

Daily Report

Monday, 8 March 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 8 March 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:41 P.M., 08 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

■ Aviation: Exhaust Emissions

Seema Malhotra:

[\[162620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support research and innovation to help accelerate progress towards achieving zero-carbon aviation.

Paul Scully:

The Government is supporting the development of future green aviation technologies as part of our £1.95bn Aerospace Technology Institute programme and the £125m Future Flight Challenge.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Chi Onwurah:

[\[162591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding from the public purse has been spent on covid-19 vaccine (a) manufacturing and (b) research and development since 1 March 2020; if he will make a comparative assessment of the adequacy of that funding spent since 1 March 2020 and the £128 million ringfenced for covid-19 vaccine R&D and manufacturing in Budget 2021; and what proportion of that funding ringfenced in Budget 2021 the Government plans to spend on covid-19 vaccine (i) manufacturing (ii) research and development.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The UK was the first country in the world to procure, authorise, and start a vaccination programme using the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines. The Government has secured access to 457 million doses, across eight different vaccine developers. As of 8 March, over 22.2 million individuals have been vaccinated with a first dose.

At the Comprehensive Spending Review 2020, the Government announced it has made available more than £6 billion in total to develop, manufacture, and procure COVID-19 vaccines. Of that, £733 million in 2021-22 was confirmed to purchase successful vaccines and £128 million was confirmed for the research and development (R&D) of vaccines, as well as their manufacture. Further funding may be allocated from COVID-19 reserves as needed.

On R&D, we have allocated:

- £33.6 million for the Human Challenge Programme.
- £20 million to the University of Oxford to fund clinical trials for their COVID-19 vaccine.
- Over £40 million to Imperial College London for the development of their vaccine.

At Budget 2021, the Government announced funding of:

- £28 million to increase the UK's capacity for vaccine testing, support for clinical trials, and to improve the UK's ability to rapidly acquire samples of new variants of COVID-19.
- £22 million for a world-leading study to test the effectiveness of combinations of different COVID-19 vaccines. This will also fund the world's first study assessing the effectiveness of a third dose of vaccine to improve the response against current and future variants of COVID-19.
- A further £5 million on top of a previous £9 million investment in clinical-scale mRNA manufacturing, to create a 'library' of vaccines that will work against COVID-19 variants for possible rapid response deployment.

On manufacturing, the Government has invested over £300 million to secure and scale-up the UK's manufacturing capabilities to be able to respond to the pandemic. This includes:

a) Facilities that have come online:

- £4.7 million for skills training through the Advanced Therapies Skills Training Network, which will be delivered through both virtual and physical centres.
- £8.75 million for the set-up of the rapid deployment facility at Oxford Biomedica in Oxfordshire.
- £65.5 million for the early manufacture of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine.
- Funding for fill and finish through a contract with Wockhardt in Wrexham, North Wales, which is currently providing fill and finish capabilities to the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine.

b) Facilities that will come online later this year, to help provide longer-term UK capacity:

- £93 million to accelerate the completion and expanded role of the Vaccines Manufacturing Innovation Centre in Oxfordshire.
- £127 million for the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult in Braintree, Essex.

In addition to the above, we have also funded the expansion of the Valneva factory in Livingston, Scotland.

■ Debt Relief Orders

Ian Mearns:

[159286]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to increase the financial cap for eligibility for a Debt Relief Order; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing that financial cap to £50,000.

Paul Scully:

The Government has recently consulted on proposals to increase the eligibility criteria for Debt Relief Orders to help more people deal with their financial difficulties and to provide a fresh start. The consultation includes increasing the total amount of debt allowable in a Debt Relief Order. The consultation proposes an increase from the current debt limit of £20,000 to £30,000 but also seeks views on whether a different limit should be implemented. The consultation closed on 26 February 2021 and the Government is currently reviewing the responses.

Ian Mearns:[\[159287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing every three years the Debt Relief Order monetary eligibility criteria to ensure that those criteria are appropriate.

Paul Scully:

No assessment has been made of the potential merits of reviewing the Debt Relief Order monetary eligibility criteria every three years. However, the Government does keep the legislative framework for insolvency under regular review.

■ Digital Technology: Small Businesses**Chi Onwurah:**[\[162593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the proportion of SMEs that will receive funding in each year of the Help to Grow: Digital scheme announced on 3 March 2020; and what the (a) criteria and (b) administration arrangements are for that scheme.

Paul Scully:

Through Help to Grow: Digital, the Government will launch a new online platform this Autumn where businesses can access advice on software that could help them save time and money, and a voucher to reduce the costs of buying that software. Over the next 3 years, 100 000 eligible SMEs could benefit from a voucher providing up to a 50% discount (worth up to £5,000) to adopt approved productivity-enhancing software. The voucher is expected to be available to UK businesses that have more than 5 and fewer than 249 employees and that have been trading for more than 12 months. The programme will launch in Autumn 2021 and eligible businesses are encouraged to register their interest at <https://helptogrow.campaign.gov.uk/>.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Fiona Bruce:**[\[161738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to provide (a) infrastructure and (b) grant funding to local businesses for the provision of on-site electric car charging points in (a) Congleton, (b) Sandbach and (c) England.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government is going further and faster to decarbonise transport by phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, and, from 2035, all new cars and vans must be zero emissions at the tailpipe.

The Government will invest £1.3 billion in accelerating the roll out of charging infrastructure. Businesses, charities and the wider public sector can get grants of up to £350 per socket for installing up to 40 charging sockets for their employees and fleets through our Workplace Charging Scheme. The scheme is demand-led, with 11,000 sockets installed in England and over 13,000 across the UK to date.

The Government will continue to support industry and consumers to make the switch to cleaner vehicles. We will publish a clear delivery plan in 2021.

Energy: Billing**Rushanara Ali:****[159315]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has issued guidance on (a) landlords using energy agents to manage utility bills and (b) the rights of tenants to access information about their own billing costs.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government's How to Rent guide gives some general advice to tenants on paying bills: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent/how-to-rent-the-checklist-for-renting-in-england>.

The How to Let guide (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-let/how-to-let>) gives advice to landlords on bills.

Additionally, our Tenant Fees Act guidance (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/922900/Tenant_Fees_Act_-_Tenant_Guidance.pdf) tells tenants: 'You are responsible for your bills if these are not included within your rent. Landlords must not overcharge tenants if they pay utilities separately from the rent'.

Ofgem's guide for tenants on how to switch energy supplier <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/how-switch-energy-supplier-and-shop-better-deal/how-switch-energy-supplier-if-you-re-tenant> says that:

' Under consumer protection law, if you are a renting a property and are directly responsible for paying the gas and/or electricity bills, you have the right to choose your own energy supplier. Your landlord or letting agent should not unreasonably prevent this'.

'Your landlord has the right to choose your energy supplier only when they are directly responsible for paying for the gas or electricity'.

■ Energy: Meters

Jonathan Edwards:

[159276]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to tackle infrastructure weaknesses that are a barrier to the roll out of smart meters in rural areas.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Second generation smart meters use a dedicated national smart metering communications network, which uses a variety of technologies to deliver connectivity to premises. These include cellular mobile technology plus wireless mesh radio, and long-range radio technology.

The Data Communications Company (DCC), which operates the national communications infrastructure for smart metering, is obligated under the conditions of its licence to provide communications coverage to at least 99.25% of premises across Great Britain.

