give inclusive advice to schools and staff on how best to support pupils' mental health, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-mental-wellbeing>.

The Government remains committed to long term improvements to support children and young people's mental health, set out in the government's response to its green paper and NHS Long Term Plan. This includes rolling out new Mental Health Support Teams to work with a fifth to a quarter of schools and colleges across the country by academic year 2023/24, offering training for a senior mental health lead in every state school in the country, and Link Programme training for all schools and colleges to help frontline health and education professionals work together effectively .

■ Sex and Relationship Education: Gender

Thangam Debbonaire:

[157203]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to monitor schools' ability to include education on gender stereotyping as required by the statutory guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education.

Nick Gibb:

The new subjects of Relationships Education (for primary aged pupils), Relationships and Sex Education (for secondary aged pupils) and Health Education (for all pupils in state-funded schools) became mandatory from September 2020. The statutory guidance sets out the content to be covered for each subject, which includes teaching about treating everyone with respect regardless of their background and characteristics, and how stereotypes can cause damage or might encourage prejudice.

As with other aspects of the curriculum, schools have flexibility over how they deliver the content of the new subjects so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs of all of its pupils. In light of challenges faced by schools because of the impact of COVID-19 and school closure, schools may choose to focus

this year's RSHE teaching on the immediate needs of their pupils, with particular attention to the importance of positive relationships, as well as mental and physical health, introducing a more comprehensive RSHE programme in September 2021.

All schools must follow the principles of the Equality Act 2010 – the need to eliminate discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between different groups in society.

In September 2020, the Department published a support package to help all schools increase their confidence and the quality of their RSHE teaching practice. This includes teacher training modules, non-statutory implementation guidance, and training for teachers led by Teaching Schools.

Ofsted's routine graded school inspections are currently suspended. When those inspections resume, inspectors will take account of the relationships education taught in each school as part of its evaluation of pupils' personal development.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[158162]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 4 February 2021 to Question 145105, what steps he is taking to ensure that families, schools and staff are informed of the support available to pupils with autism and other special educational needs and disabilities.

Vicky Ford:

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, we have issued guidance for all schools and colleges including specialist settings, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>. Our guidance sets out how schools can best support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The department has worked closely with stakeholders, including the Council for Disabled Children, Contact, Nasen and the National Network of Parent Carer Forums in developing this guidance.

The department regularly signposts guidance, announcements and publications that are relevant to children and young people with SEND, including through email alerts to key stakeholders such as commissioners, providers, and voluntary and community sector organisations. This has included issuing several ministerial open letters to families and stakeholders.

We have also announced over £42 million to continue funding projects in the 2021-22 financial year to support children and young people with SEND. This includes investment to continue strengthening participation of parents and young people in the SEND system, ensuring they have a voice in designing policies and services and have access to high quality information, advice, and support.

■ Students: Coronavirus**Ms Lyn Brown:****[157053]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions has he had with universities on (a) levels of financial support for students (b) communication of available support to students, (c) the support available to those tier 4 international students not eligible for Government assistance, (d) mental health services and (e) rent relief on student accommodation.

Michelle Donelan:

This is a difficult and uncertain time for students, but we are working with the higher education (HE) sector to make sure all reasonable efforts are being made to ensure that students are given appropriate support. I routinely engage the sector on our plans and have drawn on the expertise of the HE Taskforce of various sector representatives to challenge and inform our decision making.

On 22 February, I wrote to students outlining what my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister's announcement on return to educational settings meant for HE. The letter is available at: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/d0d32f33-6efd-42f9-b75d-6b2204ac81dc/letter-to-students_minister-donelan_22022021.pdf. As stated in the letter, we made available an additional £70 million of funding for student hardship. Providers will have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to students in a way that will best prioritise those in greatest need. This funding is available for HE providers to distribute to a wide range of students, including international students. Support might include help for students who are unable to work due to COVID-19 and to help students access teaching remotely. This is in addition to the £256 million of Student Premium funding providers are able to draw on this academic year towards student hardship and mental health support.

Whilst the government plays no role in the provision of student residential accommodation, HE providers can draw on hardship funds to support students facing financial difficulties due to accommodation fees. The government encourages all accommodation providers to be as flexible as possible. Universities and private accommodation providers are autonomous and are responsible for setting their own rent agreements. We encourage universities and private landlords to review their accommodation policies to ensure they are fair, clear and have the interests of students at heart. Where students remain in their university accommodation, HE providers should continue to make sure they are well looked after and supported. Universities UK have published a checklist for providers to support students who are required to self-isolate, which can be accessed here: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2020/uuk-checklist-support-self-isolating-students.pdf>.

It is vitally important that universities continue to make sure that students feel as supported as possible and I encourage providers to regularly communicate with students about the support available to them. Providers should pay particular regard to the specific needs of certain groups during this period, including international

students, who will require access to welfare and mental health support and essential services. I wrote to international students in December 2020 regarding tier 4 restrictions, and the letter is available here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/01c8a0f7-6799-43e8-aa95-d60552fb6d44/minister-donelan-letter-clarifying-student-travel-in-light-of-tier-4.pdf>.

We have informed students via a range of communication channels, including student-facing media, such as:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/949100/Minister_Donelan_Letter_to_Students_on_January_Returns.pdf

and: <https://twitter.com/michelledonelan/status/1363972520077049857/photo/1>.

We recognise that many students are facing additional mental health challenges during this time, and many providers have bolstered their existing mental health services. We have worked closely with the Office for Students (OfS), providing up to £3 million to fund the mental health platform Student Space. We have also asked the OfS to allocate an additional £15 million towards student mental health, through proposed reforms to strategic priorities grant funding.

■ Turing Scheme

Claire Hanna:

[\[157327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of (a) the effectiveness of the scope of the Turing scheme and (b) its ability to replace the European Solidarity Corp.

Claire Hanna:

[\[157328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of UK Charities who will benefit from the Turing Scheme.

Michelle Donelan:

The Turing Scheme will fund students at UK universities, colleges, training providers and schools to go on study and work placements overseas. Backed by £110 million, it will provide funding for around 35,000 students, a similar number as Erasmus+ outgoing mobility. This means around 20,000 higher education students, 10,000 further education and vocational training students and 5,000 school pupils will be able to benefit, subject to demand, for mobilities to take place from September 2021.

The scheme will be global, allowing students to undertake mobilities to countries around the world.

The Turing Scheme will fund students only, not staff placements (apart from those staff necessary to accompany or chaperone student placements). In considering what elements of the Erasmus+ programme we would immediately replicate under the Turing Scheme, we prioritised ensuring that as many students, learners and pupils as possible have access to life-changing mobilities to support them in developing the skills they need to thrive.

UK universities, colleges, training providers and schools are eligible to bid for funding from the Turing scheme. We have not estimated how many eligible education providers are also charities.

The Turing Scheme is an education mobility scheme. International opportunities for young people outside of formal education settings such as youth activity (similar to that offered under the European Solidarity Corps) are being considered as part of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport-led Youth Review, which was commissioned by HM Treasury at the 2020 Spending Review.

■ Union Learning Fund

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[157249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department plans to take to help replace the provision of educational and skills training offered under the Union Learning Fund after the Government ceases its funding of that Fund.

Gillian Keegan:

The Union Learning Fund (ULF) only rarely directly provides learning, as its main role has been to link individuals to training that is funded and provided elsewhere, for example via the adult entitlement to fund adults to gain English and Maths qualifications at level 2 and basic digital skills (level 1).

Adult skills are key in supporting the economy and tackling disadvantage and so we are continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) (£1.34 billion in 2020/21). The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to level 3, to support adults to gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning and training up to level 2 for unemployed people aged 19 and over.

The AEB supports 4 statutory entitlements to full funding for adult learners:

- o English and maths, up to and including level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade A* - C or grade 4, or higher, and/or
- o First full qualification at level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23, and/or
- o First full qualification at level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23.
- o Specified digital skills qualifications for adults with no or low digital skills (came into effect from 1 August 2020).

The fourth statutory entitlement to fully fund specified digital skills qualifications for adults, aged 19+, with no or low digital skills came into effect from 1 August 2020. This will ensure adults, aged 19 and over, can study for specified qualifications in basic digital skills free of charge to get the skills and capabilities they need to get on in life and work. These statutory entitlements apply in devolved and non-devolved areas.

Instead of continuing to support the ULF, the funding will be used to support larger and wider initiatives in adult education. The National Skills Fund and the Skills

Recovery Package will expand the funding and support open to all. As announced by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, in September as part of his Lifetime Skills Guarantee, this includes for adults who do not currently have a level 3 qualification, fully funding their first full level 3, focusing on the valuable courses that will help them get ahead in the labour market.

■ Vocational Education: Coronavirus

James Grundy:

[157331]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress he is making on plans for the safe return of students on heavily vocational BTEC courses to colleges.

Gillian Keegan:

To support the return to college of all students from 8 March, the department has worked closely with Public Health England to develop and refresh the system of controls for education settings to reduce and mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19. New measures include asymptomatic testing and recommending the increased use of face coverings.

In addition, to prepare for return, colleges should update their risk assessments and ensure they are implementing the system of controls, this includes assessing the risks particular to their setting and provision.

For those students whose courses are more vocational in nature (for example, for courses that require close contact, require access to specialist equipment or are taught in non-traditional classroom environments such as workshops), the further education COVID-19 guidance sets out additional steps and considerations colleges can take, details of which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision>. Colleges are advised to put greater emphasis on the other measures outlined in the systems of controls, such as increased use of face coverings, increased ventilation, in addition to the use of screens or barriers and follow the relevant working safely during COVID-19 guidance to reduce the risk of transmission, details of the guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Quality: Stoke On Trent

Jonathan Gullis:

[157323]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve air quality in Stoke-on-Trent.

Rebecca Pow:

The Joint Air Quality Unit has provided funding and support to, and continues to work closely with, Stoke-on-Trent Council as they develop plans to tackle their nitrogen

dioxide exceedances. Air Quality Ministers from both Defra and the Department for Transport have met Stoke-on-Trent councillors and hon. Members several times over the past 12 months to hear their views on how best to deal with the air quality problem in the Potteries.

Stoke has also received funding of over £34 million from the Transforming Cities Fund to develop and improve transport across the city, some of which is earmarked for active travel schemes to help improve air quality for the city's residents.

■ Animal Products and Livestock: UK Trade with EU

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[157153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with ministerial colleagues and his counterparts in the EU on securing a bilateral UK-EU SPS agreement that includes products of animal origin, animal by-products, breeding stock, and zoonotic disease control.

Victoria Prentis:

We reached an agreement with the EU on SPS measures as part of the TCA in December 2020. This agreement has secured the UK's full autonomy over our public, plant and animal health regime, tailoring it to the unique circumstances of the UK. Since 1 January, there has been no role for EU law or the ECJ in these rules.

This agreement allows the UK and the EU to cooperate on avoiding unnecessary SPS barriers to trade in agri-food goods. The SPS Chapter provides for a framework to agree to trade facilitations going forward, where justified. It is in both parties' interests to pursue this. Over time, this will help to reduce the burden on businesses from border controls and certification requirements. Taken alongside other elements of the FTA such as zero tariff, zero quota, this represents a good outcome for the UK's agri-food industry, and does not constrain our ability to legislate in these areas.

■ Biodiverse Landscapes Fund and Blue Planet Fund

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[157174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how he plans to allocate money from the (a) Biodiverse Landscapes Fund and (b) Blue Planet Fund; and what criteria he plans to apply to determine that supported projects benefit both human development and nature conservation objectives.

Rebecca Pow:

The Biodiverse Landscapes Fund will deliver poverty reduction, conservation and climate outcomes across biologically diverse, transboundary landscapes worldwide. It will create sustainable economic development for local communities which supports the protection, restoration and sustainable management of these critical landscapes, rather than deriving short-term gains from their unsustainable use.

The Biodiverse Landscapes Fund is currently in development. Funding will be allocated, however, to a range of delivery partners who have demonstrated that they can deliver interventions that will meet the Fund's objectives in a landscape via an

open, competitive process. Full details of this process, its timelines and the Fund's objectives will be published in due course.

The Blue Planet Fund aims to help countries eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA) to reduce poverty through the protection and sustainable management of their marine resources. It will focus on addressing human-generated threats across four key themes: biodiversity, climate change, marine pollution, and sustainable seafood. The Fund is currently being designed by Defra and FCDO, based on available evidence and drawing on information from across HMG's international network, and will be launched later this year.

Both programmes are ODA funded, and so are subject to the Government's guidelines and rules for designing and implementing ODA programmes. As such, once operational, progress will regularly be assessed against pre-agreed criteria and through a robust monitoring, evaluation and learning cycle to ensure projects achieve economic development and conservation objectives. Defra publishes information on ODA funded programmes to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) registry and adheres to the transparency standards set out in the UK Aid Strategy.

■ **Environmental Land Management Scheme: Organic Farming**

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[158872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that organic farming is included in the Environmental Land Management National Pilot phase 1.

Victoria Prentis:

We do not have specific organic standards within phase 1 of the Sustainable Farming Incentive Pilot. The Sustainable Farming Incentive is intended to be open and accessible to all farmers, and to reward farmers fairly for environmental goods generated across all land types and farm management systems, including organic farms. Throughout the pilot, which we are launching later this year, we will be working with hundreds of farmers to ensure that it works for all farming systems.

■ **Garden Communities**

Andrew Bridgen:

[\[157109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of the creation of a UK Garden City scheme to (a) promote horticulture and (b) promote and reinvigorate green spaces that are vital to physical and mental wellbeing during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rebecca Pow:

The merits of such a scheme were considered when responding to a select committee report on Garden Tourism in 2019. Such a scheme risks confusion with the successful City of Culture competition and other extant schemes such as Britain in Bloom. The Government did not accept the committee's recommendation.

We do of course recognise the immense benefits of being able to access green spaces, such as parks and gardens, to mental and physical well-being. Defra is collaborating with the Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable Group on a Growth Strategy for the sector to help ensure the ornamental horticulture sector continues to thrive. This is industry led and underlined by research identifying key areas of opportunity for growth in the sector, including the growing importance of outdoor green spaces to health.

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan includes commitments to introduce stronger new standards for green infrastructure and to support local authorities to assess provision. Green infrastructure includes greenspace such as parks and woodlands and other environmental features such as street trees, hedgerows and green walls and roofs. Natural England and Public Health England have published a [Rapid Scoping Review of Health and Wellbeing Evidence](#) to inform the standards.

Natural England is testing the standards in trials with local authorities and developers, and they are due to be launched in 2022. The aim is to embed the standards in national planning guidance and policy to ensure that good green infrastructure is secured for all communities through the planning system.

■ Imports and Exports: Customs

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[157154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to increase capacity to deliver SPS checks on both exports and imports as the new import regime is implemented between April and July 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra has provided £14 million funding to local authorities in England to support Port Health Authorities with the recruitment and training of over 500 new staff, including Official Veterinarians, for the purpose of undertaking new SPS checks on EU imports of animal products, including physical checks.

We have also taken a number of steps to increase certifier capacity to support exports. The number of Official Vets qualified to certify exports of products of animal origin has increased from 600 in February 2019 to more than 1,700 currently. The required training is still available free of charge and numbers continue to grow. This funded training is in addition to £1.095 million provided directly to local authorities to boost certifier capacity at the end of last year. Furthermore, we continue to maintain a system to provide surge capacity vets to both certification providers and local authorities if localised shortages arise. So far this has not been widely needed. We are considering what further mitigations may be necessary.

■ Infant Foods

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[157273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will ensure that baby/food banks are able to provide first infant formula for formula-fed babies in need.

Victoria Prentis:

Foodbanks are independent, charitable organisations and the UK Government does not have any role in their operation. Decisions about which donations to accept and make available to food bank users are therefore a matter for food bank providers.

Healthy Start vouchers support pregnant women or households with children under four, who are on a low income, with the cost of milk (including infant formula), fruit and vegetables helping to boost children's long-term health. The Government is increasing the weekly value of these vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25 in April.

■ Recreation Spaces: Staffordshire

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[157322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to increase access to green spaces in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra recognises the crucial importance of having good access to green spaces for people's health and well-being. The 25 Year Environment Plan sets out our comprehensive and long-term approach to protecting and enhancing our natural landscapes in England for the next generation, and to helping people improve their health and wellbeing by using green spaces.

The £12.1m Trees for Climate programme will plant over 500 hectares of trees in ten Community Forests between December 2020 and May 2021. When mature, the trees will eventually store over 100,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide, reduce flood risk, increase sustainable UK grown timber, provide more places for nature and biodiversity to thrive, and increase people's access to and enjoyment of woodland. The Forest of Mercia, which covers Staffordshire and the West Midlands, is one of the Community Forests which will carry out the planting.