The DCC is required by its licence conditions to assess opportunities to increase the overall level of coverage beyond its contractual requirements where it is practicable and cost proportionate.

Jonathan Edwards:

[159277]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to introduce an alternative scheme to complement the Smart Export Guarantee to encourage small scale low carbon generation in rural areas.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Smart Export Guarantee is available for low carbon generation situated across all areas of Great Britain, therefore the Government does not consider an alternative rural scheme is necessary.

Jonathan Edwards:

[159278]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of homes classified as rural have installed a smart meter.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Smart meters are replacing traditional gas and electricity meters in Great Britain as part of an essential infrastructure upgrade to make the energy system more efficient and flexible, enabling the cost-effective delivery of net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

The rollout is making good progress, with 22.2 million smart and advanced meters in homes and small businesses across Great Britain, as of the end of September 2020.

Data for smart meter installations is routinely collected at a Great Britain level.

The latest data on the rollout of smart meters is available at:

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

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[162504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has plans to further develop the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme was designed to provide a short-term economic stimulus while tackling our contribution to climate change.

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £320 million for the scheme in the next financial year, as part of funding to make homes and public buildings more energy efficient.

■ Horizon Europe

Chi Onwurah:

[\[162588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to Answer of 16 December 2020 to Question 128674 on Horizon 2020, what plans the Government has for funding continued UK participation in the EU Horizon programme.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK will participate in Horizon Europe as part of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) with the EU. We will pay a fair and appropriate share into the budget of this programme to enable the UK science and research sector to further their partnerships with our European neighbours.

Participating in Horizon Europe will strengthen R&D to build on the UK's world class reputation for research and innovation. It provides exciting opportunities for UK businesses and SMEs to support growth and innovation, working with our international partners. Business organisations and researchers have strongly welcomed us securing this outcome.

We will set out our plans for R&D spend in 2021/22 – including funding for Horizon Europe – when we publish our R&D allocations. This will be done in due course.

■ Life Sciences

Patrick Grady:

[\[162648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish a response to Early Day Motion 256, Accelerating human relevant life sciences in the UK.

Amanda Solloway:

The use of animals in research is carefully regulated and remains important in ensuring new medicines and treatments are safe. At the same time, the Government believes that animals should only be used when there is no practicable alternative and it actively supports and funds the development and dissemination of techniques that replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research (the 3Rs). This is

achieved primarily through funding for the National Centre for the 3Rs, which works nationally and internationally to drive the uptake of 3Rs technologies and ensure that advances in the 3Rs are reflected in policy, practice and regulations on animal research. Across the UK, the NC3Rs has invested £71 million in research through grants to universities, and almost £27 million in contracts through its CRACK IT Challenges innovation scheme to UK and EU-based institutions, mainly focusing on new approaches for the safety assessment of pharmaceuticals and chemicals that reduce the use of animals.

■ Public Houses: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper:

[\[162705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to Cabinet Office's guidance, Reopening businesses and venues in England, published on 24 February 2021, whether pubs opening for outdoor trade at step 2 of the covid-19 reopening roadmap are also permitted to provide outdoor live music performances ancillary to the service of food and drinks.

Paul Scully:

If a pub wishes to provide complementary live music for their seated food and/or drink customers, they can do this outdoors at Step 2. However, if a pub charges for admission, or admits an audience in addition to seated food and/or drink customers, this would be considered to be a live music event, which should only take place at Step 3. Any live music should adhere to safer working guidelines for pubs and restaurants, which includes the need to ensure that background music should be kept at a low volume and that customers should not be singing or dancing.

■ Renewable Energy

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[161783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to support the development of the renewable energy sector.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Achieving our 2050 net zero target will require significant increases in renewable electricity generation, and we will continue to encourage deployment and support the UK sector.

The Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme has been very successful in delivering large-scale renewable generation whilst reducing costs through competitive allocation rounds. The next round will open in late 2021 and aims to deliver up to double the renewable capacity of last year's successful round, potentially providing enough clean energy for up to 10 million homes. The Smart Export Guarantee, which was introduced in January 2020, gives small-scale generators, such as homes with solar panels, the right to be paid for the renewable electricity they export to the grid.

The UK is a major global market for renewables, and we want to harness the wider benefits of this market-leading position in terms of jobs and investment. As well as

supporting the creation of new offshore wind port hub infrastructure, the Government is also eager to strengthen how supply chain plans operate, as signalled in my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's announcement on 6 October. The Government is consulting on new proposals for a revised Supply Chain Plan questionnaire for CfD Applicants to complete. This will form the basis for assessment before an allocation round and ongoing monitoring, review and assessment after CfD signature. This consultation closes on 11 March 2021. The public consultation on proposals to strengthen Supply Chain Plan policy and on changes to the CfD contract has now closed. A government response will be published shortly.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus

Carolyn Harris:

[\[159336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of potential job losses in the wedding industry without additional covid-19 financial support as the sector operates at restricted capacity until 21 June 2021.

Paul Scully:

I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce, established to represent a wide range of interests in the weddings sector [in England], to understand the impact of the pandemic on jobs and businesses.

Over the course of the pandemic the Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support to businesses, including those in the wedding industry, which we keep under regular review. The Chancellor announced in his Budget a raft of new measures to further support businesses, including those in the wedding industry. These include:

- Extension of the Coronavirus Job Support Scheme to the end of September 2021.
- £5 billion for new Restart Grants.
- The Government is also providing all Local Authorities in England with an additional £425 million of discretionary business grant funding, on top of the £1.6 billion already allocated.
- Eligible businesses in hospitality sector will benefit from business rates relief worth over £6 billion in 2021 to 2022.

Carolyn Harris:

[\[159338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that representatives from all sectors of the wedding industry were consulted in the covid-19 reopening plans for that industry.

Paul Scully:

I meet regularly with the industry-led UK Weddings Taskforce, established to represent all parts of the UK Weddings sector [in England], and have received representations from it on the reopening of the wedding receptions and celebrations sector.

In the 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021', the Government has set out how it will continue to protect and support citizens across the UK and has provided a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. This includes a staged return of weddings and civil partnerships: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021>.

■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Alex Cunningham:

[161748]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the outcome of the Crown Estate's Round 4 Offshore Wind Leasing process on the Offshore Wind Sector Deal's target for 60 per cent UK content by 2030 in offshore wind projects on the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS).

Alex Cunningham:

[161749]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Crown Estate's Round 4 Offshore Wind Leasing process on developers' supply chain plans.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government has not made any assessment of the effect of the Crown Estate's Round 4 Offshore Wind Leasing process on either the Offshore Wind Sector Deal's target for 60 per cent UK content by 2030 or on developers' supply chain plans.

It will be a number of years before any projects from this latest leasing round will be preparing a supply chain plan in order to bid into a Contract for Difference Allocation Round. We will work with all developers to see how we can increase UK economic benefit.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Barclays: Proof of Identity

Kirsten Oswald:

[158088]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he last met representatives of Barclays to discuss the closure of the Barclays Identity Service; and if he will make a statement.

Julia Lopez:

Barclays entered into a contract with the Cabinet Office in April 2017 to provide an identity verification service to support GOV.UK Verify. As scheduled, this contract expires on 23rd March 2021. Cabinet Office officials have been in regular contact with Barclays to ensure a good level of service is maintained until the end of their contract.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office have not met Barclays to discuss this contract expiry.

■ Cabinet Office: Flags**Dame Angela Eagle:**[\[161679\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has a policy of supplying union jack flags for use in the background of ministerial television appearances.

Julia Lopez:

The Union Flag is the national flag of the United Kingdom. Departments fly a variety of flags, including as appropriate the Union Flag, the Saltire, the flag of Saint David, as well as any flag of Her Majesty's forces and the Pride flag. Government departments are responsible for procuring their own flags.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Justin Madders:**[\[162632\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the effect of the withdrawal of Public Procurement Note (a) 02/20 and (b) 04/20 on the rate of transmission of covid-19.

Julia Lopez:

From the beginning of the pandemic the Government has taken a number of measures to accelerate payments to suppliers and preserve cash flow. Contracting Authorities can still make their own arrangements for contractual relief if necessary and since October 2020, we have encouraged businesses to consider the raft of financial support available - including the CJRS and loan schemes.

■ Disability Unit: Coronavirus**Kate Osamor:**[\[148858\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the recent Office for National Statistics finding that nearly three in five people who have died from covid-19 were disabled, whether his Department plans to allocate additional resources to the Disability Unit to help minimise the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on disabled people.

Julia Lopez:

The Government is committed to supporting disabled people affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. Government Departments are working to ensure that the needs of disabled people are considered in the UK Government's response to COVID-19. The Government will publish a National Strategy for Disabled People this year taking into account the impacts of the pandemic on disabled people. The strategy will focus on the issues that disabled people say affect them the most in all aspects and phases of life.

The Disability Unit sits in the new Equality Hub in the Cabinet Office, alongside the Government Equalities Office, the Race Disparity Unit and, from 1 April, the sponsorship of, and secretariat to, the Social Mobility Commission. Together they will

be better equipped to drive meaningful progress on equality. The Equality Hub has a particular focus on improving the quality of evidence and data about disparities and the types of barriers different people face, ensuring that fairness is at the heart of everything we do.

■ Government Departments: Contracts

Rachel Reeves:

[\[158019\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to adapt Government procurement strategies as a result of the High Court's recent ruling on contract publication.

Rachel Reeves:

[\[158022\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what voucher schemes the currently advertised £3.3 billion contract relates to.

Julia Lopez:

The Government has a longstanding commitment to the principle of transparency in procurement.

We have recently launched our [Green Paper](#) on transforming the UK's public procurement regulations. The proposals outline specific measures to strengthen transparency throughout the commercial lifecycle and make sure we can have a choice of direct award and more competitive tendering during crises.

The Crown Commercial Service aims to create a framework which will provide an efficient and compliant route to market for public sector bodies for a broad range of voucher schemes. A Prior Information Notice was issued to the market on 29th January 2021 and stakeholder engagement is ongoing, prior to the issuance of a formal contract notice. The maximum potential value of call offs by the public sector is anticipated to be £3.3bn over the lifecycle of this framework agreement.

The framework agreement will not deliver voucher based reward and recognition schemes to employees but will cover a wide range of voucher types, such as to reward and incentivise the general public (i.e. in response to completing surveys) and to provide support to those in times of need or distress.

■ Local Government: Elections

Fleur Anderson:

[\[162707\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to provide large-type accessible postal ballots for people who are partially sighted for the elections in May.

Chloe Smith:

Whilst large print ballot papers can be provided for information, it is not possible for large print ballot papers to be voted on and submitted to the count as this could make it possible to identify who the ballot paper belonged to and thus undermine the

secrecy of the ballot. If electors require documents in accessible formats they should contact their local electoral services office.

The Government is committed to ensuring that elections are accessible for all those eligible to vote and is working with the RNIB to consider options to improve the voting process for blind and partially sighted people.

■ Veterans: Finance

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[162524\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which organisations will be allocated funding from the £10 million announced in Budget 2021 to support veterans.

Chi Onwurah: [\[162601\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to Budget 2021, which departmental budget the £475,000 in funding for the development of a digital and data strategy for armed forces charities will be allocated from.

Johnny Mercer:

This £10million fund will help deliver charitable projects and initiatives across the UK that support veterans with mental health needs. The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, in addition to disbursing their regular funding of £10million per annum, will design and run an open grant competition to award the additional funding to organisations delivering in-scope programmes in support of veterans' mental health.

The £475,000 is new funding representing an opportunity to improve the ability of charities to work together and with government, enhancing the provision of support for veterans and the broader Armed Forces Community. Therefore the additional funds have been allocated to the Office for Veterans' Affairs, within the Cabinet Office.

■ Veterans: Mental Health Services

Stephen Morgan: [\[162683\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much funding the Government allocated to veteran's mental health in 2020-21; and how much it plans to allocate in 2021-22.

Johnny Mercer:

The Government is committed to providing the necessary support for our Veterans. The vast majority of veterans currently access mental health services available to the general population. For veteran specific mental health services, in 2020-2021 NHS England provided £16.5m, which will be increased to £17.8m for 2021-2022, alongside the launch of the new High Intensity Service across England and Op Courage pathway for accessing all veterans' mental health services within NHS England.

Service charities are supported by the Government through the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, which benefits from £10m annually, and in both years an additional £10m has been allocated to support veterans' mental health needs. During 2020, the COVID-19 Impact Fund has provided nearly £6m in grants to over 100 Armed Forces charities across the United Kingdom. Of the charities awarded funding, 68% of grants sampled supported members of the Armed Forces and veterans' community for mental health and crisis support, and 77% for easing isolation and loneliness.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Church Services: Coronavirus

Jim Shannon:

[162605]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment he has made of whether the online broadcasting of services during the covid-19 outbreak has increased the number of people participating in worship.

Andrew Selous:

The Church of England has seen a significant increase in public engagement with its online resources over the pandemic. The National Church Institutions have produced a weekly online Sunday Service in video form since Mothering Sunday 2020, as well as the Daily Hope telephone line, podcasts and apps. The Sunday services have had more than 3.7 million views on Facebook and YouTube. A further 20,000 local online services and events have been listed on www.AChurchNearYou.com over the last year.

2020 saw an increase of almost 50% in downloads of Church of England apps for prayer and worship, with the apps used around 8 million times during this period. The National Institutions have continued to create resources for the major festivals, accessible on its website and social media. The current campaign #LiveLent is designed to take people on a journey of preparation ahead of Easter Day. This follows on from the #ComfortAndJoy resources, which reached millions during Advent and Christmas.

Most cathedrals and a majority of parishes offer a variety of online services and events: weekly services, morning and evening prayer, children and youth projects and social activities. These have helped grow worshipping communities nationally and internationally. Recent evidence has also shown that attendance at traditional Book of Common Prayer services has grown dramatically. More available here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/stories-and-features/book-common-prayer-services-see-huge-numbers-tuning-seeking> Digital services have also improved accessibility for those with disabilities.

Digital services are likely to continue for the time being and these will be different in each parish as clergy respond to local needs and circumstances. Training has been

provided throughout the pandemic to thousands of clergy and laypeople to improve skills and familiarise themselves with the variety of platforms available.

COP26

■ Climate Change: International Cooperation

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[153206\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that communities at highest risk are prioritised for support with climate adaptation programmes during COP26.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[153207\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what recent steps he has taken to engage with countries and communities most at risk of the effect of climate change in the run up to COP26.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[153208\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, how he plans to use the Presidency of COP26 as a global platform to help ensure that the humanitarian effects of climate change are considered when developing and financing responses to the covid-19 pandemic.