There are also a wide range of initiatives within Defra which are helping to increase access to green spaces across the whole of England. These include, but are not limited to:

- Green Recovery Challenge Fund
- Green Social Prescribing Project
- Responding to the Glover Review of protected landscapes
- Nature for Climate Fund
- Development of environmental land management schemes

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Aid Financed Trade****Gareth Thomas:**[\[154685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding the UK has provided to the World Trade Organisation's Aid for Trade programme in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has funded the Aid for Trade initiative at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) for many years, supporting least developed and developing countries to break down barriers to trade and promote economic prosperity. Whilst there isn't a specific WTO aid-for-trade programme - it is a biennial work programme setting out thematic workshops - there are various WTO based funds; most of which the UK has funded. The main Aid for Trade funds at the WTO are: the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), the Doha Development Agenda Trust Fund (DDATF) and the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF). Over the last 5 years the UK has provided approximately £17 million across three different funds.

2016 - £3.5 million

2017 - £3.25 million

2018 - £3.12 million

2019 - £4.25 million

2020 - £2.7 million

Our comprehensive Aid for Trade programmes support critical trade infrastructure like ports and roads; tackle burdensome regulations, high transport costs and delays at customs; and build trade skills so that partner countries are better able to take advantage of trading opportunities and enhance their capacity to negotiate and implement trade agreements. Our Aid for Trade portfolio will continue to deliver the critical support necessary for developing and least developed countries to harness their trading opportunities and take ownership of their overall economic development.

■ Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences**Anthony Mangnall:**[\[157298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 1 October 2020 to Question 94544 on Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences, what progress has been made on rescheduling the postponed Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative conference, Time for Justice: Putting Survivors First.

Nigel Adams:

The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) International Conference, *Time for Justice: Putting Survivors First*, was postponed in early 2020 due to the

global COVID-19 pandemic. We will revisit our plans when the international situation allows.

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[157299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress his Department has made in delivering a three-year strategy to support the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative.

Nigel Adams:

The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative remains a top priority for the FCDO. We continue to develop a three-year strategy, with clear deliverables and performance indicators, which will be underpinned by an evidence-based Theory of Change, with embedded monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[157300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas of 28 January 2021, Official report, col 655, what his objectives are for the forthcoming G7 summit, in relation to the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign & Development (F&D) Track will have three key priorities: to promote open societies; to lead a sustainable recovery; and to renew global outreach. Gender equality will fall under the second of these priorities, and we are clear that success is a recovery that leaves no one behind, and places gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at its core. To do this, the F&D Track will be guided by the framework of the '3 Es' - Educating girls, Empowering women, and Ending violence against women and girls. Within the Foreign & Development track, we will seek to strengthen the G7's commitment to women's political and economic empowerment and ending violence against women and girls. We also aim to secure G7 agreement on ambitious new access and learning targets for girls' education, demonstrating the continued importance we place upon tackling gender inequality, one of the root causes of Conflict-related Sexual Violence.

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[157301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with its counterparts in the US on preventing sexual violence in conflict.

Nigel Adams:

We continue to engage with international partners, including the United States, on the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative in our efforts to end conflict-related sexual violence. Promoting gender equality and advancing women and girls' rights on the international stage are core elements of the UK's role as a force for good in the world.

■ Caribbean Community

Ruth Jones: [\[157289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last met representatives of CARICOM.

Nigel Adams:

No meeting has taken place between the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), since the creation of the Office of Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs in September 2020.

Senior British officials have regular contact with CARICOM officials, including the Secretary-General. Most recently on 11 December 2020 the Minister of State for the Commonwealth, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, co-hosted with the CARICOM Secretary-General a Moment of Ambition Summit alongside the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre.

■ China: Trade Agreements

Caroline Lucas: [\[157064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Trade Policy on 9 February 2021, Official Report, col 219, and the Government's policy on the pursuit of trade deals with countries engaged in likely genocide, what plans he has to review existing bilateral agreements with China in the field of trade and investment.

Nigel Adams:

The UK has a Bilateral Investment Treaty with China, signed in 1986. The Government has no plans to review this agreement.

■ Commonwealth: Land Mines

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[157087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Commonwealth counterparts on encouraging all Commonwealth countries to sign up to the Mine Ban Convention.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom is strongly committed to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and its humanitarian goals. We regularly take opportunities in multilateral forums and bilateral discussions to call on States not yet party to accede without delay, and work with a variety of partners inside and outside the Commonwealth in pursuit of universalisation.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Caroline Lucas:

[\[157068\]](#)

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 will make that donation from (a) its bilaterally purchased doses or (b) the UK COVAX allocation; and if he will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

The Prime Minister has confirmed that the UK will share the majority of any surplus COVID-19 vaccines with the COVAX international vaccine procurement pool. As the multilateral facility responsible for ensuring global equitable access to vaccines, COVAX is best able to distribute vaccines where they are needed most. Our current priorities are ensuring the safety of the UK population and supporting COVAX as it starts distributing vaccines to the most vulnerable populations around the world. We will set out more details on funding mechanisms, and any cost recovery regarding surplus vaccines in due course.

■ Gaza: Coronavirus

Louise Haigh:

[\[157219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assurances he has received that Israel will allow future covid-19 vaccines into the Gaza strip.

James Cleverly:

We welcome the steps that the parties have taken so far to coordinate responses to the COVID-19, including the arrival of the first shipment of vaccines from the Palestinian Authority into Gaza on 17 February, with the approval of Israel. We encourage further cooperation and 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 Palestinian Authority 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.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Stephen Farry:

[\[157337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Israeli Government on reports of the Israeli Army allegedly seizing EU humanitarian aid intended for the Palestinian community of Humsa Al Bqai'a in the Jordan Valley.

James Cleverly:

I called on Israel to stop demolitions on 5 February 2021. I also raised our concern about demolitions with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 29 October 2020, and

issued a statement outlining the UK's concern about the demolitions of structures in Humsa Al-Baqai'a on 6 November 2020. Officials from the British Consulate General Jerusalem visited Humsa Al-Baqai'a on 6 November 2020 to reiterate UK support for the community. The UK provides funding to the West Bank Protection Consortium, which is coordinating with the Palestinian Red Cross and the United Nations to provide emergency shelter to the community of Humsa Al-Baqai'a, and determine the community's long-term needs. UK senior officials raised demolitions with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 10 November 2020. The UK also urged the Government of Israel to end demolitions of property in the West Bank at the UN Security Council on 21 December 2020.

We are focused on preventing demolitions from happening in the first place through our legal aid programme, which supports Bedouin communities and Palestinians facing demolition or home eviction in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem. We continue to urge the Government of Israel to develop improved mechanisms for zoning, planning and permitting in Area C for the benefit of the Palestinian population, including by facilitating local Palestinian participation in such processes.

■ Israeli Settlements

Patrick Grady:

[\[157200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterparts on the issue of illegal settlements in Palestine.

James Cleverly:

Both the Foreign Secretary and I made clear our opposition to settlement advancement in the sensitive location of Givat HaMatos on 21 January 2021. I also raised settlement construction in Givat HaMatos with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 18 January 2021 and urged the Government of Israel not to proceed. Officials from the British Embassy in Tel Aviv have also urged the Israeli Authorities to cease the construction process in a meeting alongside European counterparts on 19 January 2021. The UK's position on settlements is clear: They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution.

■ Mozambique: Gas Fired Power Stations

Dan Carden:

[\[158186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the value is of the Government's proposed investment in the Temane gas-fired power station in Mozambique through CDC Group's Globeleq subsidiary.

James Duddridge:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: CDC has invested over \$1 billion of climate finance into developing countries in Africa and South Asia since 2017. CDC's climate strategy sets out its comprehensive approach to align all of CDC's investing activities with the

Paris Agreement, based on the core principles of reaching net zero by 2050, enabling a just transition and strengthening adaptation and resilience.

CDC's fossil fuel policy, published in December 2020, applies to all new commitments. This policy excludes future investment in the vast majority of fossil fuel subsectors including coal, oil and upstream gas exploration and production, with very limited exceptions. CDC will only consider new investments in gas power and related infrastructure if they are aligned with the Paris Agreement and aligned with a country's pathway to net zero emissions by 2050.

Commercial discussions regarding the proposed Temane power project remain ongoing. Financial information on CDC's investment is commercially sensitive and therefore is unable to be disclosed.

■ Myanmar: Human Rights

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[159267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether CDC's planned increase in investment in Myanmar is still scheduled to go ahead in light of the military coup in that country; and if that investment was earmarked for Burmese Government trade promotion whether it can be redirected to civil society organisations documenting human rights violations in Myanmar.

James Duddridge:

CDC has paused all new investment activity in Myanmar and is reviewing the impact of the coup on its existing investments in the country. CDC has no investments in military or state-owned companies in Myanmar, does not directly work with or partner with the government, and has not supported any trade promotion by the government.

In parallel, on 25 February the UK launched a Trade Review. All UK support for trade promotion has been suspended in Myanmar while the UK works with British businesses and civil society to reshape our approach.

■ Nigeria: Power Stations

Dan Carden:

[\[158185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which Independent Power Plants (IPP) and Captive Power Plants (CPP) in Nigeria are now owned by the UK Government as a result of CDC's acquisition of a majority stake in CPGNL Limited.

James Duddridge:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: CDC has a 70% stake in Globeleq. Globeleq acquired a 74% stake in CPGNL Limited on 24 December.

CPGNL Limited comprises 11 power plants with a total generating capacity of 57 Megawatts (MW); further details are commercially sensitive.

■ Overseas Aid: Climate Change**Sarah Champion:** [\[157138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the November 2020 OECD report which found that 74 per cent of climate finance has taken the form of loans, what form the UK's contribution to international climate finance has taken to date; and what form the £11.6 billion it has committed over the next five years will take.

James Duddridge:

The UK has published full details on our International Climate Finance (ICF) annually since 2014. The reports can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/international-climate-finance>. Over the past five years only 0.12% (£5.9 million) of UK ICF has been delivered through concessional loans, with 87% (£4,854 million) delivered through grants, 10% (£556 million) as equity investments and 3% as other.

Decisions on future programming will be made in due course.

■ Overseas Aid: Gender Based Violence**Anthony Mangnall:** [\[157302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of the UK's Official Development Assistance was spent on projects tackling gender-based violence in 2019.

Nigel Adams:

We estimate that in 2019, the UK spent roughly 0.4% of its ODA budget on projects dedicated to tackling gender-based violence and violence against women and girls. To break down further, UK bilateral spend on such projects in 2019 was at least £47.1 million, and UK imputed multilateral share of spend was £12.4 million for 2018. We estimate that in 2018, roughly 0.31% of the UK's ODA budget was spent on tackling gender-based violence and violence against women and girls (£32.6 million bilateral and £12.4 million multilateral). Figures are likely to be underestimations due to programme recording under additional codes, such as humanitarian. Figures for the UK Imputed Multilateral Share 2019 will be published shortly.

■ Tigray: Sexual Offences**Sarah Champion:** [\[157129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the statement by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict dated 21 January 2021, if he will condemn crimes of sexual violence in the Tigray Region and outline the discussions he has had with his international counterparts on condemning those crimes.

Sarah Champion:

[\[157130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that people who have been subject to sexual violence in the Tigray Region have access to (a) medical care and (b) support.

James Duddridge:

We note that the Government of Ethiopia has declared a zero policy on sexual violence and the stated intention to establish a national joint taskforce (including the Ministry of Defence with the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth) to investigate alleged cases of sexual violence against women in Tigray. We will monitor the effectiveness of this taskforce in bringing perpetrators to justice. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are working hard to deliver support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. The UK is currently working closely with its partners to ensure that survivors have an increasing access to specialised services and justice. I re-enforced the urgency of the need for humanitarian access when I spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador on 24 February.

■ **Uganda: Politics and Government**

Ruth Jones:

[\[157293\]](#)

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

James Duddridge:

The UK Government has significant concerns about the treatment of opposition candidates and their supporters in the run-up to and since the Ugandan elections. This does not provide for an open political landscape, within which democracy can flourish. I set out our concerns in a statement on 17 January about the political climate surrounding the elections and have urged the Government of Uganda to meet its international human rights commitments. Following the unacceptable constraints placed on the opposition candidate, Robert Kyagulanyi, the British High Commission in Kampala pressed the Ugandan authorities to remove restrictions on his political freedoms prior to the lifting of his de facto house arrest on 25 January. The recent violence towards journalists on 17 February was unacceptable and we welcomed the commitment of the Chief of Defence Forces to investigate the matter and take appropriate action. On Monday 22 February, Kyagulanyi and his party, National Unity Platform (NUP), announced the withdrawal of their petition challenging the Presidential election results at the Supreme Court. Our High Commissioner is engaging with political leaders across all parties to discuss these issues and push for democratic engagement and reform.

■ **West Bank: Demolition**

Stephen Farry:

[\[157336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations his Department (a) has made and (b) plans to make to the Israeli

Government on recent trends in the number of demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank.

James Cleverly:

The UK Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised ongoing demolitions with the Israeli Authorities in a meeting alongside like-minded partners on 25 February 2021. I called on Israel to stop demolitions on 5 February 2021 and raised my concerns about demolitions of Palestinian homes and structures with the Israeli Ambassador on 29 October 2020. UK officials from the British Consulate in Jerusalem have made regular visits to areas at risk of demolition and eviction to reiterate UK support for those communities. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process.

■ **West Bank: Palestinians**

Julie Elliott:

[\[159300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the recent report from Israeli human rights organisations, Breaking the Silence, Physicians for Human Rights Israel and Yesh Din, A Life Exposed: Military invasions of Palestinian homes in the West Bank, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the ending of that practice; and what assessment his Department made on the effect of that practice on the community.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of the report by Yesh Din entitled, 'A Life Exposed: Military invasions of Palestinian homes in the West Bank'. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the Israeli security forces' rules of engagement. While we recognise Israel's legitimate need to deploy security measures, we encourage them to deploy these in a way which minimises tension and to use appropriate force.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Accident and Emergency Departments: Standards**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[148792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the longest patient waiting time was in A&E at each NHS trust in England during 2020.

Edward Argar:

A table showing the maximum duration to departure in accident and emergency for each National Health Service trust in England for the financial period 2019-2020 is attached.

Attachments:

1. Maximum Duration to Departure [PQ148792 TABLE.xlsx]

■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Yorkshire and the Humber**Jon Trickett:**[\[148692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients were waiting longer than four hours at A&E in Yorkshire and the Humber region in (a) 2010 and (b) 2020.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: The data is not available in the format requested.

■ Ambulance Services: Yorkshire and the Humber**Jon Trickett:**[\[146774\]](#)

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

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: In 2010, there were 274 emergency ambulances and 194 rapid response vehicles in operation within the Yorkshire and Humber region. The latest data for 2020 shows there are now 410 emergency ambulances and 106 rapid response vehicles in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

■ Asthma: Coronavirus**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[141556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of placing asthma sufferers who purchase asthma medicine abroad in the same priority group as clinically vulnerable asthma sufferers for the covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Clinically vulnerable individuals are in priority group six. Adults with asthma which requires continuous or repeated use of systemic steroids or with previous exacerbations requiring hospital admission are within that group. This includes anyone who has ever had an emergency asthma admission or those who have an asthma diagnosis and have had three prescriptions for oral steroids over a three-month period as an indication of repeated or continuous oral steroids. An individual who is not sure whether they meet this definition may want to seek advice from their general practitioner.

■ Brain: Tumours**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[151742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of NIHR processes in progressing research into brain tumours; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including brain tumours. As with other Government funders of health research, the NIHR does not allocate funding for specific disease areas. The level of research spend in a particular area, is driven by factors including scientific potential and the number and scale of successful funding applications.

In May 2018 the Government announced £40 million over five years for brain tumour research as part of the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission through the NIHR. The NIHR released a public announcement to the research community in April 2018, making clear our desire to receive brain tumour research funding applications. We are relying on researchers to submit high-quality research proposals in this very difficult area.

■ Coronavirus: Casinos

Scott Benton: [104195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the scientific basis is for the Government's decision to close casinos under the very high local covid-19 alert level restrictions.

Scott Benton: [107124]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the scientific basis for the decision to close casinos in tier 3 local covid alert level areas.

Scott Benton: [107125]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the scientific basis for the decision to close bookmakers in Tier 3 local covid alert level areas.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Epidemiological data and projection models on local restriction tiers, including commentary on individual tier allocation decisions affecting businesses such as casinos and bookmakers in tier 3 is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938964/Coronavirus_England_briefing_26_November.pdf

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Philip Davies: [157049]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of (a) lockdowns and (b) social distancing on the immunity of (i) children and (ii) adults to other viruses; and if he will publish the scientific evidence upon which that assessment is based.

Jo Churchill:

No formal assessment has been made.

Matt Western:

[\[159000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the South African variant of covid-19 can be identified through processing available at the Milton Keynes Lighthouse Laboratory.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 March 2021]: The tests processed at Milton Keynes Lighthouse Laboratory will detect the South African variant as a SARS-CoV-2 RNA Positive result. Once SARS-CoV-2 RNA is positive, these samples are sent away to the Sanger Institute for sequencing to identify whether they are the South African or any other variant.

■ **Coronavirus: Gyms**

James Grundy:

[\[157333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on public health of the closure of gyms as a result of covid-19 restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government considers the impact restrictions may have on public health.

Whilst we recognise that exercise is important for people's mental and physical health, gyms are high risk settings for spreading COVID-19.

■ **Coronavirus: Higher Education**

Emma Hardy:

[\[107728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many higher education institutions that requested covid-19 test kits prior to the return of students in academic year 2020-21 have received them.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: We do not publish data in the format requested. We have dispatched more than seven million home test kits including supporting testing at schools and universities, batch testing in outbreak areas, elective surgery at National Health Service hospital trusts and the Oxford vaccine clinical evaluation.

■ **Coronavirus: Kingston upon Hull**

Emma Hardy:

[\[117357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the letter of 13 November from the Leader of Kingston upon Hull City Council, Stephen Brady OBE, on the levels of covid-19 infection in that city, what plans he has for a programme of widespread community testing in that city.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: Community testing in Hull was launched in December 2020.

■ Coronavirus: Liverpool**Dan Carden:** [\[119346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the UK National Screening Committee on the mass covid-19 testing pilot in Liverpool.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 26 November 2020]: We have had no such discussions. Community Testing is a case detection strategy we are implementing as a public health intervention, screening has different clinical considerations.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**Philip Davies:** [\[157043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what evidence his Department used to implement mandatory face coverings to control the transmission of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

Face coverings are largely intended to protect others and not the wearer against the spread of infection. Evidence on the effectiveness of face coverings is constantly developing.

In June 2020, Public Health England (PHE) used an established methodology to complete a rapid review of the evidence related to face coverings in the community and COVID-19 and concluded that “the beneficial effects of wearing masks may be increased when combined with other non-pharmaceutical interventions, such as hand washing and social distancing.” A second review, published in January 2021, found evidence consistent with the findings of the first review, that the use of face coverings in the community helped reduce the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, PHE continue to advocate the same measures of wearing face coverings in specified community settings. We keep our face covering policy under review, guided by the advice of scientific and medical experts.

■ Coronavirus: Pulse Oximetry**Sam Tarry:** [\[156625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of Oximeters on the treatment of covid-19; and what plans he has to make them more widely available.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There are ongoing data collection and evaluation workstreams underway as part of the COVID-19 oximetry programmes. Oximeters are not used in the treatment of COVID-19 but in the early detection ‘silent hypoxia’ which seems to present more commonly in patients with risk factors. Measuring decreases in blood oxygen levels using oximeters helps identify patients who are at risk of clinical deterioration which in turn improves outcomes. Oximeters are already widely available in primary care and

secondary care across England for patients with COVID-19 and with risk factors based on clinical judgement.

■ **Coronavirus: Quarantine**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[152412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how funding is determined for local authorities issuing discretionary payments to people isolating due to covid-19.

Helen Whately:

The discretionary funding is determined according to the COVID-19 Relative Needs Formula (RNF). The RNF is used to allocate funding for each local authority based on population size and levels of deprivation. It also takes account of allocations to authorities across previous tranches of funding.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Jon Trickett:

[\[110734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of covid-19 tests carried out since the 31 March 2020 were taken with a home testing kit.

Helen Whately:

We do not publish data in the format requested.

Hilary Benn:

[\[133713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy that all staff working at covid-19 test centres should be vaccinated; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Testing staff who work at sites for symptomatic members of the public where assisted tests are carried out, are eligible to be prioritised for a vaccine as they are considered frontline healthcare workers for the purpose of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation prioritisation. Laboratory staff and those at sites for asymptomatic testing are not considered frontline healthcare workers and therefore will not be eligible for vaccine prioritisation.

Maria Eagle:

[\[138399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the MHRA authorised the use of lateral flow testing on a daily basis in workplaces such as Jaguar Land Rover which are piloting the operation of the Government's protocol in workplaces.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 20 January 2021]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has issued an exceptional use authorisation to the Department, who have taken on the role of legal manufacturer. The devices deployed for daily contact testing at workplaces such as Jaguar Land Rover have received a CE mark for supervised use. As long as use of the devices is supervised, as is the

case at Jaguar Land Rover, the MHRA considers their use within the CE mark and no further authorisation is required.

Justin Madders: [\[143802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason ECOLOG has reportedly lost its Government contract for covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

The Department has taken the decision not to proceed with a contract for Ecolog to provide deployable laboratory and testing services. For reasons of commercial confidentiality, we are unable to provide further details on this specific contract.

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[148057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total value of service credits applied to the contracts awarded for Covid-19 testing since 1 March 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: No service credits have been applied.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[148793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to include covid-19 testing staff at drive-through, walk-in testing centres and elsewhere in vaccination priority groups 1-9.

Edward Argar:

Testing staff who work at sites for symptomatic members of the public where assisted tests are carried out, are eligible to be prioritised for a vaccine as they are considered frontline healthcare workers for the purpose of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's prioritisation. Laboratory staff and those at sites for asymptomatic testing are not considered frontline healthcare workers and therefore will not be eligible for vaccine prioritisation.

John Redwood: [\[154673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what level of infectious material is required for a positive PCR test for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

There are many different SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR assays in use across the United Kingdom. Each assay will have a slightly different limit of detection. The lowest concentration of virus that can be reliably and consistently detected by the assay and will be configured according to local arrangements. Some RT-PCRs are designed to identify a single gene target and others will detect multiple targets.

Nick Smith: [\[158899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cost per test has been at the covid-19 testing site in Cwm, Marine Colliery, Ebbw Vale, in each month since its opening in July 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 March 2021]: We are unable to provide the information requested as it is commercially sensitive.

Layla Moran:

[\[91920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has for the use of lateral flow covid-19 tests in (a) schools and (b) other education settings.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 November 2020]: Rapid lateral flow device testing is available for staff in secondary schools, colleges, primary, school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Justin Madders:

[\[148827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients have been admitted to hospital with covid-19 on each day in 2021 having had (a) one dose and (b) two doses of the (i) AstraZeneca and (ii) Pfizer vaccines.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: This information is not available in the format requested.

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[149718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy, in response to data that some covid-19 vaccines significantly reduce transmission rates, that people sharing households with extremely vulnerable individuals for whom vaccination may not give full protection, should receive their vaccination at an early stage, regardless of age or other factors, in order to protect their shielding fellow-residents.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 10 February 2021]: The Government continues to follow the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which agrees priority groupings for vaccination. The Interim advice has been published by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation recommending an age-based approach which the Government has accepted in principle.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[151657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the World Health Organisation's SAGE Roadmap for prioritizing the use of COVID-19 vaccines in the context of limited supply, published on 13 November 2020, what discussions he has had with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on the prioritization of people who are homeless for the covid-19 vaccine; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

For the first phase, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation 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 over 50 years old in order of age. The first phase also includes those with certain clinical risk factors, which make them particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

Anyone who is homeless and falls into these groups is eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. We are working closely with partners to ensure they can access it. Local authorities should work with their local health partners to ensure individuals experiencing homelessness are able to access the vaccine by other means if mainstream provision is unsuitable.

Karl Turner:

[\[151692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his guidance is on the covid-19 vaccine for people with a terminal diagnosis.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: For the first phase of the vaccination programme, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors.

Included in this are individuals who are clinically extremely vulnerable and individuals with certain underlying health conditions, including immunosuppression, which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality. Some terminal illnesses, such as specific cancers, are considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable, will be prioritised for a vaccine in cohort four.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[153175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will (a) update the guidance on covid-19 vaccination priority lists for people with asthma and (b) publish the criteria that will be used to decide whether they fall into priority group 6 in the first phase of the vaccination roll out; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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. Adults with asthma which requires continuous or repeated use of systemic steroids or with previous exacerbations requiring hospital admission, will be vaccinated in priority group six, which includes all individuals aged 16 to 64 years old with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality.

Michael Fabricant:

[\[154738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing for (a) research on and (b) trials of oral vaccines offering immunity to covid-19.

Edward Argar:

Through a joint rolling research call for COVID-19 research between the National Institute for Health Research and UK Research and Innovation, funding of over £500,000 has been committed to a study looking at the safety and immunogenicity of two candidate COVID-19 vaccines administered to the respiratory tract in aerosol form, with an expected end date in August 2021.

In addition, Innovate UK, have been managing the delivery of £75 million of the £110 million Department-funded UK Vaccine Network programme. Nine Departmental projects within this portfolio were repurposed to identify other COVID-19 vaccine solutions. Also, two Innovate UK grants worth over £2.2 million in total, were awarded to Stabilitech, now known as IosBio, to assess its COVID-19 vaccine candidate that has an oral capsule delivery system in animal efficacy studies. This technology is now being tested in participants in clinical trials in South Africa and the United States.

Ian Mearns:[\[154984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to ensure that asthma sufferers who are prescribed daily medication are prioritised for the covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: An individual with a more severe case of asthma may have been included in the clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) group, in which case they will be vaccinated in priority group four. For those with asthma not identified for inclusion in the CEV group, people with asthma that requires continuous or repeated use of systemic steroids or with previous exacerbations requiring hospital admission will be vaccinated in priority group six.

Mike Amesbury:[\[155367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the need to prioritise front-line NHS test and trace workers for covid-19 vaccinations.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Testing staff who work at sites for symptomatic members of the public where assisted tests are carried out, are eligible to be prioritised for a vaccine as they are considered frontline healthcare workers for the purpose of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation prioritisation. Laboratory staff and those at sites for asymptomatic testing are not considered frontline healthcare workers and therefore will not be eligible for vaccine prioritisation.

Taiwo Owatemi:[\[155413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the next phase of the covid-19 vaccination programme will include people living with sufferers of blood cancers to protect that high-risk group.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Phase two of the vaccination programme will cover all adults under 50 years old not already included in phase one. Interim advice has been published by the Joint

Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation recommending an age-based approach which the Government has accepted in principle.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[156294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the risk of covid-19 to people with bleeding disorder; and what steps his Department is taking to prioritise people with bleeding disorders for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 February 2021]: Individuals with bleeding disorders have not been prioritised for a vaccination in phase one.

Phase two of the vaccination programme will cover all adults under 50 years old not already included in phase one. Prioritisation for phase two has not yet been decided, but interim advice has been published by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation recommending an age-based approach.

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[157162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to prioritise front-line workers in the justice sector for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Workers in the justice sector who are eligible for a vaccine, because of their age or other clinical factors such as underlying health conditions, will have access to a vaccine in the first phase.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has now published their interim advice for phase two, their advice states that the best way to achieve this objective is to continue prioritising people for vaccinations by age based on risk but also as this will enable the most rapid deployment across the population.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Contracts

Sir Mark Hendrick: [\[149725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department receives reimbursement from companies that do not uphold (a) the commitments and (b) delivery of services outlined in their contract with his Department.

Edward Argar:

The majority of contracts awarded by the Department have break clauses, along with clauses to manage product and service quality and delivery, meaning if the company supplies faulty products or services or misses delivery dates or key outputs, we are able to review the contracts and reclaim any money. Department only pays for goods and services received as standard.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Serco**Richard Burgon:**[\[158126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November 2020 to Question 108272 on Department of Health and Social Care: Serco, whether any (a) fines and (b) other financial penalties have been paid to his Department by (i) Serco and (ii) Serco subsidiaries as a result of contractual obligations with his Department not having been met.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: No fines or other financial penalties have been paid by Serco or sub-contractors.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**Andy McDonald:**[\[158941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Questions 149246 and 155054 tabled by the hon. Member for Middlesbrough.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 2 March 2021]: I refer the hon. Member to the answers to Question 149246 on 2 March and Question 155054 on 26 February.

Barbara Keeley:[\[159264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Questions 146837, 146838 and 146836, tabled on 1 February 2021 by the hon. Member for Worsley and Eccles South.

Edward Argar:

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

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

■ Eating Disorders: Health Services**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[159344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all eating disorder services are commissioned to provide NICE-approved treatments for people with binge eating disorder.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

National Health Service commissioners and providers in England are expected to take National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines into account in the planning and provision of services.

For children and young people, there is a programme in place to promote early access to effective, NICE-approved treatments for eating disorders, working in partnership with children, young people and their families. For adults, the Adult Eating Disorders: Community, Inpatient and Intensive Day Patient Care Guidance was published in August 2019, emphasising that eating disorder services should provide evidence-based treatment, care and support for the full range of eating disorder diagnoses, including binge eating disorder.

■ Health Services

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[\[157096\]](#)

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

Edward Argar:

In addition to the £63 billion of additional funding already provided to the National Health Service in 2020-21 and a further commitment of £20.3 billion in 2021-22 to help manage ongoing COVID-19 pressures alongside non-COVID-19 activity levels, we are providing an additional £3 billion next year, on top of the long-term settlement, to support recovery from COVID-19.

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

■ Health: Equality

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[156543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the finding of Ethnic inequalities in health-related quality of life among older adults in England: secondary analysis of a national cross-sectional survey, published in the Lancet on 28 January 2021, that being a member of some ethnic groups is equivalent to being 20 years older than chronological age in terms of health care and outcomes, what recent assessment he has made of the steps needed to tackle racial health inequalities.

Jo Churchill:

The Minister for Equalities (Kemi Badenoch MP) is leading cross Government work to tackle COVID-19 disparities experienced by ethnic minority groups. The second quarterly report was published on 26 February 2021. Action to address broader health inequalities will be informed by the work of the independent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities. The Commission is currently finalising its report, which will be submitted to the Prime Minister on 10 March.

■ Honey: Imports

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[157152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 February 2021 to Question 149773 on Honey: Sales, how many checks were made on imports of honey to ensure their equivalence with UK food production standards in each of the last five years; and on how many occasions imported honey products were found to not meet UK standards.

Jo Churchill:

In the five years from 2016-2020 there were 6,720 consignments of honey imported into the United Kingdom from non-European Union countries totalling 212,043,339 kilograms in weight. The following table provides a summary of the number of checks undertaken on consignments of imported honey between 2016-2020 and the number found to be unsatisfactory.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total number of documentary checks	1,270	1,420	1,382	1,371	1,277
Number of documentary checks found to be unsatisfactory	26	41	31	44	43
Total number of identity checks	1,264	1,419	1,379	1,366	1,275
Number of identity checks found to be unsatisfactory	8	13	18	21	24
Total number of physical checks	636	659	680	644	272
Number of physical checks found to be unsatisfactory	2	1	5	6	5

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total number of samples taken	89	118	105	99	49
Number of samples found to be unsatisfactory	1	4	1	6	1

■ Hospitals: Construction

Mr David Jones:

[\[148739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to name one of the 40 new hospitals to be constructed by 2030 in memory of the late Sir Tom Moore.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: The Government is considering ways to mark the memory of Captain Sir Tom Moore.

■ In Vitro Fertilisation

Jim Shannon:

[\[154572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many women have had IVF treatment in each of the last three years; and in how many of those cases was the treatment successful.

Helen Whately:

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) have advised that the last three years that full data is available, including outcomes of in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment, are 2016-2018. The following table shows the number of patients having IVF treatment and the number of successful cycles.

YEAR OF TREATMENT	PATIENT COUNT	CYCLES	LIVE BIRTHS
2016	51,219	68,064	19,122
2017	52,157	69,733	19,978
2018	51,165	69,137	19,604

Source: HFEA

Note:

The data is as shown on the HFEA's register on 12 December 2020. This is a live database, so these figures reflect the data on this day and are likely to change over time.

■ In Vitro Fertilisation: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[158954]

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 the provision of IVF services in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 March 2021]: All fertility clinics were able to re-open from May 2020, provided that they could demonstrate to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) that they could offer a safe service for patients and clinic staff during the ongoing pandemic. The HFEA has advised that, as of 31 January 2021, a small number of clinics have been affected by staff redeployment and other COVID-19 related issues. This has resulted in less than 10% of clinics either temporarily suspending services, re-prioritising activity, or working with other local clinics to ensure patient treatment is not affected.

HFEA provides information for patients showing the full list of clinics which have been authorised to resume treatment, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.hfea.gov.uk/treatments/covid-19-and-fertility-treatment/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-patients/>

The HFEA has advised that activity figures for Coventry and West Midlands are broadly consistent with the average England activity figures.