Alok Sharma:

At COP26, adaptation and resilience will be a priority. We are calling on countries to agree and put in place delivery mechanisms for adaptation and loss and damage. As COP President Designate, I have engaged personally with over 50 countries. With donors, we have been clear that we must deliver for those that are at the front line of climate change and collectively honour the \$100 billion commitment.

The UK Prime Minister launched an Adaptation Action Coalition (AAC) last month to mobilise action on adaptation and galvanize momentum ahead of COP26 and beyond and we want to encourage all parties to join. In partnership with the existing UNCAS Coalition, this will build on the Call for Action on Adaptation and Resilience to transform political commitments into tangible action on the ground.

We aim to enable action to avert, minimise and address loss and damage through wider resilience building and a specific focus on preparedness and response to natural disasters. This includes: expanding early action financing, improving early warning systems and the capacity to act on the risks they identify, and increasing insurance and social protection coverage, including through the Risk Informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) and other disaster risk reduction initiatives such as InsuResilience.

We are additionally continuing to support the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR), which is an LDC-led, LDC-owned initiative to put in place the long term, locally responsive action that is needed to deliver a climate-resilient future.

■ Forests: Conservation

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[153139\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking to encourage greater international action against deforestation; and if he will make a statement.

Alok Sharma:

The UK Government is fully committed to tackling global deforestation, working in partnership with international governments.

Under our COP26 Presidency we have established the Forests, Agriculture and Commodity Trade (FACT) Dialogue. This aims to agree collaborative actions to reduce the impact of agriculture on tropical forests and other carbon-rich ecosystems, whilst investing in sustainable production and promoting trade.

More broadly, the Prime Minister recently pledged to spend £3bn on international climate change solutions that protect and restore nature and biodiversity over the next five years.

The UK Government is bringing forward world-leading due diligence legislation, making it illegal for large UK businesses to use key commodities if they have not been produced in line with local laws protecting forests and other natural ecosystems.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust

Stephen Morgan:

[\[162684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding from the public purse has been allocated to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust for the financial year (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22.

Johnny Mercer:

Since its inception in 2015, the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT) has received £10 million per annum in funding from Her Majesty's Government (HMG), which is provided in perpetuity, to run its own grant programmes. This was the case for 2020-21 and will continue for the financial year 2021-22 and beyond.

Additionally, the AFCFT also receives funding from HMG to disburse money as charitable grants on behalf of Government departments. In 2020-21 the AFCFT received £10 million of HMG funding for the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, £6 million for the COVID Impact Fund on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and Office for Veterans' Affairs, and £3 million for Veterans Community Centres distributed on behalf of the MOD.

In 2021-22, in addition to the annual £10 million from HMG, the AFCFT will receive a further £10 million in HMG funding for the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund. This figure will help deliver charitable projects and initiatives across the UK that support veterans with mental health needs. The AFCFT will distribute the funds

through regular programmes of support, with grants awarded to charitable organisations supporting veteran's mental health.

■ **Armed Forces: Children**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[163322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that children educated at MoD operated schools overseas have had continuity of education in the event that they have returned to the UK since the start of the covid-19 pandemic.

Johnny Mercer:

There have been no mass evacuations or repatriations of Armed Forces families from any of our overseas bases where children are educated at MOD operated schools. Where families have returned to the UK on changes of assignment the normal process of maintaining continuity of education for children has been sustained, with the MOD continuing to work closely with the Department for Education (DfE) and devolved equivalents to ensure Armed Forces families are not disadvantaged in the schools admissions processes.

The MOD remains most grateful to the DfE and devolved equivalents for their continuing support of Armed Forces families under the Armed Forces Covenant, even in these challenging times.

■ **Armed Forces: Wakefield**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[160860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many cadet force adult instructors for each branch of the armed forces live in Wakefield.

James Heappey:

The requested information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ **Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[162682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many veterans have accessed treatment at the Defence National Rehab Centre since its opening.

Johnny Mercer:

Since 2016, veterans with amputation-related complications can be referred by the NHS to the Complex Prosthetics Assessment Clinic (CPAC) at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre, which relocated from Headley Court to the Stanford Hall Rehabilitation Estate in 2018. Since the relocation, 22 veterans have been seen at the CPAC.

■ European Fighter Aircraft: Procurement

Dave Doogan: [\[162700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many of the different components excluding weapons and weapon systems on the Typhoon Aircraft are manufactured in Scotland; and what the gross value of that work is to date in monetary terms.

Dave Doogan: [\[162701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the gross value is of the work to manufacture the different components on the Typhoon Aircraft in Scotland as a percentage of the gross aircraft manufacturing cost.

Jeremy Quin:

The complexity of the international supply chain means that it is not possible to account for all the components used in the Typhoon aircraft that are manufactured in Scotland or to assess their overall value. However, the Leonardo MW facility in Edinburgh is the lead radar equipment supplier for Royal Air Force Typhoons.

In July 2020, the Ministry of Defence awarded a two-year contract worth £317 million to continue development of an electronically scanned Radar, known as the European Common Radar System (ECRS) Mk 2. This contract placed £140 million of work into Leonardo MW based in Edinburgh and represents the latest commitment to a development project which was first initiated in 2010.

■ International Military Services

Tulip Siddiq: [\[161823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 155266 on International Military Services, whether any of the recently appointed Directors of International Military Services Ltd are also contracted to work at his Department.

Mr Ben Wallace:

The current Board of Directors is made up of permanent Ministry of Defence officials.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[161824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish a list of the outstanding supply commitments that International Military Services Ltd had at the time it was reported to have ceased trading in July 1991.

Mr Ben Wallace:

Documentation pertaining to the outstanding legal dispute to which it is a party will have been retained. But as a commercial entity, IMS Ltd was only required to retain records of unrelated commercial activities for a period of seven years.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[161825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether International Military Services Ltd ceased trading in July 1991 or 2010.

Mr Ben Wallace:

IMS Ltd stopped taking on new business in 1989, but continued to fulfil a small number of existing contractual obligations. All such obligations had been completed by 2010 at which point the company ceased trading.

■ **Veterans: Proof of Identity****Justin Madders:**[\[162639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 December 2020 to Question 115709 on Veterans: Proof of Identity, what progress has been made for the phase two roll out of the Veterans' ID card.

Johnny Mercer:

It remains the case that officials in the Ministry of Defence continue to work with the Office for Veterans' Affairs within the Cabinet Office to develop ideas on how to build an online digital verification tool so that people can prove they served. Work is progressing but we are unable to confirm a delivery date at this point.

Information on phase two of the Veterans' ID card will be released closer to the launch date at the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-veterans-id-cards-rolled-out-to-service-leavers>

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Bowling: Coronavirus****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[159252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions his Department has had with the representatives of the ten-pin bowling sector on financial support for its businesses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

I, and my officials, have met with representatives of the Ten-Pin Bowling Proprietor's Association, along with several other visitor economy stakeholders through the Tourism Industry Council, to assess the impact of COVID-19 and related restrictions on bowling alleys.

Bowling centre operators can continue to access the Government's comprehensive support package - including the extended furlough and self-employed support schemes, new grant schemes, as well as various government-backed loans.