■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Coronavirus

Bob Blackman:

[141967]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that effective treatment continues for patients with (a) Crohn's disease and (b) ulcerative colitis during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021 and the reintroduction of shielding guidance.

Edward Argar:

Providers have been rolling out remote consultations using video, telephone, email and text message services as a priority, including for those with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

■ Laboratories

Rachael Maskell:

[155197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to ensure that the healthcare science infrastructure being built through the lighthouse

laboratories and megalabs announced by his Department is fully utilised after the demand for covid-19 testing has reduced.

Helen Whately:

We continuously review our laboratory requirements as the pandemic progresses to ensure we have sufficient capacity.

The new Leamington Spa laboratory will in the immediate term be dedicated to COVID-19 testing for the National Testing Programme, working alongside the network of Lighthouse Laboratories and partnerships with public, private and academic sector laboratories. The long term plan for this laboratory is that it forms a part of the United Kingdom's diagnostic capability.

■ **Laboratories: Accountability**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[155193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the lines of accountability are within the NHS Test and Trace structure for the megalabs announced by his Department.

Helen Whately:

The NHS Test and Trace Senior Responsible Owner for the Leamington Spa laboratory is Head of Laboratories, Dame Anna Dominiczak, who reports to the Director of Testing Operations Mark Hewlett. Consideration is being given to the longer term structural placement of this laboratory in the context of the future of Test and Trace, National Institute for Health Protection and NHS England.

We have paused development work on the second laboratory in Scotland until we have further detailed projections on long-term testing demand.

■ **Laboratories: Contracts**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[155191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which organisations have been identified to run the new megalabs announced by his Department in November 2020 based in (a) Leamington Spa, Warwickshire and (b) Glasgow.

Helen Whately:

The construction of the laboratory in Leamington Spa is underway and will start processing tests from spring 2021. We have paused development work on the laboratory in Scotland until we have further detailed projections on long-term testing demand.

The Leamington Spa laboratory will be run by the Department, which will hold supply contracts for resourcing, equipment, machinery, facilities and waste management.

■ Laboratories: Finance**Rachael Maskell:**[\[155194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the operating budget is in the financial year (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22 for each of the megalabs announced by his Department.

Helen Whately:

This information is not currently available as the contracts for these laboratories are yet to be published.

■ Laboratories: Leamington Spa**Matt Western:**[\[159004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what contracts his Department has signed with private companies relating to the running of a new high throughput laboratory in Leamington Spa.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 March 2021]: The Royal Leamington Spa laboratory will be run by the Department which will hold supply contracts for resourcing, equipment, machinery, facilities and waste management. These contracts will be published on the Governments Contract Finder website.

■ Medacs Healthcare: Coronavirus**Fleur Anderson:**[\[155419\]](#)

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

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: A range of Government officials conducted the negotiations for the contracts awarded to Medacs.

■ Mental Health Services: Coronavirus**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[157231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the cross-Government group of Ministers established to consider and respond to the longer-term mental health effects of the pandemic will set out its plans; and whether its proposals will be publicly funded.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government will publish an action plan setting out further measures to respond to and mitigate the impacts on mental health across the population in due course.

■ Migrants: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[154904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the effect of no regular social security income for people who have no recourse to public funds on the likelihood of those people (a) requesting a covid-19 test as per Government advice and (b) self-isolating due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

We introduced the Test and Trace Support Payment (TTSP) scheme to support those where financial concerns can make it difficult to self-isolate.

We continue to work closely with the 314 local authorities in England to monitor the efficacy and payments made under the TTSP scheme. The discretionary element of TTSP is specifically designed to address the needs of people on low incomes, including those with no recourse to public funds, who need financial support for self-isolation and to encourage greater uptake of testing and to undertake self-isolation. We have provided an additional £20 million a month to extend the current scheme beyond 31 March into the summer.

■ NHS: Medical Records

Tony Lloyd:

[\[151624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in what circumstances NHS patient information is transferred outside of the NHS; what the protocols are for the transfer of such (a) aggregate anonymised and (b) personal information; what steps are taken to supervise such transfers of information (i) in general, (ii) to a private sector company and (iii) to an entity outside of UK legal jurisdiction.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: Confidential patient information is not transferred outside of the National Health Service unless there are strong legitimate and appropriate reasons to do so. Aggregated data may be made publicly available by organisations through their publication schemes as required under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Any data transfer to the public or private sector, inside or outside the United Kingdom, aggregated or personal information, is subject to strict process and procedure and the legal obligations set out in privacy legislation including the Data Protection Act 2018 and the obligations set out by the National Data Guardian and the Common Law Duty of Confidentiality. In addition, from 1 January 2021, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) applies in the UK in place of the GDPR.

Any use of NHS data that is not already in the public domain must have an explicit aim to improve the health and wellbeing of citizens or to improve how the NHS operates. This would include, for instance, research by universities, clinical audits and clinical trials by pharmaceutical companies.

■ NHS: Parking

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[148735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to provide NHS staff with free parking for the duration of the covid-19 pandemic.

Edward Argar:

Free car parking for National Health Service staff was announced on 25 March 2020 for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. This remains the Government's position and funding has been provided to trusts to support this commitment.

■ NHS: Waiting Lists

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[148790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the median waiting time is for routine NHS treatment at each NHS trust in England.

Edward Argar:

The latest available data as of November 2020 is attached table.

Attachments:

1. Median Waiting Times [PQ148790 TABLE .docx]

■ Nurses: Students

Hilary Benn:

[\[133715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether student nurses on placement will receive covid-19 vaccinations alongside other NHS employees.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Frontline health and care staff are at high risk of acquiring COVID-19 infection and of transmitting that infection to multiple persons who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 as well as to other staff in a healthcare environment. They have been prioritised in the first phase. Staff working on the COVID-19 vaccination programme, temporary staff, students, trainees and volunteers who are working with patients are included within the priority group of frontline healthcare workers.

■ Pain: Health Services

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[\[148067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the equitable geographic distribution of provision of pain management services in England.

Edward Argar:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ Pharmacy: Protective Clothing**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[157057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether pharmacy staff are required to wear a face covering while serving customers.

Jo Churchill:

The Face Covering Regulations require that workers in retail, hospitality and leisure venues wear a face covering where they come or are likely to come into contact with members of the public. Pharmacies are included in these requirements so both staff and members of the public must wear a face covering.

■ Plastic Surgery: Regulation**Sir Desmond Swayne:** [\[156992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to regulate providers in the aesthetic industry.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Cosmetic surgery may only be performed by doctors registered with the General Medical Council and providers are required to register with the Care Quality Commission. The Department is working with stakeholders to assess the need for strengthened safeguards around the regulation of providers who offer some of the more invasive non-surgical cosmetic procedures.

■ Radox Laboratories: Coronavirus**Rachel Reeves:** [\[154554\]](#)

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

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: A range of Government officials conducted the negotiations for the contracts awarded to Radox.

■ Test and Trace Support Payment**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[141586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of not extending the Test and Trace Support Payment to low-income parents or guardians of children who have been identified by their school as being in close contact with someone who has tested positive for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: The Government keeps all elements of its COVID-19 response under review, including the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. We continue to listen to feedback from charities and support groups. We are

working closely with the 314 local authorities in England to monitor the effectiveness of the scheme, including the potential impact on groups who are ineligible to claim.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum: Housing

Apsana Begum:

[159051]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many locations are housing asylum seekers under section 98 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 in (a) Poplar and Limehouse constituency, (b) Tower Hamlets and (c) London.

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 break down of numbers of asylum seekers accommodated under Section 98 for each local authority area. These figures are not available in a reportable format and to provide the information could only be done at disproportionate cost.

■ Dogs: Theft

Marsha De Cordova:

[157271]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of (a) the increase in dog theft and (b) the introduction of harsher punishment for that crime.

Kit Malthouse:

There are no published figures on pet or dog theft. The theft of a pet is a criminal offence under the Theft Act 1968 and carries a maximum penalty of seven years' imprisonment. The Sentencing Council's guidelines on theft now take account of the emotional distress on the victim caused by any theft offence, including theft of a pet, meaning that the courts will now take this into account when considering the appropriate sentence.

■ Exploitation: Children

Ms Lyn Brown:

[157983]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of creating a statutory definition of child criminal exploitation, in terms of improving (a) sentencing, (b) probation management in the community, (c)

rehabilitation in custody and (d) resettlement and probation support after release from custody.

Victoria Atkins:

This Government is determined to tackle Child Criminal Exploitation in all its forms. Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is already defined in statutory guidance for frontline practitioners working with children. Specifically, this includes the Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance.

The definition used in these pieces of statutory guidance is consistent with the definition of CCE in the Serious Violence Strategy, the Home Office County Lines Guidance, the Ministry of Justice County Lines Exploitation Practice Guidance for YOTs and frontline practitioners and the Home Office Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit.

More widely, the Home Office is working across Government to ensure police and partners make full use of the powers and tools available to tackle county lines and associated child criminal exploitation and to ensure these ruthless criminals face the full force of the law.

■ **Female Genital Mutilation**

Sarah Champion:

[\[157139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to FORWARD UK's February 2021 report entitled Do No Harm: Lived Experiences and Impacts of FGM Safeguarding Policies and Procedures, if the Government will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the safeguarding approach for FGM in the UK.

Victoria Atkins:

FGM is a crime and it is child abuse. We will not tolerate a practice that can cause extreme and lifelong physical and psychological suffering to women and girls.

The Government significantly strengthened the law in 2015 to improve protections for victims and those at risk. This included the introduction of a new safeguarding measure which compels certain professionals to report if they have encountered someone who appears to have been a victim of FGM and who is under the age of 18, regardless of what community they are from.

We are committed to ensuring that professionals take the right action to help protect those at risk of FGM and the Government provides free resources, including a resource pack, e-learning, statutory multi-agency guidance and a range of communication materials to ensure that they have the training and guidance they need to provide effective advice and support on this issue. Our Statement Opposing FGM is available in 11 different languages.

The Home Office has recently awarded emergency Covid-19 funding to charities which have so-called 'honour'-based abuse (which includes FGM) as the main or a core part of their remit, including £42,269 to The Vavengers, which supports survivors of FGM.

Over 600 FGM Protection Orders have been issued by the courts since they were introduced in 2015.

■ **Home Office: Written Questions**

Sarah Jones:

[\[159353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons a response has not been provided to Question 123677, tabled by the hon. Member for Croydon Central on 1 December 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

With apologies for the delay, Question 123677 has now been responded to.

■ **Maira Shahbaz**

Sir Edward Leigh:

[\[158852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's policy is on a potential offer of asylum to Maira Shahbaz.

Chris Philp:

I am not able to provide specific information with regards to Maira Shahbaz's case as it is a longstanding Government policy not to comment on individual cases. Departing from this policy may put individuals and their family members in danger.

The UK has a proud record of providing protection for people who need it, in accordance with our obligations under the Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights. However, there is no provision within our Immigration Rules for someone to be allowed to travel to the UK to seek asylum or temporary refuge.

Whilst we sympathise with people in many difficult situations around the world, we are not bound to consider asylum claims from the very large numbers of people overseas who might like to come here. Those who need international protection should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach – that is the fastest route to safety.

The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from religious minorities in Pakistan. Our concerns about such cases, as well as Freedom of Religion or Belief, women and girls' rights and gender equality more broadly, are regularly raised with the Government of Pakistan.

■ **Mother and Baby Units: Glasgow**

Alison Thewliss:

[\[157191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the consultation process was for opening the mother and baby unit at 100 Pollokshaws Road, Glasgow.

Alison Thewliss: [\[157192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which organisations were consulted and what the consultation process was in advance of opening the mother and baby unit at 100 Pollokshaws Road, Glasgow.

Chris Philp:

The mother and baby unit is a new dedicated facility in Glasgow to support mothers and babies, providing accommodation, along with access to healthcare and other support services, that is purpose designed to best meet their needs.

Mears liaised with Glasgow City Council Health and Social Care Partnership and the local Asylum Health Bridging Team on the development and implementation of the unit, who are fully supportive of this proposal. This was considered via the Glasgow Partnership Board and the Regional Delivery and Procurement Group, which were established for such joint working and communication purposes.

Alison Thewliss: [\[157193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions Mears had with the Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership before opening the mother and baby unit at 100 Pollokshaws Road, Glasgow.

Chris Philp:

The mother and baby unit is a new dedicated facility in Glasgow to support mothers and babies, providing accommodation, along with access to healthcare and other support services, that is purpose designed to best meet their needs.

Mears liaised with Glasgow City Council Health and Social Care Partnership and the local Asylum Health Bridging Team on the development and implementation of the unit, who are fully supportive of this proposal. This was considered via the Glasgow Partnership Board and the Regional Delivery and Procurement Group, which were established for such joint working and communication purposes.

■ Nitrous Oxide: Misuse

Alexander Stafford: [\[159066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle the illegal online sale of nitrous oxide for recreational consumption.

Alexander Stafford: [\[159067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions her Department has had with representatives from (a) Amazon and (b) Facebook on the recreational consumption of nitrous oxide sold on their online marketplace and community forum platforms.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government takes the supply of substances for their psychoactive effect very seriously. There are legitimate uses for nitrous oxide, such as in medicine, dentistry and as a propellant for whipped cream canisters, but those who supply nitrous oxide

who know, or who are reckless as to whether, it will be used for its psychoactive effect may be subject to a maximum sentence of seven years' imprisonment, an unlimited fine, or both under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

There have been no recent discussions with Amazon or Facebook regarding sales of nitrous oxide for recreational consumption. However, government guidance is available on the gov.uk website to all retailers to satisfy themselves that they comply with the law. The guidance recommends that retailers, including those operating online, should pay particular attention to the potential for abuse of nitrous oxide, especially where customers seek to buy in bulk or large volumes, and suggests that retailers may wish to carry out age checks to prevent those at highest risk from gaining access to psychoactive substances.

With regard to the online sale of nitrous oxide, in the Queen's Speech on 19 December 2019, the Government committed to develop legislation to improve internet safety for all. We have published the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation, which sets out the new expectations on companies to keep their users safe online. The new regulatory framework will establish a duty of care on companies to improve the safety of their users online, overseen and enforced by an independent regulator. The Full Government Response will be followed by legislation, which we are working on at pace, and will be ready this year.

■ Personal Names

Sarah Champion:

[\[157135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what mechanisms are in place to ensure that people who are required by law to notify local authorities or police of a change of name make that notification.

Victoria Atkins:

Tough checks and a range of legislative measures are available to the police to manage and monitor known sex offenders living in the community.

Under existing legislation (part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003) registered sex offenders are required to inform their offender manager of any change in circumstances, including a change of name. They must do this annually or whenever their details change. A failure to notify the police of a change of name can lead to the offender receiving a further conviction and a prison sentence of up to five years.

The Home Office will continue to work with the police, the courts and the Disclosure and Barring Service to ensure these mechanisms are robust and we will take all necessary steps to make sure the public is kept safe.

■ Pets: Theft

Neil O'Brien:

[\[159026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many pet thefts were reported in each year since 2008.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects information from police forces in England on Wales on offences covered by the notifiable offence list. Whilst pet thefts are covered by the notifiable offence list, it is not possible to separately identify these crimes from others in the wider offence category of theft offences.

Police: Disciplinary Proceedings

Dr Luke Evans: [\[159044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of aligning the time limit for professional investigations of police officers with the time limit for police investigations of suspected criminals.

Kit Malthouse:

In February 2020, the Government introduced a package of reforms to strengthen the police discipline system and help speed up proceedings, including the introduction of a 12-month trigger on police discipline investigations which requires the investigating body - whether the IOPC or a Professional Standards Department in a police force - to provide a written explanation for the delays, the planned steps to bring the investigation to a conclusion and the estimated completion date. This is sent to the local policing body.

There are no plans to align the time limits for investigations into police officers with investigations of suspected criminals.

Police: Per Capita Costs

Sarah Jones: [\[123677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 27 June 2017 to Question 581 on Police: Per Capita Costs, what recent estimate she has made of the average annual cost to a police authority of employing a (a) police officer and (b) police community support officer; and what estimate she has made of that cost in each year from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

Kit Malthouse:

The salary scales as recommended by the Police Remuneration and Review Body for England and Wales from 1st September 2020 are set out in the [Police Remuneration Review Body \(PRRB\) 6th report](#) under Annex D.

Roads: Antisocial Behaviour and Speed Limits

Stephanie Peacock: [\[157245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle (a) speeding and (b) anti-social behaviour on roads.

Stephanie Peacock:[\[157246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the police are adequately resourced to tackle (a) speeding and (b) anti-social behaviour on roads.

Kit Malthouse:

Excess speed is still a major cause of death and serious injury on our roads. Anyone who breaks the speed limit should expect to face proper sanction.

The enforcement of speeding offences and anti-social behaviour on roads is an operational matter for the police. It is for chief officers to decide how to prioritise enforcement in accordance with local priorities and demand and their PCC's police and crime plan.

On 4 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.

Decisions regarding the number of officers and how they are deployed are a matter for Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables.

■ Stalking**Stephanie Peacock:**[\[157244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to strengthen legislation to improve protections for victims of stalking and their families.

Victoria Atkins:

Stalking is a terrible, insidious crime that can have a devastating impact on victims' wellbeing. This Government is committed to protecting and supporting victims and is determined to do everything we can to stop perpetrators at the earliest opportunity.

The Government has significantly strengthened the law to improve protection for victims of stalking. In 2012 we created two stalking offences to highlight stalking as a specific behaviour and through the Policing and Crime Act 2017 the maximum sentence for the offence of stalking involving fear of violence or serious alarm or distress was raised from five to ten years' imprisonment.

In January 2020 we introduced new civil Stalking Protection Orders. These enable early police intervention, pre-conviction, to address stalking behaviours before they become deep-rooted or escalate. Stalking Protection Orders can be used in relation to any type of stalking and have the flexibility to impose both restrictions and positive requirements on the perpetrator. A breach of this order has a criminal penalty, carrying a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment.

■ Violence Reduction Unit: Finance

Sarah Jones: [\[159354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the earliest date is that police forces can expect to receive 2021-22 Violence Reduction Unit allocations.

Sarah Jones: [\[159355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what dates police forces received Violence Reduction Unit allocations in previous years.

Kit Malthouse:

Programme level Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) funding was initially announced in April 2019. Police and Crime Commissioners were then advised in August of the individual amounts that they, working in partnership with other VRU representatives, would be eligible to apply for. The date at which individual VRU awards were confirmed varied, as this was dependent on successful completion of an application process and individual agreement of grant agreements. The following year (20/21), programme level VRU funding and the amounts that Violence Reduction Unit partnerships would be eligible to apply for via Police and Crime Commissioners was confirmed in December 2019. Again, the date at which individual VRU awards were confirmed varied, as this was dependent on successful completion of an application process and individual agreement of grant agreements. Programme level funding for 21/22 was announced in February 2021 and, as in previous years, the funding will be dependent on successful completion of an application process and individual agreement of grant agreements. Officials are in touch with the VRUs in relation to the applications for the 2021/22 funding round. We expect that the information on the applications will be shared in the near future. The applications will be accompanied by bespoke support from the Home Office, in order to enable VRUs to provide the strongest possible application.

■ Visas

Alison Thewliss: [\[157190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to reintroduce premium priority visa services.

Kevin Foster:

Priority and Super Priority Visa services are already available in some locations overseas. If available, customers are able to purchase these services when booking an appointment at a visa application centre.

Priority and Super Priority Visas services have been reinstated in the UK for most in-country work and study routes, including applications for Indefinite Leave to Remain. It is anticipated Priority and Super Priority Visa services for Marriage and Settlement routes will be open by the end of March 2021.

All other in-country immigration application routes will continue to offer a standard service at this time.

■ Windrush Lessons Learned Review

Tim Farron:

[157994]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Government's response to recommendation 17 of the Windrush Lessons Learned Review as set out in the Comprehensive Improvement Plan, whether the ethical decision making model has been produced.

Priti Patel:

A draft ethical decision-making model has been produced and this is now being tested with different teams across the Home Office.

Neil Coyle:

[158072]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 5 October 2020 to Question 96770 on Windrush Lessons Learned Review, if she will publish a progress report on that full evaluation of the compliant environment policy and measures.

Priti Patel:

Transparency and engagement will remain at the heart of our approach to the evaluation of the compliant environment. I can confirm we intend to publish a progress report on the evaluation at a suitable juncture.

As set out in the Comprehensive Improvement Plan initial analysis of data and evidence on the compliant environment will be completed by Autumn 2021. We are expecting the evaluation of the right to rent scheme to be completed by Summer 2021.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund

Thangam Debbonaire:

[159326]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to registrations to the Building Safety Fund, if he will provide a breakdown of pre-tender support allocated under that fund.

Christopher Pincher:

The amount of funding for pre-tender support allocated from the Building Safety Fund so far can be found in the Building Safety Fund Registration Statistics, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-registration-statistics>. The amount allocated to each individual project, and how that will be used, will vary according to each project's needs. Pre-tender support is limited to 10 per cent of the estimated cost of work. More information on pre-tender support is available in the Building Safety Fund Application Guidance at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#fund-application-guidance>.

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[\[158846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government funding for remediation combustible cladding includes the remediation of (a) combustible insulation, (b) wooden timber balconies and (c) other non-cladding related building safety defects.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government's existing funding schemes are providing £1.6 billion to remove and replace unsafe cladding systems from high rise residential buildings. This is because unsafe cladding acts as an accelerant to fire spread, and funding will remove the biggest obstacle to remediation proceeding. Eligible items covered by funding includes works directly related to the replacement of the unsafe cladding system. Detailed information on eligible items can be found in the relevant prospectus for each fund, available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/building-safety-programme.

Works which are not directly related to the remediation of unsafe cladding systems will not be covered by public funding. Non-cladding defects are therefore not included unless they are integral to the cladding. 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. We will publish more details on how the additional £3.5 billion funding for the removal of unsafe cladding announced on 10 February will work alongside existing funds as soon as possible.

■ Evictions and Homelessness: Coronavirus

Ian Lavery:

[\[157111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will (a) make it his policy to abolish no-fault evictions and (b) take further steps to prevent homelessness as a result of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the economy.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government remains committed to abolishing Section 21 through a Renters' Reform Bill, which will enhance renters' security. However, our collective efforts are currently focused on responding to the coronavirus outbreak.

Repealing Section 21 represents the largest change to renting in 30 years and it is only right that the reforms are taken forward in a considered manner. The Government's consultation '*A New Deal for Renting: Resetting the Balance of Rights and Responsibilities Between Landlords and Tenants*' sought views on the best way to provide tenants with greater security, but also ensure that landlords are able to recover their properties where they have valid reasons to do so. This balance is vital to ensuring the future supply of good quality housing in the rented sector. We will bring forward a Renters Reform Bill to implement the reforms at the appropriate time, once the urgencies of responding to the pandemic have passed.

We've taken unprecedented action to prevent people getting into financial hardship by helping businesses to pay salaries, with the furlough scheme, and boosted the welfare safety net by billions of pounds. Local housing allowance rates (LHA) have been increased to the 30th percentile of local market rents in each area, which will be retained next year, even in areas where rents have gone down. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available to those who require additional support, and the Government will make available £140 million in DHP funding for 2021-22.

To further tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, the Government will be spending over £750 million next year, further demonstrating the Government's commitment to end rough sleeping and fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act. This includes the £310 million Homelessness Prevention Grant, an increase of £47 million compared to this year. This funding will help local authorities to manage homelessness pressures and enable investment in homelessness prevention.

■ Funerals: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:

[\[157319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure local authorities (a) adhere to the Government's public health funeral guidelines and (b) publish their policy and contact details online.

Luke Hall:

My Department published non-statutory public health funeral guidance on September 16 2020. This was developed following feedback from some local authorities that they would value information on good practice and suggested guidelines which they could draw upon to inform their local policies.

This guidance is non-statutory therefore it does not create any new requirements local authorities must adhere to. The guidance suggests that publishing a written policy on public health funerals on their website, which can be accessed in a range of formats and languages, could be a helpful approach for local authorities to take so that the public are aware of the local arrangements for public health funerals.

■ Housing and Public Sector

Mike Amesbury:

[\[159357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to respond to the consultation, Supporting housing delivery and public service infrastructure, which closed on 28 January 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

The consultation closed on 28 January. We are currently considering the responses received and will make further announcements as soon as possible.

■ Housing: Construction**Karin Smyth:** [\[158973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on improving consumer protection in the residential building industry.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to improving consumer protection for residents across the housing market, including the residential building industry. This includes ensuring that the New Homes Ombudsman is established and developers are required to belong to it. Last year we published the draft Building Safety Bill which included provision for the New Homes Ombudsman. This will require developers to belong to the New Homes Ombudsman and provide better protection for new build homebuyers. We will bring forward legislation when Parliamentary time allows. Alongside introducing legislation, we continue to stay in touch with the industry-led New Homes Quality Board to consider the appointment of a voluntary New Homes Ombudsman scheme and produce a developers code of practice.

■ Housing: Insulation**Rushanara Ali:** [\[159309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to ensure that people living in homes with unsafe cladding are not excluded from access to insurance cover.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department is aware that obtaining affordable building insurance for some multi storey, multi occupied buildings can be challenging. The Department is working with industry to understand this better and to scope out potential resolutions.

■ Local Government: Coronavirus**Ian Lavery:** [\[157114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will allocate funding in Budget 2021 to local authorities to cover costs and funding shortfalls incurred as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

The Government has allocated over £8 billion directly to councils since the start of the pandemic. According to our monthly financial monitoring returns estimated expenditure pressures for the financial year are £7.3 billion. Furthermore, the Chancellor already took action at the Spending Review to provide local authorities with over £3 billion of additional support for COVID-19 in 2021-22, taking total COVID support to over £11 billion.

■ Planning Permission

Sarah Olney:

[\[159347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will extend unimplemented planning permissions which will or have expired after January 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

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

■ Service Charges: Research

Justin Madders:

[\[157189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research's findings on leasehold and freehold charges commenced in 2018 will be published.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government believes that service charges should be transparent and communicated effectively, and that there should be a clear route to challenge or redress if things go wrong.

The Government commissioned Cambridge University to produce research on service charges as well as establishing an independent working group, chaired by Lord Best, to raise professionalism and standards across the property agent sector, which also considered how fees such as service charges should be presented to consumers. The working group published its final report to Government and we are considering the report's recommendations, alongside Cambridge University's report.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Kate Hollern:

[\[159322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what methodology his Department used to calculate the £1.5 billion per year that will be required for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to match EU Structural Funds; and if he will publish that calculation.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK for people and places. Funding for the UKSPF will ramp up so that total domestic UK-wide funding will at least match receipts from EU structural funds, on average reaching around £1.5 billion per year. Its funding profile will be set out at the next Spending Review. £1.5 billion is the average annual investment from EU

Structural Funds (including ERDF, ESF and ETC) over the previous EU funding round.

■ **UK Shared Prosperity Fund: European Social Fund**

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[157159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what transitional funding and support he is providing to cover the period between the Shared Prosperity Fund being implemented and the end of the European Social Fund.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK for places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers.

To help local areas prepare over 2021/22 for introduction of the UKSPF, we will provide additional UK funding to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches. Further details will be published soon.

■ **Waking Watch Relief Fund**

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[159330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many applications to the waking watch fund have been (a) received and (b) approved as at 26 February 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

The Waking Watch Relief Fund opened on 31 January for all buildings with the exception of private sector buildings located in Greater London.

Local authorities in Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle and Sheffield are responsible for administering the Fund for buildings located in their respective areas. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority is responsible for administering the fund for buildings located in Greater Manchester. MHCLG is responsible for administering the Fund for buildings in all other areas, except Greater London, and for all social sector applications regardless of location.

Information on the number of applications received will be published as soon as possible.

The Greater London Authority will be administering the Fund in Greater London, subject to a Mayoral Decision. The Fund will open to applications from eligible private sector buildings in Greater London on 18 March.

■ **Woodhouse Colliery: Carbon Emissions**

Marsha De Cordova: [\[157268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of reopening the Woodhouse coal mine

in Cumbria on the UK's commitment to achieving net zero; and whether there are plans to offset that mine's carbon emissions.

Christopher Pincher:

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

JUSTICE

■ Deed Poll

Sarah Champion:

[\[157133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what legal status is granted to non-enrolled deed poll; and which Government agencies recognise non-enrolled deed poll changes.

Chris Philp:

It is a well-established right within the common law of England and Wales that an individual may change their given or family name freely, for example by marriage. If a person uses a new name and becomes known by that name, the name is considered legally altered.

Whilst there are no legal formalities needed to change one's name, many organisations will require some form of proof that the change has occurred. This proof might take various forms; however, in practice, many people prove their name change by signing an unenrolled change of name deed. If this deed is properly prepared and executed it is a legally valid document and is usually sufficient evidence of the name change for all purposes, including applications to Government agencies.

A name change made to deceive or defraud another person or organisation, such as the Probation Service or Police, is not legally valid and constitutes a serious criminal offence.

Sarah Champion:

[\[157134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how a non-enrolled deed poll change is verified and by whom.

Chris Philp:

All changes of name made by unenrolled deed must be executed following the stipulated requirements of a formal deed in order to be legally valid. This includes being signed in the presence of an independent witness who must then attest the signature to verify the person's intent. In most cases, no further authentication of the deed is necessary for it to take legal effect.

There are, however, circumstances in which change of name deeds are subject to greater scrutiny. Persons with any existing or pending criminal proceedings against them, on licence or under probation, or on the Sex Offender's Register, are obliged to notify relevant authorities of any name change within the timeframe prescribed by law for them to do so. Failure to comply with these measures can result in a criminal conviction and prison sentence.

■ Mental Health Act 2007

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[157167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of including adults with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in the Criminal Justice System in the White Paper on reforms of the Mental Health Act.

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[157170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate his Department has made of the number of adults in the criminal justice system with suspected or diagnosed attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Lucy Frazer:

The latest published data suggests that 28% of offenders (48,349) had a learning difficulty or challenge (LDC), out of 170,710 offenders in custody and the community with a Layer 3 (full) Offender Assessment System (OASys) assessment from June 2018.

As set out in our Sentencing White Paper 'A Smarter Approach to Sentencing', we want to improve awareness of neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice System (CJS), provide staff with the confidence and knowledge to better support neurodivergent individuals, and support them to engage meaningfully with the rehabilitative aspect of their sentence.

To support this work, in December 2020, MoJ launched an Independent Call for Evidence on neurodiversity in the CJS. This will enable us to obtain a clearer picture of prevalence including those with ADHD, and how we can better support them in future to realise better outcomes.

NHS England's Liaison and Diversion Services (L&D) operate at police stations and courts to identify people who have vulnerabilities, including neurodisability, when they first come into contact with the criminal justice system, as well as at point of sentence. We are working very closely with health partners and will share the relevant findings of the Call for Evidence with them.

The provision of healthcare – including screening for ADHD and treatment - across the secure estate falls under commissioning by NHS England/Improvement and NHS Wales. All people in prisons receive an early health assessment within the first 24 hours of entry. The initial assessment is fully comprehensive to ensure that all of the physical and health needs of an individual are identified and addressed at an early stage.

Where a person's mental health condition is of a nature or degree that warrants hospital detention the Mental Health Act 1983 (MHA) provides powers for the court or the Justice Secretary to divert the individual away from the criminal justice system to hospital for assessment and/or treatment.

The recently published White Paper, *Reforming the Mental Health Act*, sets out proposals to improve provision for those in the criminal justice system with serious

mental disorder. The White Paper does not specifically address the position of those with ADHD within the criminal justice system, but all those within the criminal justice system currently detained or eligible for detention under the Mental Health Act will benefit equally from these reforms, regardless of diagnosis.

■ Prisoners' Release

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[157060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's announcement of 29 January, £70 million to keep prison leavers off the streets and cut crime, which prisons will receive funding for support to enable quicker access to accommodation, healthcare and employment support services as they are released; and how much each prison will receive.

Lucy Frazer:

Sixteen prisons will receive additional education focused resource to support employment outcomes, or resource to enable quicker access for prison leavers to accommodation, healthcare, or employment support services on release. Prisons have initially been grouped to lead on specific themes:

Employment & Accommodation

HMP Bullingdon

HMP Elmley

HMP Forest Bank

HMP Kirkham

HMP Leeds

HMP Norwich

HMP Risley

HMP Wandsworth

Substance Misuse

HMP Durham

HMP Guys Marsh

HMP Stocken

Education

HMP Bristol

HMP Lincoln

HMP Swaleside

Employment, Accommodation, Substance Misuse & Education

HMP Berwyn

HMP New Hall

We will be investing up to £4m worth of funding over 2021/22, spread across these prisons. This is in addition to the minimum of £20 million investment in supporting prison leavers at risk of homelessness into temporary basic accommodation for up to 12 weeks, giving them the foundation for a crime-free life. Launching in five of the 12 National Probation Service regions, it will support around 3,000 offenders in its first year. While there, offenders will get help to find a permanent home so there is less reason for them to turn back to crime.