Alongside a range of other Budget measures to support leisure and hospitality, the Government will continue to provide eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties in England with 100% business rates relief from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021. This will be followed by 66% business rates relief for the period from 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022.

■ Broadband

Darren Henry:

[158228]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department are taking to ensure areas designated OFCOM area 2 can access Government schemes to improve their broadband speeds.

Matt Warman:

The government's ambition is to deliver nationwide gigabit-capable broadband as soon as possible. We are working with industry to target a minimum of 85% gigabit-capable coverage by 2025 but will seek to accelerate rollout further to get as close to 100% as possible. We expect that approximately 80% of UK premises will be delivered by industry commercially without the need for public subsidy. It will be more difficult to deliver gigabit connectivity to the hardest to reach 20% of the premises, which is why the government has announced £5 billion to deliver gigabit-capable connectivity to these premises as fast as possible.

For their proposed regulation for the 2021-26 period, Ofcom have defined two geographic markets: Area 2, accounting for roughly 70% of premises, where there is already some material commercial deployment by rival networks to BT Openreach or where this could be economic based on information provided to Ofcom by operators; and Area 3 - where Ofcom believes there is unlikely to be material commercial deployment by rivals to BT Openreach.

Ofcom has not yet officially confirmed the premises in these market areas as they are still under review following a consultation that closed on 8 December 2020. Ofcom expects to publish their final decisions by 31 March 2021.

DCMS' £5 billion UK Gigabit programme will prioritise areas that are in the hardest to reach 20% premises in the country and, within that, the c.3% of premises that do not have access to superfast broadband. For this reason, our programme is unlikely to initially prioritise areas that are designated in Ofcom's Area 2 as this will avoid the risk of crowding out commercial investment, and provide value for public money whilst delivering to those areas most in need.

However, DCMS will continue to conduct market surveys as part of the UK Gigabit programme, through which telecom operators provide detailed information on their commercial build plans. If it becomes clear that premises in Ofcom's Area 2 are unlikely to benefit from a commercially delivered gigabit programme within a reasonable timeframe, then DCMS will take this into account when considering eligibility for government schemes.

■ Broadband: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[162594]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much of the £5 billion funding for the gigabit broadband rollout announced in November 2020 will be spent in (a) 2021-22, (b) 2022-23, (c) 2023-24 and (d) 2024-25.

Matt Warman:

The government will continue to implement an ambitious programme of work to remove barriers to broadband deployment, and maximise coverage in the hardest to reach areas of the country through our £5 billion UK Gigabit programme.

DCMS has made significant progress to date with the support of the industry. Over 1 in 3 (34%) premises can now access gigabit-capable broadband, and we expect that gigabit broadband coverage will reach at least 50% during 2021.

The Spending Review 2020 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents/spending-review-2020#departmental-settlements>) provides further details on our planned year on year capital spend for 2021-22 to 2024-25, which totals £1.2 billion as part of the £5 billion UK Gigabit Programme. DCMS continues to work closely with industry to progress this programme and our year on year rollout plans for these areas.

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-2025	TOTAL
Gigabit Broadband (£ billion)	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.5	1.2

■ **Broadband: Rural Areas****Mark Menzies:****[154979]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to improve home broadband connections for people in (a) rural and (b) semi-rural locations who are continuing to work from home.

Matt Warman:

- DCMS are working tirelessly to improve home broadband connections. £2.6bn public funding is committed to subsidising the roll-out of broadband infrastructure in harder-to-reach areas through the government's Superfast Broadband programme. The original programme target of 95% was achieved and we have continued beyond this to greater than 96%.
- Over 96.6% of UK premises have access to superfast (30Mbps) broadband, with 5.3 million additional homes and businesses in both rural and semi-rural areas having superfast broadband available for the first time thanks to the government's investment in the Superfast programme. (Source: ThinkBroadband)
- Blackpool has recently completed an LFFN project, which has enabled the development of a full fibre broadband network throughout Blackpool comprising the re-use of existing Blackpool network assets, the build of an additional 20.678km underground duct infrastructure and the installation of 54.5km of fibre optic cables. The project has enabled business and consumers across the authority access to Gigabit services as part of the deployment of the network.

- The Rural Gigabit Connectivity programme, launched in May 2019 acting as the first step towards piloting the “Outside-In” approach identified in the FTIR. The programme was set up to trial the LFFN PSBU delivery mechanism, to provide gigabit capable connectivity to public sector buildings (Hubs), along with vouchers to eligible residential and business premises in rural and remote areas. The RGC programme is combining both demand and supply-side interventions.
- The programme focused on targeting Hubs located within the Final 10% & 20% of least commercially viable areas across the UK identified through DCMS modelling (This was originally only the F10%, however this was altered to the F20% following the Year 2 business case submission to HMT in March 2020).
- The Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme was a pilot which has enabled us to test different approaches to stimulate the broadband market and to support the installation of gigabit-capable broadband to homes and businesses; it has been very successful and we're going to build on this success with a new voucher in April, while also taking the opportunity to refine our approach to ensure that we focus support on the hardest to reach premises.

■ Charities: Coronavirus

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[158038]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to support charities during the covid-19 outbreak.

Matt Warman:

The Government made a £750 million package of support available, specifically for charities, social enterprises and the voluntary sector. This ensured that charities and other civil society organisations, including those at risk of financial hardship, could continue their vital work during the Covid-19 outbreak. To date, over 15,000 charities have received funding. This includes household names such as St John Ambulance, NSPCC, Age UK, Barnardo's and the British Red Cross as well as over 8,000 small organisations.

On top of this, the Government continues to make an unprecedented multi-billion-pound package of support available across the economy to enable organisations to get through the months ahead. Charities continue to access these schemes, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, grants for organisations that have been required to close, including retail and leisure facilities, deferral of VAT bills to the end of June, and government backed loan schemes.

■ Coronavirus: Music

Nadia Whittome:

[160891]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the safety of re-commencing private music lessons for adults during the covid-19 lockdown.

Caroline Dinenage:

On 22 February the Prime Minister set out the roadmap gradually ending the current lockdown for England.

At step 3 of the roadmap, no earlier than 17 May, the restrictions on social mixing indoors will be eased and individuals will be able to meet socially distanced in a group of 6 or with 1 other household. Non-professional activities, such as private music lessons for adults, will be able to resume from this time.

The timings outlined in the roadmap are indicative, and the Government will be led by data, rather than fixed dates. Before taking each step, the Government will review the latest data and will only ease restrictions further if it is safe to do so. The indicative, 'no earlier than' dates in the roadmap are all contingent on the data and subject to change.

■ Culture Recovery Fund: Coventry**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[161779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress his Department has made on delivering support through the Culture Recovery Fund to the culture and heritage sector in Coventry .

Caroline Dinenage:

Last year the government announced the unprecedented £1.57 billion support package for the culture sector, of which over £1 billion has now been allocated to over 3,800 arts and culture organisations across the country. We are proud to say that HMT have now announced in this week's budget a further £300 million for the Culture Recovery Fund to continue to support key local and national cultural organisations as audiences begin to return. This will continue to ensure a vibrant future for the culture sector as the nation recovers from the pandemic.

The Culture Recovery Fund is already supporting the arts and culture sector to survive the pandemic and continue operating. The further support announced at this week's budget will allow museums, theatres and galleries to move towards reopening with optimism and support jobs up and down the country. Details on this additional funding will be published by DCMS in due course.