■ Prisoners' Release: Temporary Accommodation

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[157058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's announcement of 29 January, £70 million to keep prison leavers off the streets and cut crime, which probation regions will receive funding to support prison leavers at risk of homelessness into temporary basic accommodation for up to 12 weeks; and how much funding each region will receive.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[157059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's announcement of 29 January, £70 million to keep prison leavers off the streets and cut crime, over what period the additional support for prison leavers at risk of homelessness to access temporary basic accommodation for up to 12 weeks will be available for each of the probation regions included in the pilot.

Lucy Frazer:

The five probation regions contained in the announcement were the North West; Yorkshire and the Humber; East of England; Greater Manchester and Kent, Surrey and Sussex.

Funding will be allocated according to the number of people we forecast being released homeless in each area and will reflect the learning gathered from both the Covid-19 emergency scheme, and the offender accommodation pilot.

Individuals released from prison will be provided up to 12 weeks of temporary accommodation and will be supported into long-term settled accommodation before the end of that 12-week period. This service will be in operation for the next financial year and will commence in Summer 2021. Spending Review 2021 will set out the approach for future years.

■ Prisoners: Coronavirus

Sarah Champion: [\[157131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners have tested positive for covid-19 in (a) HMP Askham Grange, (b) HMP Bronzefield, (c) HMP Downview, (d) HMP Drake Hall, (e) HMP East Sutton Park, (f) HMP Eastwood Park, (g) HMP Foston Hall, (h)

HMP Low Newton, (j) HMP New Hall, (k) HMP Peterborough, (l) HMP Send and (m) HMP Styal since 23 March 2020.

Sarah Champion:

[\[157132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners have died as a result of covid-19 in (a) HMP Askham Grange, (b) HMP Bronzefield, (c) HMP Downview, (d) HMP Drake Hall, (e) HMP East Sutton Park, (f) HMP Eastwood Park, (g) HMP Foston Hall, (h) HMP Low Newton, (j) HMP New Hall, (k) HMP Peterborough, (l) HMP Send and (m) HMP Styal since 23 March 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

We have strict safety measures in place to limit the spread of the virus. This means prisons and probation services are well prepared to take immediate action whenever cases or suspected cases are identified. Our decisive action prevented thousands of prisoners and staff becoming infected with the virus. These included minimising movement between prisons and introducing measures to shield the vulnerable, isolate those with symptoms, and quarantine new entrants to custody. All our actions have been informed by the advice of experts from PHE and will be kept under constant review.

Recognising the unique environment in prisons, we routinely test staff and prisoners to bolster our defences against the virus, and conduct mass testing in outbreak sites – meaning we can identify more cases, isolate them earlier and move quickly to contain outbreaks and protect the NHS.

The table below shows figures for the period 23 March 2020 to 31 January 2021, the most recent verified data for the listed prisons. Where values of positive cases of two or fewer are present they have been suppressed (~) in order to prevent disclosure of personal information.

PRISON	NUMBER OF POSITIVE COVID CASES	NUMBER OF PRISONER DEATHS RELATED TO COVID-19
HMP Askham Grange	~	0
HMP Bronzefield	44	0
HMP Downview	11	0
HMP Drake Hall	76	0
HMP East Sutton Park	33	0
HMP Eastwood Park	53	0
HMP Foston Hall	25	1
HMP Low Newton	109	1
HMP New Hall	10	1

PRISON	NUMBER OF POSITIVE COVID CASES	NUMBER OF PRISONER DEATHS RELATED TO COVID-19
HMP Peterborough (Male /Female)	12/~	0/0
HMP Send	54	0
HMP Styal	135	0

Although care is taken when processing and analysing the returns, the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system. Much of the data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic has been done at pace, with recording practices evolving as we understand more about the requirements and conditions we are facing.

■ Prisons: Coronavirus

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[157160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many routine covid-19 tests of front-line staff and prisoners across the justice estate including the private prison estate have been conducted since 6 November 2020; what the average wait time has been to receive results for those tests; and how many results have been positive.

Alex Chalk:

The safety of our staff and those in our care remains our top priority. We are doing all that we can to protect and support those who are more vulnerable to Covid-19, whether this be through age or an underlying health condition.

We are now routinely testing staff and prisoners to bolster our defences against the virus – meaning we can identify and isolate cases earlier and move quickly to contain outbreaks and protect local NHS. Alongside the measures we have put in place since March, regular testing will ensure we continue to limit the spread of the virus and save lives.

Following recommendations from PHE, staff who work in prisons are regularly tested and prisoners are tested on reception and at transfer points.

The information on the number of routine tests conducted is based on returns provided from each prison establishment. Therefore, the following data is subject to change.

Testing totals since November 2020

Routine Testing of Staff – 228,854

Routine Testing of Prisoners - 53,857

Positive results from routine testing since November 2020

Staff – 449

Prisoners – 484

The current average wait time is 48 hours for the return of test results. This is expected to reduce with the recent introduction of lateral flow devices.

Data provided will not align with routine data that is published in the [monthly service user](#) publication, which includes prisoners and children in custody and the [HMPPS Workforce stats](#) which includes data for the whole of HMPPS staff - not just frontline prison staff.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[157161]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department has taken to protect the safety of (a) frontline workers in the justice sector and (b) prisoners during the covid-19 outbreak.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government is very clear that our frontline staff are vital key workers, and they are going above and beyond the call of duty to keep the public, their colleagues, and service users safe. While we rightly celebrate our heroes in the NHS during this challenging period, our hidden heroes in the justice sector understandably can sometimes feel forgotten, and we extend our gratitude to all our leaders and staff for their bravery and dedication to public service.

The safety of our staff and service users remains our top priority. We are doing all that we can to be flexible and to support those who are more vulnerable to Covid-19, whether this be through age or an underlying health condition.

We continue to work with DHSC and the Welsh Government, to ensure that appropriate testing is made available to court, prison, and probation staff, to those service users in our care, and to those within our buildings.

In the prison system we continue to manage the risk to establishments through the use of cohorting and compartmentalisation, routine staff testing, and testing prisoners on both reception and transfer. Social distancing and basic hygiene are also used to reduce transmission and we continue to provide access to cleaning and hygiene products in prisons. We are following the public health advice on the use of medical face masks alongside other items of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where close contact is sustained, essential and unavoidable. We also continue to operate reduced regimes, specifically designed with PHE, to reduce contact and support social distancing in prisons.

Probation staff and service users are already able to access testing as needed if they display any COVID-19 symptoms, and this will link them into the NHS Test and Trace system if they test positive. We will continue to work with DHSC and Welsh Government, to ensure that appropriate testing is made available to probation staff and service users. We have introduced regular asymptomatic testing of staff and residents in Approved Premises to limit the spread of the virus and protect the local NHS, and are rolling out lateral flow testing to all of our staff who cannot work from home.

In courts, we are spending £113m on a range of emergency measures to tackle the impact of COVID-19, and £142m to improve court and tribunal buildings and roll out new technology. This has enabled remote hearings where possible, and safety controls in every building for cases that need physical hearings. Safety controls include limitations on the number of people on sit, plexiglass screens, face coverings, and regular cleaning, to name just a few. Everything we do is kept under regular review and we continue to work closely with public health colleagues as part of that effort.

■ Prisons: Crime

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[\[158036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to reduce crime in prisons.

Lucy Frazer:

Reducing crime in prisons is a key priority for the Ministry of Justice. In August 2019 we committed to spend £100m on prison security, and we are delivering on this commitment. This includes X-ray body scanners which have been installed in 40 prisons across England and Wales. These detect drugs and contraband that fuel crime in prisons and their use has already prevented over 2,300 illegal items from entering our prisons. This investment will also strengthen staff resilience to corruption and target organised criminals who seek to exploit prisons as a lucrative market.

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service also works closely with law enforcement agencies so that crimes committed in prison are dealt with effectively. In May 2019, a Crime in Prisons Referral Agreement was published jointly with the National Police Chiefs' Council and the Crown Prosecution Service to help achieve an improved and consistent performance in the investigation and prosecution of offences in a custodial setting.

■ Prisons: Modernisation

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[\[158037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to modernise prisons.

Lucy Frazer:

Providing safe, decent, and secure prisons is a key priority for the Government. We are taking a number of steps to modernise our prisons, including building new prison places and increasing our investment in refurbishment and maintenance to upgrade the existing estate.

As announced at the spending review, we have committed over £4 billion capital funding to make significant progress in delivering 18,000 additional prison places across England and Wales by the mid-2020s, and £315m to improve the prison estate. These 18,000 prison places include 10,000 places being made available through the construction of four new prisons; the expansion of a further four prisons;

refurbishment of the existing prison estate and the completion of our ongoing prison builds at Glen Parva and HMP Five Wells.

Digital technologies will also contribute to the Government's modernisation of prisons. Access to modern, robust technology is a vital part of current prison design. During the pandemic, HMPPS delivered unprecedented digital innovation through the rollout of secure video call technology into every single prison in the male, female and youth estate, with 124,000 calls made as of 22nd February 2021. We are committed to expanding the use of digital technology in the existing estate and future prisons, including in-cell technology for prisoners.

■ Undertakers

Fleur Anderson: [\[157320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the publication of the Competition and Markets Authority's final report in its funerals market investigation, published in December 2020, when the Government plans to introduce the registration and inspection regime for funeral directors recommended by the CMA.

Fleur Anderson: [\[158224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to help reduce the cost of services provided by funeral companies.

Alex Chalk:

The Competition and Market's Authority have completed a comprehensive investigation into the funeral market. The government is carefully considering the recommendations made in the final report and will be issuing a response shortly.

In regard to the cost of funeral services; the Competition and Market's Authority are continuing to look at pricing controls and will commence their monitoring programme soon. Additionally, the Government helps with the cost of funeral services for many bereaved families through the funeral expenses payment scheme and the Children's Funeral Fund.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

James Daly: [\[912618\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to strengthen Northern Ireland's place in the UK.

Selaine Saxby: [\[912623\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to strengthen the Union.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government places great importance on the Union, and Northern Ireland's integral place within it. We are using Northern Ireland's centenary to promote

Northern Ireland on the world stage and showcase the contribution of its people, places and products to our United Kingdom.

We have just signed Heads of Terms for the Derry-Londonderry City Deal, which includes a £105m UK Government investment, showing our commitment to levelling up across the UK.

In addition to the £2bn we have committed through New Decade New Approach, we have supported the Executive with £3.3bn to tackle Coronavirus. The £400m New Deal for Northern Ireland will boost economic growth, supporting businesses across Northern Ireland to invest.

We will continue working tirelessly for our family of nations, ensuring it is a Union of people that works for everyone.

Andrew Bowie:

[\[912619\]](#)

What plans his Department has to mark the centenary of Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

Northern Ireland's centenary is an anniversary of profound significance, providing an important opportunity to facilitate national recognition and international awareness. It is also the centenary of the United Kingdom as we know it today and hence of importance to every part of our country.

It presents a unique opportunity to boost the economy as we promote Northern Ireland as an attractive place to live, visit and do business.

We have provided £3m of funding to mark the centenary, including a £1m Shared History Fund to support the engagement of a wide range of arts, heritage and community groups. We will be sharing further details of our centenary plans over the coming weeks.

TRANSPORT

■ Bicycles: Hire Services

Darren Jones:

[\[157260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the report published by his Department in July 2020 entitled Gear Change, whether he plans to bring forward proposals to fund cycle hire schemes in cities outside London; and what steps his Department is taking to solve the last-mile problem to enable low-carbon multi-modal journeys.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

On 28 July 2020 the Prime Minister launched ambitious plans to boost cycling and walking. This included a £2 billion five-year package of funding for active travel, the bulk of which will go to local authorities across England to support schemes, including potentially cycle hire schemes, in their areas.

The Spending Review in November confirmed that £257 million of dedicated funding would be made available next financial year to support cycling and walking schemes. Further details about how this funding will be allocated will be announced in due course. Decisions on how best to support low-carbon last-mile journeys in their areas are matters for local highway and planning authorities.

■ Cycling and Walking

Darren Jones:

[\[157258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his Department's report Gear Change, a bold vision for cycling and walking, when he plans open applications for local authorities to bid for funding to become (a) mini-Hollands and (b) zero-emission cities.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Funding for, and announcements on, long-term commitments in Gear Change, including for 'mini-Hollands' and zero-emission cities, is subject to the forthcoming multi-year Spending Review, expected later this year. Decisions on how local authorities will be able to register interest in taking part in the selection process, and how the selection will be made, will be announced in due course.

Darren Jones:

[\[157259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his July 2020 report entitled Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking, what assessment he has made of the (a) minimum acceptable and (b) ideal width of a segregated cycle lane.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Alongside the Gear Change plan, the Department published updated cycle infrastructure design guidance for local authorities to improve the quality, accessibility and safety of local cycle infrastructure schemes. The updated guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120> and it includes detailed advice on both of these points.

■ Electric Vehicles: Sales

Daisy Cooper:

[\[159367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on developing a sustainable long-term solution to incentivise consumer purchase of new electric vehicles beyond the existing Plug in Vehicle Grants.

Rachel Maclean:

I have regular conversations with a range of colleagues on increasing the uptake of electric vehicles in the UK. We will continue to consider the long-term need for consumer incentives for the uptake of electric vehicles as the market develops, taking account both of the need to support that market and to ensure taxpayer value for money. We will continue to support industry and consumers to make the switch to cleaner vehicles and publish a clear delivery plan in 2021.

Between July to September 2020 59,738 Ultra Low Emission Vehicles were registered for the first time in the United Kingdom, an increase of 162% on the same period in 2019 and 265% on the same period in 2018.

■ Harbours Act 1964

Kelly Tolhurst:

[\[158982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to amend the Harbours Act 1964 in light of the changing demands on UK ports.

Robert Courts:

The Government has no current plans to amend the Harbours Act 1964, but will keep the port regulatory regime under review to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

■ Motor Vehicles

Daisy Cooper:

[\[159369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the ability of car manufacturers to (a) produce and (b) import the required number of vehicles to satisfy consumer demand and meet the Government's 2030 phase out date for petrol and diesel vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

Consumer demand for zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) is growing. In 2019 the UK was the third largest market for ultra-low emission vehicles in Europe and last year 1 in 10 cars that were sold came with a plug. There is a global momentum towards ZEVs and the automotive industry is investing billions into new technology over the next 5 to 10 years. A number of vehicle manufacturers have made ambitious commitments to electrify their vehicle production which will result in greater consumer choice of ZEVs across a number of price points over the next decade. The UK is already well placed at the forefront of this with our ambitious phase out dates and a strong package of supporting measures in place. The Government is working closely with vehicle manufacturers to further develop the UK's supply chain for Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs). We are investing nearly £500 million of funding for the Automotive Transformation Fund, as part of a wider commitment of up to £1 billion to develop UK supply chains for the large-scale production of BEVs and to support further R&D in the UK. This will protect existing jobs and support thousands more high-quality jobs across the UK. We are working both in the UK and overseas on the opportunity of attracting foreign direct investment in to the UK BEV supply chain.

■ Motor Vehicles: Testing

Paul Maynard:

[\[158898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to permit owners of (a) motor homes and (b) other leisure vehicles to be allowed to take them to workshops to carry out MOT tests.

Rachel Maclean:

All motorists are currently permitted to attend garages and MOT test centres for the purposes of obtaining an MOT test and other essential repairs to their vehicle.

■ **Motorcycles: Training****Kerry McCarthy:**[\[159254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many compulsory basic training tests have expired since 23 March 2020.

Kerry McCarthy:[\[159255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many compulsory basic training tests have been undertaken since 23 March 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) certificates are issued by motorcycle Approved Training Bodies (ATB) to successful candidates and are valid for two years. There is no means of establishing the number of CBT tests that have been undertaken since 23 March 2020.

■ **Motorways****Jim McMahon:**[\[159343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 24 February 2021 to Question 154650, how many (a) Traffic Officers and (b) control room staff across Highways England's regional operations have responsibility for managing the SRN, including the All Lane Running sections in each of the last five years.

Rachel Maclean:

The table below provides an annual breakdown of Full Time Equivalent (FTE), on-road Highways England Traffic Officers as of 31 March, each year. The current data is the number of FTE Traffic Officers as of 31 January 2021:

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	CURRENT	
Traffic Officer FTE	864	850	884	958	929	890	

Pursuant to the Answer to Question 154650, the figure of 1091 provided included Traffic officers and their supervisors, on a headcount basis.

The table below provides an annual breakdown of FTE control room staff as of 31 March each year. Control room staff roles comprise control room operators of the regional operations and control centres.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	CURRENT	
Control Room	311	308	336	373	365	382	

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	CURRENT
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FTE

■ Motorways: Safety

Darren Henry:

[\[158227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that smart motorways maintain the same safety standards as conventional motorways.