The culture and heritage sector in Coventry has so far been awarded over £6m across 17 organisations, including organisations such as the Belgrade Theatre Trust and the Kasbah Nightclub. They join a total of 289 organisations receiving funds in the wider West Midlands region.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: National League**Julie Elliott:**[\[156397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish all departmental correspondence with the National League from the last 12 months.

Nigel Huddleston:

I will send copies of all of my correspondence with the National League to the Hon Member's office, as well as my letter to the Shadow Minister for Sport on 5 February 2021 on this matter.

The correspondence primarily relates to the Sports Winter Survival Package. I gave a statement to the House on Thursday 19 November 2020 on the details of this package, which have remained the same throughout.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus**Caroline Nokes:**[\[158921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what risk assessment has been undertaken to permit 10,000 attendees at outdoor events in May 2021 while weddings are capped to attendees of 30 people in the same time period.

Nigel Huddleston:

On 22 February, 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 in the wedding sector. In the 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021', the Government has set out how it will continue to protect and support citizens across the UK and has provided a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. This includes a staged return of weddings and civil partnerships.

We understand the unique significance that marriages and civil partnerships hold in people's lives, but we have to take necessary steps to limit transmission of COVID-19. This includes restrictions on wedding and civil partnership ceremonies, as well as other forms of social contact. By their very nature, weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are highly social events that bring families and friends together, making them particularly vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19.

When large events resume – subject to capacity caps – in Step 3, these events will need to be organised by a business, charity or similar organisation; comply with COVID-Secure guidance, with reasonable steps to limit the risk of transmission; and a full risk assessment must be completed. Event organisers must ensure that those attending do not mix beyond what is permitted by the social contact limits (unless another exemption exists, such as for work purposes, or supervised activities for children).

■ Gambling: Northern Ireland**Jim Shannon:**[\[159303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the total gross gambling yield that licensed remote (online) operators receive from customers based in Northern Ireland for the period November 2014 to September 2019.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Gambling activity is a devolved issue in Northern Ireland, regulated under the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (NI) Order 1985. The UK government and the Gambling Commission therefore do not collect official data on the gross gambling yield derived from customers in Northern Ireland.

Leisure: Coronavirus**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[161780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department has taken to support leisure centres in Coventry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

The National Leisure Recovery Fund seeks to support eligible public sector leisure centres to reopen to the public, giving the sport and physical activity sector the best chance of recovery to a position of sustainable operation over the medium term. A total of £100 million was available as a biddable fund to eligible local authorities in England. Coventry City Council will be notified shortly of the outcome of their application to the scheme.

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

Local Press: Planning Permission**Dean Russell:**[\[159053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the importance of advertising planning notices in local newspapers to (a) the elderly and vulnerable, (b) other local residents and (b) local media organisations.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Local planning authorities are required to publicise certain types of planning applications in local newspapers as set out in Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

We are mindful of the potential impact that any changes to the requirements might have on transparency and local democracy, as well as the potential effect on local newspaper revenue. Indeed the independent Cairncross Review into the future of journalism found that statutory notices, including planning notices, provide an important strand of revenue for many local publishers and that their withdrawal would do serious damage to parts of the sector. We also recognise the importance of local newspapers to communities and the continued need to reach out to people who cannot digitally access information.

Proposals to reform publicity requirements are being considered through the “Planning for the Future” White Paper which aims to make it simpler, quicker and more accessible for local people to engage with the planning system using digital tools. MHCLG is considering consultation responses and will publish a response in due course, and the impact on transparency and local democracy, as well as on local newspaper revenue will be considered before any decisions are taken.

■ Museums and Galleries: Coronavirus

Chris Bryant:

[\[162525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the evidence behind the Government's decision to allow aquaria and galleries that sell art to open as early as April 2021, but not museums and galleries.

Caroline Dinenage:

- The government published the roadmap on 22 February, which sets out a step-by-step plan to ease restrictions in England cautiously.
- The design of the roadmap has been informed by the latest scientific evidence and seeks a balance between our key social and economic priorities, whilst preserving the health and safety of the country. The scientific evidence shows that opening too early or too quickly risks a further lockdown.
- Under the roadmap, we seek to reopen outdoor elements of museums and galleries and aquariums in Step 2 (no earlier than 12th April), with indoor elements at these attractions opening at Step 3 (no earlier than 17th May).
- Commercial art galleries can reopen in Step 2, when restrictions on non-essential retail are lifted.

■ Music Festivals: Coronavirus

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[154608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing a Government-backed insurance scheme to musical festivals that may have to cancel events planned for summer 2021 as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Dinenage:

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

Understandably, the bar for considering Government intervention is set extremely high. Given the high costs involved in setting up a scheme we need to make sure it is the most effective use of funds at a time when we are looking at how best to support the sector.

The evidence of market failure must clearly demonstrate that such a scheme is the only barrier to staging events. At the moment, progress with the vaccine rollout and

beating the virus is crucial in achieving the next stages for large events as set out in the roadmap.

We are working closely with the sector to determine the appropriate and most effective response within the public health context. We will continue to engage with HMT on this matter.

■ Music: Coronavirus

Sarah Champion:

[158064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the phase of the Government's plan to ease coronavirus restrictions under which community music rehearsals and performance are planned to be permitted to resume.

Caroline Dinenage:

On 22 February the Prime Minister set out the roadmap gradually ending the current lockdown for England.

At step 3 of the roadmap, no earlier than 17 May, the restrictions on social mixing indoors will be eased and individuals will be able to meet socially distanced in a group of 6 or with 1 other household. Non-professional activities, such as community music rehearsals and performances, will be able to resume from this time.

The timings outlined in the roadmap are indicative, and the Government will be led by data, rather than fixed dates. Before taking each step, the Government will review the latest data and will only ease restrictions further if it is safe to do so. The indicative, 'no earlier than' dates in the roadmap are all contingent on the data and subject to change.

EDUCATION

■ 16 to 19 Tuition Fund

Dame Diana Johnson:

[162533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2021 to Question 156534 on the 16 to 19 Tuition Fund, how much funding under the 16-19 Tuition Fund has been allocated to (a) further education colleges, (b) sixth form colleges, (c) 16 to 19 academies and free schools, (d) school and academy sixth forms and (e) other institutions for the academic year 2020-21.

Gillian Keegan:

We have made up to £96 million available for the 16 to 19 tuition fund enabling schools, colleges and other 16 to 19 providers to provide small group tuition for disadvantaged students whose learning has been disrupted as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Providers were required to opt-in to receive an allocation and need to comply with the guidance for the fund. The guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-16-to-19-tuition-fund>.

The attached table shows the data on the funding claimed and allocated. The data available shows the amounts for different kinds of academy, and for maintained schools, but does not consistently differentiate 16 to 19 only schools and academies from those with pre-16 as well as post-16 provision.

Attachments:

1. 162533_table
[162533_table_showing_funding_allocated_under_16_to_19_tuition_fund.docx]

■ **Adoption**

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[162714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the findings from the 1972 Houghton Report on adoption; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[162715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the debate on forced adoption in the UK of 12 July 2018, Official Report, column 1187, whether he has met with any victims of the historic practice of forced adoption in the UK since that date; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[162716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the debate on forced adoption in the UK of 12 July 2018, Official Report, column 1187, whether he has met with any victims of the historic practice of forced adoption in the UK since that date; and if he will make a statement.