Rachel Maclean:

The Secretary of State has committed £500 million to deliver smart motorway safety improvements across the strategic road network (SRN), delivered by Highways England through an 18-point Action Plan published in March 2020. The Action Plan includes the faster rollout of a radar-based, stopped vehicle detection (SVD) system across the all lane running motorway network, and a national and targeted communications campaigns to further increase awareness and understanding.

The Secretary of State has asked for a one-year on report from Highways England setting out progress in delivering the 18-point Action Plan and identifying actions that can be delivered early. He has asked for the report by 12 March 2021 so any accelerated works can be rapidly put in place.

■ Port Infrastructure Fund

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[158875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he made of the effect of reducing allocations to successful applicants to the Port Infrastructure Fund by 34 per cent.

Robert Courts:

Several options for distributing the £200M fund were fully considered, ranging from fully-funding a few projects at selected ports to significantly funding as many projects as possible. The latter was chosen as the most beneficial, appropriate and fair option. All successful projects were awarded unprecedented levels of Government funding for ports infrastructure, all given as grants.

The greatest effect of this approach is providing a far greater quantity of ports throughout Britain with funding assistance than otherwise would have been possible. In normal circumstances, ports would be expected to fund such facilities themselves.

■ Ports: Fees and Charges

Kelly Tolhurst:

[\[158978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to reduce port charges in the UK.

Robert Courts:

The Government has no current plans to make changes to the charges levied by port operators.

Regional Airports: Coronavirus**Gavin Newlands:**[\[158963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the economic effect of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) regional airports and (b) the Government's levelling up agenda.

Robert Courts:

The Government recognises the challenges faced by the aviation sector at this time. The Government is committed to maintaining critical connectivity and through policies like Public Service Obligations the Department for Transport subsidises routes into London.

We have also taken action to support airports through the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS). This opened for applications on 29 January to provide support for eligible commercial airports and ground handlers in England. It will provide support up to the equivalent of their business rates liabilities or COVID-19 losses – whichever is lower – in the 2020/21 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £8m.

The Government is keen to find ways to work closely with the industry to ease restrictions on international travel gradually and sustainably. The Secretary of State for Transport will lead a successor to the Global Travel Taskforce to develop a framework that can facilitate greater travel when the time is right, while still managing the risk from imported cases and variants.

Roundabouts: Redbridge**Wes Streeting:**[\[158140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Transport for London on (a) safety and (b) congestion around the A406 junction with Redbridge Roundabout.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department speaks regularly with Transport for London on a range of issues. The A406 is part of Transport for London's Road Network, so they are responsible for management of the road.

Taxis**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[158172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 16 February 2021 to Question 151802, what recent meetings his Department has had with the (a) taxi and private hire vehicle sector and (b) Licensed Private Hire Car Association.

Rachel Maclean:

Department for Transport officials have recently held two meetings with taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) stakeholders, including the Licensed Private Hire Car Association. These meetings took place on 28 January and 5 February. They focused on issues the taxi and PHV sector is encountering in the context of the pandemic and how these might be addressed.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus****Daisy Cooper:**[\[157306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Government's roadmap on easing lockdown restrictions announced on 22 February 2021, whether the Government plans to provide access to cost-effective covid-19 testing for (a) travel operators and (b) their customers in advance of international travel being permitted under the provisions of that roadmap.

Robert Courts:

The Government recognises the challenging times facing the aviation sector as a result of COVID-19 and is committed to tackling this virus while enabling a sustainable and responsible return to travel.

Travel operators can already benefit from access to rapid asymptomatic workforce testing. DHSC currently provide funding for businesses with more than 50 employees who cannot work from home. This funding has recently been extended to the end of June and covers guidance, training and test kits.

An online portal has also been launched to make it even easier for businesses in the private sector to get involved and find out more about offering rapid testing to their workforce. Organisations who are considering participation should register their interest on the portal before 31 March.

The Government will keep this under review as vaccine deployment continues and will investigate how asymptomatic testing could be used to support the recovery.

Although we understand that some travel is essential, most travel is undertaken by choice. It therefore would not be right to use public money to subsidise testing for travel. However, we expect the cost of tests to decrease in future as testing technology advances and the market expands.

TREASURY■ **Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties****Mark Menzies:**[\[158914\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the rate of Alcohol Duty on spirits on the growth of small distilleries.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government keeps alcohol duties under review and the impact of spirits duty is considered carefully at each fiscal event, including its effects on small producers. The Government is also reviewing small producer reliefs more generally through its alcohol duty review. Further information on the progress of the review will be provided in due course

Liz Twist:[\[159007\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many meetings he has had with representatives (a) of the alcohol industry and (b) from public health organisations to discuss alcohol duty in the last six months.

Liz Twist:[\[159008\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many meetings Ministers in his Department have had on alcohol duty with representatives of the (a) alcohol industry and (b) public health organisations in each of the last six months.

Liz Twist:[\[159010\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many meetings officials in his Department have had on alcohol duty with representatives of the (a) alcohol industry and (b) public health organisations in each of the last six months.

Kemi Badenoch:

Treasury Ministers and officials regularly meet with representatives of the alcohol industry, and public health stakeholders, to discuss alcohol duty and related issues, including the health impacts of alcohol as part of the process of policy development and delivery.

Details of ministerial and permanent secretary meetings with external organisations on departmental business are published on a quarterly basis and are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmt-ministers-meetings-hospitality-gifts-and-overseas-travel>

Kenny MacAskill:[\[159037\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with his Department on the public health benefits of (a) setting alcohol duty at a level that covers the estimated costs of alcohol to society and (b) introducing scaled taxation for alcohol whereby stronger alcohol products are taxed more per unit of alcohol than lower strength products.

Kemi Badenoch:

Protecting against alcohol-related harms remains a key objective of the alcohol duty system. However, it is not the sole consideration and any duty changes must be assessed within the wider economic and business context.

The Treasury is considering the merits of various taxation methods as part of its alcohol duty review. We remain in the early stages of analysis and further updates will be provided in due course.

■ Buildings: Insulation**Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[159328\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 153293, on Buildings: Insulation, what additional funding the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish governments will receive through the Barnett formula as a result of the £3.5 billion announced on 10 February 2021 for the removal of unsafe cladding on buildings over 18 metres.

Steve Barclay:

The Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government made an oral statement to the House of Commons on building safety on 10 February 2021.

The Barnett formula is applied to changes in departmental funding. Therefore, the level of Barnett will be confirmed at future fiscal events and spending reviews when there are changes to the level of funding for MHCLG.

■ Construction: VAT**Dr Lisa Cameron:** [\[157175\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to support small and medium-sized businesses in the construction industry through the changes required as a result of the implementation of VAT reverse charge.

Jesse Norman:

The Government recognised that the introduction of the reverse charge will have an impact on cashflow for some affected businesses in the construction sector, and provided a long lead in time. The measure has also been delayed twice to allow businesses more time to prepare and also in recognition of the impact of COVID-19. HMRC have published guidance on reducing cash flow impacts and have written to affected businesses on three occasions signposting where to obtain information and outlining the steps they need to take to prepare.

More broadly, the Government has provided a very substantial level of support to business through the various COVID-19 schemes.

All businesses and self-employed people in financial distress and with outstanding tax liabilities may be eligible to receive support with their tax affairs through HMRC's Payment Support service.

■ Electric Vehicles: Sales**Daisy Cooper:** [\[159368\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of developing (a) a bonus-malus or grant scheme, (b) 0 per cent or reduced VAT rate on new electric vehicles and (c) other sustainable long-term solutions to replace the existing Plug in Vehicle Grants to incentivise consumer purchase of those vehicles.

Jesse Norman:

The Government already provides 'Plug-in Grants' for zero emission cars and ultra-low emission vans, motorcycles and taxis, which provide a discount on the cost of a new vehicle, reducing the price paid by the consumer. At the Spending Review 2020, the Chancellor confirmed £582m to extend these grants to 2022/2023.

VAT makes a significant contribution towards the public finances, raising about £130 billion in 2019/20, and helps fund the Government's priorities including the NHS, schools, and defence. Any loss in tax revenue would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, increased borrowing or increased taxation elsewhere.

■ Electric Vehicles: VAT**Matt Western:****[159001]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing (a) a bonus-malus or grant scheme and (b) zero per cent or reduced VAT rate on new electric vehicles to incentivise consumer purchase of those vehicles.

Kemi Badenoch:

The government already provides 'Plug-in Grants' for zero emission cars and ultra-low emission vans, motorcycles and taxis, which provide a discount on the cost of a new vehicle, reducing the price paid by the consumer. At the Spending Review 2020, the Chancellor confirmed £582m to extend these grants to 2022/2023.

With regards to VAT on electric vehicles, VAT makes a significant contribution towards the public finances, raising around £130 billion in 2019/20, and helps fund the Government's priorities including the NHS, schools, and defence. Any loss in tax revenue would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, increased borrowing or increased taxation elsewhere.

■ Exports: EU Countries**Wera Hobhouse:****[157238]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what guidance his Department plans to issue for businesses exporting to the EU with reference to the rate of import tax their customers would need to pay.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC provided extensive and updated GOV.UK guidance on customs processes for the end of the transition period. HMRC continue to work with business stakeholders, listening to their feedback, to develop new content on high priority topics.

The Government has published a digital tool to help exporters check duties and customs procedures for exporting goods: <https://www.gov.uk/check-duties-customs-exporting>. Import and export procedures in EU countries are the responsibility of the tax and customs authorities in those countries. Businesses and individuals should confirm the processes at their port of arrival. More information can be found at: https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/home_en.

Foreign Companies: France**Darren Jones:** [\[157261\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support his Department can provide to UK-based, French-owned companies who no longer benefit from French research and development tax credits for UK-based work.

Jesse Norman:

Firms within the charge to UK corporation tax, which undertake qualifying R&D, may be able to claim R&D tax reliefs via the Research and Development Expenditure Credit (RDEC) or the Small and medium sized enterprises (SME) R&D Relief.

Combined, these reliefs provided £5.1 billion of support to nearly 60,000 businesses in 2017-18.

Gambling: VAT**Mary Glendon:** [\[159298\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many businesses in the gaming, gambling and leisure industries that applied to reclaim VAT, following the Upper Tribunals decision in favour of Rank and Done Bros in 2020, have yet to receive a refund on the tax.

Jesse Norman:

144 businesses have received a refund. In addition, 157 claims have been rejected as invalid, and 474 are in the process of validation.

London Capital and Finance: Insolvency**Justin Madders:** [\[157188\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment has been made of potential similarities between the investment schemes marketed by Ready2Invest Limited and the collapse of London Capital & Finance Plc.

John Glen:

This is a matter for the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), which is operationally independent from Government. The question has been passed on to the FCA. The FCA will reply directly to the honourable Member by letter. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

National Minimum Wage (Offshore Employment) (Amendment) Order 2020**Mike Kane:** [\[159321\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many complaints he has received in respect of non-compliance with the National Minimum Wage (Offshore Employment) (Amendment) Order 2020 since its introduction on 1 October 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is determined that everyone who is entitled to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) receives it.

Consequences for not complying with paying the NMW can include fines of 200% of the arrears, public naming and, for the worst offences, criminal prosecution.

HMRC have received no complaints in respect of non-compliance with the National Minimum Wage (Offshore Employment) (Amendment) Order 2020 since its introduction on 1 October 2020.

HMRC are undertaking a range of activities to highlight the change in the law to workers who are likely to be affected by it. HMRC have sent letters to employers across the UK to communicate the change in the law and are producing a series of multi-lingual leaflets to be distributed to workers to encourage them to come forward and make a complaint, if they think they have not been paid at least the National Minimum Wage.

■ **Non-domestic Rates: Empty Property**

Jane Hunt:

[\[157330\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the criteria for business rates relief for empty properties beyond three months when there has been a change of ownership.

Jesse Norman:

The Government maintains an Empty Property Relief (EPR) to support property owners between the reoccupation of vacated premises. The current structure of EPR strikes a balance between not penalising landlords who lose a tenant at short notice, while incentivising property owners and landlords to secure new tenants.

The fundamental review of business rates is considering all parts of the business rates system, including reliefs and any eligibility criteria.

■ **Revenue and Customs: Tax Avoidance**

Neil Coyle:

[\[158948\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what responsibilities the most senior contractors who used the loan charge scheme had while they were engaged at Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and Revenue and Customs Digital Technology Services.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC's legal duty to maintain taxpayer confidentiality means they are unable to disclose information relating to identifiable taxpayers. The information requested could potentially lead to the identification of individual taxpayers.

■ **Sports: Vat Zero Rating**

Claire Hanna:

[\[159377\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a zero VAT rating for the construction of facilities for community amateur sports clubs.

Jesse Norman:

The Government currently maintains a zero rate of VAT on the construction of certain buildings. This includes buildings that will be used solely for a relevant charitable purpose, intended solely for non-business use and/or as a village hall.

Going further would come at a cost to the Exchequer. Given this, the Government has no current plans to change the VAT treatment of construction.

■ Tax Avoidance**Neil Coyle:**[\[158949\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how his Department determines who the employer is between the promoter and end user client engaged in the loan charge scheme in circumstances where HMRC and Customs Digital Technology Services are also the engagers of a contractor using a loan scheme.

Jesse Norman:

Where a contractor is engaged, the identity of the employer will depend on the facts of the engagement and the tax rules that apply to that engagement. For example, if a contractor is employed by an employment agency or umbrella company, who then supply the contractor to the client organisation, that agency or umbrella company will be the employer.

Conversely, where the Agency legislation applies to an engagement, the first agency in the labour supply chain is usually deemed to be the employer for tax purposes. However, if the contractor is engaged under the current off-payroll working legislation, the person who pays the contractor's intermediary will be the deemed employer for tax purposes. From 6 April 2021, the off-payroll working rules are changing so that the deemed employer will be the party in the labour supply chain who meets the relevant conditions.

Neil Coyle:[\[158951\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the finding of the Independent Loan Charge Review that loans made pre-December 2010 were made before the law was clear, for what reason HMRC has pursued tax from people with pre-2010 open years.

Jesse Norman:

The Independent Loan Charge Review set out that the loan charge should only apply to loans made on, or after, 9 December 2010. However, it also made clear that, for years before this, where there is an enquiry or assessment, HMRC still had the ability to pursue the tax due under the existing rules.

Where there are open enquiries for periods before 9 December 2010, HMRC will resolve these in line with the HMRC Litigation and Settlement Strategy. Closing open enquiries for less than the amount of tax due under the law is not within this Strategy, nor would it be fair to those who have already settled with HMRC on the basis of their full liability, or fair to taxpayers more generally.

■ Tax Avoidance: Bankruptcy

Neil Coyle:

[\[158950\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of how many clients of loan scheme promoters may become bankrupt.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC cannot provide an estimate for the number of people who have used disguised remuneration (DR) loan schemes who have been declared or may become bankrupt. Individuals may be declared bankrupt for many reasons, not necessarily as a direct result of tax liabilities arising from DR scheme use. HMRC are not always the only creditor; some individuals may be declared bankrupt as a result of a non-HMRC debt and some individuals may choose to enter insolvency themselves, based on their overall financial position.

The Government is aware that some unscrupulous promoters continue to sell DR loan schemes. The Government and HMRC remain committed to tackling those who promote tax avoidance schemes. In March 2020, HMRC published their strategy for tackling promoters, which set out HMRC's work to date and outlined how HMRC will continue to take robust action against promoters of tax avoidance.

HMRC only ever consider insolvency as a last resort and encourage taxpayers to get in contact to agree the best way to settle their tax debts. Anyone who is worried about being able to pay what they owe is encouraged to get in touch with HMRC as soon as possible.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Gavin Newlands:

[\[158964\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the financial effect on the Exchequer of reduced income from the travel sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the challenging circumstances facing the travel sector as a result of Covid-19, and firms experiencing difficulties can draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor, including schemes to raise capital, flexibilities with tax bills and the extended furlough scheme.

As set out in the Covid-19 Impact Assessment last November, the Government cannot forecast with confidence the precise impact of specific changes to restrictions, including those on the travel sector, as this will depend on a broad range of factors which are, in many cases, difficult to estimate.

The Treasury does not prepare forecasts for the UK economy and public finances, these are the responsibility of the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). The OBR's latest forecast (March 3) highlighted that

the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the unprecedented fiscal support has caused significant but necessary increase in borrowing and debt.

■ Treasury: Middlesbrough**Andy McDonald:** [\[159318\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether Middlesbrough has been shortlisted as a location for the Treasury North campus.