Vicky Ford:

Following on from the debate in 2018, I can confirm that my hon. Friend, the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families and current Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department of Health and Social Care, Nadhim Zahawi, met with the hon. Member for Wirral South on 24 October 2018. The meeting was attended by a number of women who had experienced these historical adoption practices. I understand it was a very difficult and moving experience to hear from women who gave up their children under historical adoption practices.

However, whilst we cannot undo the past, we now have a society that takes a very different attitude to single mothers and lessons of the time have been learned and have led to significant changes to legislation and practice.

Single parents are now supported to help ensure that families can stay together, and children are only removed permanently without the consent of the parents by a court if it is satisfied that the child is suffering significant harm or is likely to suffer significant harm.

NHS maternity services now have robust policy, guidance and processes in place to safeguard care for vulnerable women and babies.

I understand in the 2018 debate Minister Zahawi committed to making the 1972 Houghton Report available. I will ensure this is publicly available as soon as possible.

■ **Climate Change: Education**

Caroline Lucas: [\[157998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to engage with global partners to improve climate education internationally ahead of COP26.

Caroline Lucas: [\[157999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking through the education system to deliver target 13.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals to Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning ahead of COP26.

Caroline Lucas: [\[158000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has worked with Ministers for Education in the devolved Administrations to co-ordinate the teaching of climate education across the UK.

Nick Gibb:

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

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

■ Educational Institutions: Knives

Carla Lockhart:

[158236]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many knife possession orders have been issued in relation to (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools and (c) higher educational establishments in the last five years.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not hold data on the number of children found in possession of a knife at school. However, the School Snapshot Survey from winter 2019 showed that 29% of schools were actively dealing with knife crime as a safeguarding issue: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-snapshot-survey-winter-2019>. Secondary schools were 4 times more likely to be actively dealing with knife crime than primary schools.

Schools and colleges have a duty and responsibility to protect pupils and staff. We support them with a range of guidance to help them fulfil their responsibilities, including advice on health and safety and school and college security. The school and college security guidance includes a suite of resources to assist schools and colleges with the development of policies and culture to help address a wide range of security related issues.

Relationships, Sex and Health Education is now compulsory, and schools can build on the core content to address local issues such as gang activity and recognising and avoiding exploitative relationships. In serious violence hotspot areas, schools, alternative provision settings and colleges are working with police and health through Violence Reduction Units to run interventions to tackle serious youth violence.

■ Further Education and Sixth Form Education: Pupil Numbers

Dame Diana Johnson:

[162532]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2021 to Question 156534 on the 16 to 19 Tuition Fund, how many 16 to 19 year olds are studying in (a) further education colleges, (b) sixth form colleges, (c) 16 to 19 academies and free schools, (d) school and academy sixth forms and (e) other institutions in the 2020-21 academic year.

Gillian Keegan:

National statistics showing the numbers of young people aged 16 to 18 who are participating in education and training in 2020/21 are scheduled to be published at the end of June 2021, as part of a series on participation in education and training, and employment. More information can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/participation-in-education-and-training-and-employment>.

The latest data published is for the academic year 2019/20:

Participation of 16 to 18 year olds in education by institution type, England, end 2019 (provisional)

FULL- AND PART-TIME EDUCATION	END 2019 (PROVISIONAL)
State funded schools	450,200
<i>Local Authority Maintained schools</i>	78,000
<i>Sponsor Academies and City Technology Colleges</i>	52,800
<i>Converter Academies</i>	294,600
<i>Free schools</i>	24,100
Special schools	16,500
Independent schools	87,100
Sixth form colleges	109,100
General further education, tertiary and specialist colleges	515,300
Higher education institutions	219,400
Total	1,397,600

■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments

Dr Matthew Offord:

[158916]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the appeal mechanism will be for pupils to appeal grades awarded by their teachers in A Level and GCSE examinations.

Nick Gibb:

If a pupil judges that their grade does not reflect their performance, or their grade has not been properly determined, they will have a clear route to appeal.

If a pupil considers their grade to be wrong, they will be able to ask their centre to check for errors and make sure they have followed their own process correctly. If the centre finds an error, they can submit a revised grade to the exam board with a supporting explanation for approval.

Otherwise, the centre is able to submit an appeal to the exam board on the pupil's behalf. The exam board should review both the process the centre has followed and the evidence on which a pupil's grade was determined to confirm whether the grade submitted by the centre was a reasonable exercise of academic judgement. If an exam board finds the evidence cannot support the grade, they should determine the alternative grade and inform the centre.

An exam board will only revise a pupil's grade at appeal where it finds the evidence cannot reasonably support that grade, rather than as a result of differences of opinion. Pupils should be aware that their grade can go up or down on appeal.

There may be some pupils taking Vocational and Technical Qualifications or other general qualifications who are unhappy with the results that they receive through the alternative arrangements. These pupils will have a right of appeal on the same basis as those set out for GCSEs, AS and A levels, but the exact nature of the processes may differ to recognise the different nature of the qualifications.

If a candidate remains unhappy with their grade following a Board appeal, they will have two additional options. First, the case can be referred to Ofqual's Exams Procedure Review Service (EPRS). The exam board's decision on the grade following appeal will stand unless the EPRS finds that the exam board has made a procedural error. Second, it is the Government's policy that there needs to be a full series of GCSE, AS and A level examinations held in the autumn and Ofqual will carry out a consultation on the arrangements for this. Having an Autumn exam series will provide an opportunity for pupils to try and improve their grade through traditional exams if they are not content with their teacher assessed grade in this unusual year.

■ Higher Education: Finance

Emma Hardy:

[162678]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction of 50 per cent to the high-cost subject funding for other courses in price group C1 on the number of (a) courses available, (b) UK students undertaking those courses and (c) international students undertaking those courses.

Emma Hardy:

[162679]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data was used to arrive at the reduction of 50 per cent to the high-cost subject funding for other courses in price group C1.

Michelle Donelan:

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

We have asked the Office for Students (OfS) to reform the grant for 2021-22 to ensure that more of taxpayers' money is spent on supporting higher education provision which aligns with national priorities. This includes the reprioritisation of funding towards the provision of high-cost subjects that support the NHS and wider healthcare policy, high-cost science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects, and subjects meeting specific labour market needs.

This government also values the arts. High quality provision in a range of subjects is critical for our workforce and our public services and is culturally enriching for our society, and that is why we have invested in our world class specialist providers through the Strategic Priorities Grant. This includes asking the OfS for a £10 million

increase to the specialist provider allocation, to support these institutions which are particularly reliant on Strategic Priorities Grant funding. We want to ensure that our small and specialist providers, including some of our top music and arts providers, receive additional support, and that grant funding is used to effectively support students.

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

■ Higher Education: Greater London

Dr Rupa Huq:

[161821]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of (a) changes to the Higher Education Teaching Grant budget for the 2021-22 financial year and (b) removal of London weighting on higher education in London.

Michelle Donelan:

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

We have asked the Office for Students (OfS) to reform the grant for the 2021-22 financial year to ensure that more of taxpayers' money is spent on supporting higher education provision which aligns with national priorities, such as healthcare, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and subjects meeting specific labour market needs.