Andy McDonald: [\[159319\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the (a) terms of reference, (b) criterion applied in the decision-making process, (c) locations and sites being considered and (d) scorings and assessments are of the considered locations for the Treasury North campus.

Kemi Badenoch:

Budget 20 committed to establishing a significant new campus in the north of England focused on economic decision making, which will include teams from HM Treasury, DIT, BEIS and MHCLG. Potential locations for the economic campus in the north of England have been considered against a broad range of criteria. Our aim is to ensure the campus meets Departments' needs and supports the Government's wider levelling up agenda.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Access to Work Programme: Coronavirus****Ruth Jones:** [\[157286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Access to Work fast track assessment process is available to all disabled workers to enable them to work during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the honourable lady to the answer I gave to her to [UIN 134140](#) on 13th January 2021.

■ Access to Work Programme: Job Entry Targeted Support**Ruth Jones:** [\[157282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to integrate the Access to Work fast track assessment process into the Job Entry Targeted Support scheme.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the honourable lady to the answer I gave to the Member for Ceredigion on 30th November 2020 to question [120975](#).

■ Access to Work Programme: Kickstart Scheme

Ruth Jones: [\[157281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to integrate the Access to Work fast track scheme into the Kickstart scheme.

Mims Davies:

I refer my Honourable friend to the answer given for PQ [120974](#).

■ Carer's Allowance: Overpayments

Stephen Timms: [\[156242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have been asked to repay overpayments of carer's allowance in each of the last five years.

Justin Tomlinson:

[Holding answer 25 February 2021]: The number of people asked to repay new overpayments of Carer's Allowance, as referred to Debt Management between April 2016 and January 2021, is set out in the table below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	VOLUME
2016/2017	17.5k
2017/2018	13.0k
2018/2019	37.6k
2019/2020	51.9k
2020/2021 YTD	11.5k
Total	131.5k

■ Children: Maintenance

Navendu Mishra: [\[160841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to redeploy staff to child maintenance and enforcement to improve the service's compliance rate.

Guy Opperman:

There are no current plans to redeploy any department colleagues to the Child Maintenance Service.

However, the Child Maintenance Service are undertaking a range of changes as part of an overall improvement programme that will continue to support increased compliance.

■ Disinfectants

Dame Angela Eagle: [\[151626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether it is her Department's policy that workplaces that remain open during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021 must provide their staff with access to disinfectant products that are tested to the EN 14476 standard for virucidal efficacy.

Dame Angela Eagle: [\[151628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of workplace covid-19 safety guidelines to (a) highlight the importance of surface disinfection and (b) ensure that workplaces are deploying the most suitable surface disinfectant products.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: As each workplace is different, it is for an employer to identify, as part of their risk assessment, how to control COVID-19 transmission. Guidance has been produced by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Public Health England (PHE) and the Health and Safety Executive that gives advice and information to employers on how to do such an assessment and make the workplace COVID-secure.

Frequent surface cleaning is one of several control measures that can be implemented to manage the transmission risk. Guidance from PHE and BEIS advises the use of standard cleaning products for frequently touched surfaces to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Whilst we do not specify particular products, those that have been tested to the EN 14476 standard will be effective against viruses.

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

■ Employment Schemes: Contracts

Seema Malhotra: [\[159317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what information her Department holds on the performance of employment programmes procured via the Dynamic Purchasing System.

Guy Opperman:

Programmes procured through the Dynamic Purchasing System are monitored at a Jobcentre district level against the criteria agreed with the partner organisation as part of the procurement process. This information is discussed at district performance review meetings and is not collated nationally.

■ Employment: Disability

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[157176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data the Government holds on the proportion of disabled workers who are turned down for reasonable adjustments by their employer; and what plans the Government has to use data on the proportion of disabled workers who are turned down for reasonable adjustments by their employer to inform the proposed National Strategy for Disabled People.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave on 03 February to question number [145803](#).

■ Employment: Young People

Seema Malhotra:

[\[159316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the oral evidence of the Minister for Employment to Work and Pensions Committee on 11 February 2021, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleague's on the Prime Minister's announcement of 30 June 2020 of an opportunity guarantee for young people.

Mims Davies:

Department for Work and Pensions' officials work closely with a range of partners including local authorities, key stakeholders and colleagues in other Government Departments (including the Department for Education, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and HM Treasury) to deliver against our shared goal to support young people into employment.

Since September 2020 the DWP Youth Offer has provided wrap-around support for 18-24-year-old claimants in the Intensive Work search regime of Universal Credit. This is through the 13-week Youth Employment Programme, complemented by joined-up local delivery through Youth Hubs and with additional support offered by specialist Youth Employability Coaches for those young people with complex needs. This tailored intervention allows Work Coaches to adapt their approach to suit each claimant's needs.

The Youth Offer is providing a guaranteed foundation of support for young people, ensuring they are able to access the right support, education or training to support their work and career ambitions.

■ Industrial Injuries Advisory Council

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[157255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will publish the criteria it uses to select which recommendations from the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council to implement.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[157256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to publish her Department's responses to future recommendations made by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the honourable member to the answer I gave on 1st February 2021 to Question [143863](#)

■ **Jobcentres: Southend on Sea****David Linden:** [\[159015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 24 February 2021 to Question 155335 on Jobcentres, when she plans to publish details on gov.uk of the temporary Jobcentre site in Southend which was reported to have been confirmed in writing by her Department to the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend East.

Mims Davies:

Information and updates on temporary Jobcentres is currently being developed for GOV.UK, with plans to publish later in March. It should be noted however that, due to commercial sensitivities, information about any temporary Jobcentre can only be published once a lease is signed.

■ **Pension Credit****Dr Lisa Cameron:** [\[157169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that older people are aware of the passported benefits Pension Credit claimants are entitled to.

Guy Opperman:

The Department looks to promote at every opportunity the message that even a small amount of Pension Credit can act as a passport to a wide range of other benefits and services, as we did in the February 2020 nationwide raising awareness campaign. We are currently sending letters to over 11 million pensioners in Great Britain informing them about the increase in their State Pension from April. In order to better promote Pension Credit and encourage eligible pensioners to make a claim, an accompanying leaflet includes specific information about Pension Credit, highlighting that an award of Pension Credit can mean being eligible for other benefits such as Housing Benefit or a free over-75 TV licence.

■ **Pension Credit: Publicity****Daisy Cooper:** [\[157304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much the Government has spent on promoting the uptake of pension credit in each year of the last three years.

Daisy Cooper:**[157305]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish an action plan to increase the number of eligible people applying for pension credit.

Guy Opperman:

DWP continues to use available channels to promote Pension Credit and reach potential recipients, and their family and friends. This includes using proactive press activity and planned social media posts to encourage older people to check if they are eligible by visiting the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website or calling the Freephone claim line 0800 99 1234.

The Department is currently sending letters to over 11 million pensioners in Great Britain informing them about the increase in their State Pension from April. In order to better promote Pension Credit and encourage eligible pensioners to make a claim, the accompanying leaflet includes specific information about Pension Credit, highlighting that an award of Pension Credit can mean being eligible for other benefits such as Housing Benefit or a free over-75 TV licence.

As part of an internal review of communication products, we have also identified improvements in our Pension Credit messaging at other key customer “touchpoints” and are updating the products used to claim Attendance Allowance and Carer’s Allowance accordingly.

We also continue to liaise regularly with stakeholders about ways to encourage take-up of Pension Credit, and working with the BBC on their messaging around free TV licences and Pension Credit through their licensing letters and other channels.

A targeted, pilot campaign in early 2020 was developed to explore the role for advertising beyond that broader promotion. This time limited pilot used advertising in GP surgeries, Post Offices and social media. Activity was curtailed by the early impact of the pandemic. We are continually reviewing the role for paid advertising.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations**Apsana Begum:****[159371]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of extended personal independence payments awards due for review which are set to end before a medical assessment can take place.

Justin Tomlinson:

To ensure continuity of payments to our customers in receipt of PIP [during the coronavirus pandemic], we have extended awards with a review date to ensure that a review can take place before the end of the award.

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[157168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the financial effect of the covid-19 outbreak on people on legacy benefits; and if she will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

Legacy benefits were increased by 1.7% in April 2020 following the Government's announcement to end the benefit freeze and 0.5% this coming year.

We increased the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants, so they now cover the lowest 30% of local rents. This increase, costing almost £1 billion, will mean that 1.5 million households see an increase, on average, of £600 this year. We also increased the additional earnings disregard in Housing Benefit to ensure increases in the maximum rate of the basic element of Working Tax Credit did not impact on a claimant's Housing Benefit award.

We legislated to allow access to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) from day one of a claim for Covid-19 related cases and we have made it easier to access ESA by launching a portal for new style ESA online claims.

It has always been the case that claimants on legacy benefits can make a claim for UC if they believe that they will be better off. There are special arrangements for those in receipt of the Severe Disability Premium, who are now able to make a new claim to UC. Claimants should check their eligibility before applying to UC as legacy benefits will end when they submit their claim and they will not be able to return to them in the future.

From 22nd July 2020, a two-week run on of Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (IR) and Jobseeker's Allowance (IB) is available for all claimants whose claim to UC ends entitlement to these benefits to provide additional support for claimants moving to UC.

■ Social Security Benefits: Mentoring

Seema Malhotra:

[\[158931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the oral evidence of the Minister for Employment at the Work and Pensions Committee on 11 February 2021, how claimants are being supported via virtual mentoring circles; and will she make a statement.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 2 March 2021]: Mentoring Circles are one of the ways we are supporting young people through the Plan for Jobs. Mentoring Circles form part of the wider suite of initiatives available to young people, including the DWP Youth Offer and Kickstart.

Mentoring Circles are employer-led virtual sessions where employment experiences are shared with mentees aged 16 – 24 years old. Alongside receiving practical advice

on their CVs and job applications, participants are given the opportunity to practice interviews and develop employability skills. The sessions also give young people the opportunity to hear from their peers facing similar barriers.

Sessions are accessed via various digital platforms. Steps can be taken via the Flexible Support Fund to facilitate access to virtual sessions for participants requiring additional support to do so.

■ Universal Credit: Housing

Craig Tracey:

[R] [\[155250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the the number of benefit claimants that face a shortfall between their actual rent and the amount for rent included in their universal credit payment; and what assessment she has made of the average size of that shortfall in each region.

Will Quince:

This is published in the supplementary tables available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/universal-credit-statistics-29-april-2013-to-14-january-2021>.

For those that do experience a shortfall, Discretionary Housing Payments are available. Since 2011 we have provided over £1 billion in Discretionary Housing Payment funding, enabling local authorities to support households that need additional help by making financial awards to people experiencing financial difficulty with housing costs who qualify for Housing Benefit or the housing costs element of Universal Credit.

Universal Credit household shortfalls November 2020

	AVERAGE MONTHLY SHORTFALL
East Midlands	£126
East of England	£181
London	£259
North East	£92
North West	£116
Scotland	£114
South East	£194
South West	£142
Wales	£112
West Midlands	£130

	AVERAGE MONTHLY SHORTFALL
Yorkshire and The Humber	£107
Great Britain	£154

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **British Council Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20**

Minister for Asia (Nigel Adams):

[\[HCWS817\]](#)

Copies of the British Council's Annual Report and Accounts for the 2019-20 financial year have been placed in the libraries of both Houses.

The British Council builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. As the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities, it makes a significant contribution to projecting British values overseas and generating soft power for the UK in return. In doing so it makes a lasting difference to the UK's security, prosperity and influence.

The British Council is the world's leading cultural relations organisation, with a reach in 2019-20 of 983 million people. This included 76 million direct interactions, through a presence in over 100 countries.

The Council received £187m grant-in-aid, including £161m ODA, from the FCO in 2019/20.

The Report can also be found at the British Council's website: www.britishcouncil.org.

■ **EEA EFTA Separation Agreement Joint Committee meeting, 18 December 2020**

Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas (Wendy Morton):

[\[HCWS818\]](#)

The EEA EFTA Separation Agreement agreed with Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, protects Citizens' Rights, and includes other separation provisions. These provisions wind down certain arrangements that the UK has with the EEA EFTA States by virtue of their participation in the Single Market and other EU-led initiatives. The Agreement also establishes a Joint Committee whose primary role is to supervise and facilitate the implementation and application of the Agreement, with the power to make decisions. The Joint Committee has a rotating chair, which, when held by the UK, will be chaired by a Minister from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, but may be delegated to officials

The first meeting of the Joint Committee took place on 18 December 2020. The meeting was held by remote means, with the UK holding the rotating chair. All parties reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring the correct and timely implementation of the Citizens' Rights part of the agreement, which protects the rights of EEA EFTA nationals living in the UK and UK nationals living in the EEA EFTA States and the agreement as a whole

Two decisions were adopted by the Joint Committee. The first decision adopted was the Rules of Procedure for the Joint Committee, and the second was on 'triangulation' under

Article 32 of the Agreement. The triangulation provisions ensure that social security coordination rights between the UK, the EU and the EEA EFTA States continue for those in scope of the EEA EFTA Separation Agreement and the Withdrawal Agreement. Corresponding agreements between the EU and the UK, and the EU and the EEA EFTA States were in place by the end of the transition period, thus the Joint Committee was able to set the date from which the triangulation provisions would apply as 1 January 2021. Copies of each of these decisions have been deposited in the House Libraries

The Joint Committee will meet at least annually, with Iceland holding the next rotating chair. The next meeting is expected to take place later in 2021.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Northern Ireland Update

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis): [\[HCWS819\]](#)

As part of the pragmatic and proportionate implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol, the Government is taking several temporary operational steps to avoid disruptive cliff edges as engagement with the EU continues through the Joint Committee. These recognise that appropriate time must be provided for businesses to implement new requirements, and support the effective flow of goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

For supermarkets and their suppliers, as part of the operational plan the UK committed to at the UK-EU Joint Committee on 24 February, the current Scheme for Temporary Agri-food Movements to Northern Ireland (STAMNI) will continue until 1 October. Certification requirements will then be introduced in phases alongside the roll out of the Digital Assistance Scheme.

In addition, further guidance will be provided later this week on parcel movements from Great Britain to Northern Ireland to provide necessary additional time for traders beyond 1 April. Guidance will also be set out to help address practical problems on soil attached to the movement of plants, seeds, bulbs, vegetables and agricultural machinery. And the Government will write to the Northern Ireland Executive to confirm that flexibilities within the Official Controls Regulation 2017/625 are such that no charging regime is required for agri-food goods.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Pensions Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Pensions & Financial Inclusion (Guy Opperman): [\[HCWS816\]](#)

The Pension Schemes Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 11 February. We are now setting out next steps, delivering on the commitment made during the passage of the

Pension Schemes Bill and following extensive engagement since report stage in the House of Commons. The Act will introduce:

- Three new criminal offences, including a sentence of up to seven years in jail for bosses who plunder or run pension schemes into the ground.
- The legislative framework needed to usher in pensions dashboards that will give savers greater control over, and awareness of their pensions.
- The legislative framework to allow Collective Money Purchase pension schemes to operate.
- Powers to require pension schemes to take the Paris Agreement temperature goal into account, and other climate change goals set by Government.
- Strengthened rules around pension transfers to prevent members being misled in relation to transferring their pensions pots.
- Measures to support trustees and employers to improve the way they plan and manage scheme funding over the longer term and enable the Pensions Regulator to take action more effectively to protect members' pensions.

We are now progressing the secondary legislation to ensure the UK's pension system is safer, better and greener. The sequencing of the subsequent legislation will allow for proper consultation, engagement with key stakeholders and further Parliamentary debate, through affirmative procedure where required.

Following our consultation in January 2021 on Climate Change, we will lay these world leading regulations this Summer to come into force ahead of COP26. This will make the UK the first major economy in the world to legislate for, and bring into practice, the recommendations of the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures, ensuring climate change is at the heart of the pensions system.

On the Pensions Regulator's Powers, we will consult on the majority of draft regulations this Spring, and will commence these powers and the criminal offences measures in the Autumn. For the duty to give notices and statements to the Regulator in respect of certain events, we will consult on the draft regulations later this year, for commencement as soon as practical thereafter.

In early Summer we plan to consult on draft regulations for scams and Collective Defined Contribution Schemes, with commencement on the scams measures from early Autumn 2021.

We aim to consult on proposed regulations for the Pensions dashboard later this year and lay draft regulations before Parliament for debate in 2022. Delivery remains on track for 2023 in line with the plans published by the Pensions Dashboards Programme.

On Defined Benefit Scheme Funding, later this year we will consult on draft regulations, following promised engagement with key interested parties, working closely with colleagues at the Pensions Regulator as they develop the revised Funding Code, which will also be subject to a full public consultation.

Both Ministers and Regulators will continue to engage with both Houses of Parliament as these measures progress.