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

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

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

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

Emma Hardy:

[162680]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Office for Students Guide to Funding 2020-21, whether a review of the longer-term approach to funding has taken place in respect to London weighting.

Michelle Donelan:

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

We have asked the Office for Students (OfS) to reform the grant for the 2021-22 financial year to ensure that more of taxpayers' money is spent on supporting higher education provision which aligns with national priorities, such as healthcare, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and subjects meeting specific labour market needs.

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

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

In terms of supporting higher education providers and students, we have recently made available an additional £50 million of hardship funding for the 2020/21 financial year. In total we have made £70 million of funding available for student hardship, including the £20 million made available to higher education providers in December. Providers will have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to students, in a way that will best prioritise those in greatest need.

This money is in addition to the £256 million of Student Premium funding higher education providers are able draw on for the 2021/22 academic year towards student hardship funds, including the purchase of IT equipment, and mental health support, as well as to support providers' access and participation plans.

Furthermore, we have asked the OfS to allocate £15 million towards student mental health in 2021/22 through the proposed reforms to Strategic Priorities grant funding,

to help address the challenges to student mental health posed by the transition to university, given the increasing demand for mental health services. This will target those students in greatest need of such services, including vulnerable groups and hard to reach students.

The OfS has also been asked to allocate £5 million to providers in order to provide additional support for student hardship in 2021/22. This is to mitigate the rise in student hardship due to COVID-19 impacts on the labour market which particularly affect, for example, students relying on work to fund their studies, students whose parents have lost income and students who are parents and whose partner's income has been affected.

■ Primary Education: Assessments

Caroline Lucas:

[\[158900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of nursery school attendance rates since September 2020 on plans to introduce Reception Baseline Assessment in September 2021; and if he will make it his policy to delay formal testing of four year olds in English and maths.

Nick Gibb:

The purpose of the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) is to act as the starting point to enable the Department to measure the progress schools make with their pupils. Whilst nurseries remained largely open during the COVID-19 outbreak, the attendance rates of nursery pupils do not impact on the RBA as an assessment. The assessment will assess all children on-entry, accounting for any impact on their learning up to this point. It is important for us to understand where children are starting from so that we can acknowledge and give credit to those schools that have successfully helped their pupils to catch up.

The Department is planning for a full programme of primary assessments to take place in the 2021/22 academic year. This will include the introduction of the statutory RBA as previously announced. We will confirm full details for 2021/22 primary assessments in due course.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[158902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his policy is on how data collected from the Reception Baseline Assessment will be used by the Government; whether that data is planned to be sold to third party organisations; and whether he plans that parents will have the right to object to the collection and retention of their children's data.

Nick Gibb:

The data from the reception baseline assessment (RBA) will be used at the end of Key Stage 2 to create a baseline for a school level progress measure for the Year 6 cohorts. Data collected and produced from the assessment will be stored in the National Pupil Database (NPD). The NPD can be used to provide evidence on educational performance to inform independent research, as well as to support studies commissioned by the Department. The Department has no plans, however, to

make the data from the RBA available externally or internally for research purposes. It is intended to be used solely for analysis concerned with the primary accountability progress measure. The data, including numerical scores, will not be shared with external bodies, including schools, teachers, pupils, or parents/carers. Teachers will receive a series of short, narrative statements on how each child did at that time, which can be used to inform teaching.

The Department and the National Foundation for Educational Research, who are contracted by the Department to deliver the RBA, will handle personal data in accordance with the rights given to individuals under data protection legislation, including parents/carers. The privacy notice related to the statutory RBA will be published in due course.

Caroline Lucas:

[158903]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether it is his policy that data collected from the Reception Baseline Assessment will (a) be black-boxed for seven years for the purposes of demonstrating whole-school progress from Reception to the end of year 6 and (b) be used as a diagnostic tool to assess the effects of covid-19 on young children.

Nick Gibb:

The purpose of the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) is to measure the progress schools make with their pupils. The data from the assessment is intended to be used solely for analysis concerned with the primary accountability progress measure. The data, including numerical scores, will not be made available to external bodies, including schools, teachers, pupils or parents/carers. Teachers will receive a series of short, narrative statements on how each child did at that time, which can be used to inform teaching.

The Department has always been clear that the RBA is not a diagnostic assessment and should not be used to track or group individual children or hold early years settings to account, including in the context of COVID-19.

■ Pupil Premium: Migrants

Vicky Foxcroft:

[158986]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending pupil premium funding to all children from families with no recourse to public funds.

Nick Gibb:

Pupil premium eligibility is based on Ever6 free school meals (FSM), whereby pupils eligible for FSM at the time of the October census, or at any point in the previous 6 years, attract pupil premium funding in the following financial year.

The Department is working with other Government Departments to evaluate access to FSM for families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and are also considering pupil premium eligibility in that context.

FSM was extended to include certain NRPF groups on a temporary basis during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Department will also extend pupil premium eligibility to these same groups for the 2021-22 financial year, with schools able to claim pupil premium funding for eligible pupils. We will provide further details on the claims process in due course.

■ Pupils: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[158176]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure the (a) accuracy and (b) availability of covid-19 test at-home kits for secondary school pupils, as required twice a week when they return to school.

Nick Gibb:

Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests have been widely and successfully used to detect asymptomatic COVID-19 cases. The speed and convenience of the tests supports the detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals, who would not otherwise have been tested. LFD tests are approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, and are highly specific, with a low chance of false positive test results. They are also very sensitive and able to identify the majority of the most infectious yet asymptomatic individuals. These tests are an additional layer of health protection in addition to hand washing, face covering and social distancing.

For students, they will need to be tested 3 times at an onsite asymptomatic testing site, upon their return to school or college. The Department is aware that LFD tests are more effective when individuals are used to swabbing so this will give students the opportunity to become used to swabbing in a supervised environment first. They will then be provided with home test kits for twice weekly testing.

Test kits are being delivered to secondary schools and colleges from 24 February 2021. There will be a sufficient number of kits for the first 3 to 4 weeks of testing. Secondary schools and colleges will then automatically receive a re-stock of test at home kits between 8 March and 15 March so pupils can collect them after test 3. Schools can provide testing kits in 2 packs of 3, or 1 pack of 7 to each member of staff or student so that they are able to test twice a week.

Students aged 18 and over should self-test and report the result, with assistance if needed. Students aged between 12 and 17 should self-test and report with adult supervision. The adult may conduct the test if necessary. When testing at home, children aged 11 who attend a secondary school, should be tested by an adult.

From 15 March onwards there will be a reordering process for schools and colleges to receive more test stock. It will be the responsibility of the school or college to manage test stock and reordering, as well as exercising appropriate oversight and governance of the testing programme.

■ Remote Education: Mobile Broadband

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[158170]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 12 February 2021 to Question 149320, what estimate he has made of the number of 4G wireless routers delivered to pupils without connection at home in (a) Slough, (b) the South East and (b) England.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[158171]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 12 February 2021 to Question 149320, what assessment he has made of the timeframe for the mobile data offer and 4G wireless routers to end.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has delivered over 70,000 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home and continues to deliver them where children require remote education. More information on the number of routers delivered can be found by clicking on the 'download associated files' link here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data>. Data for these routers is also being funded by the Department until the end of July 2021, to align with the end of the academic year.

The Department has partnered with the UK's leading mobile network operators to provide free data to disadvantaged families, which will support access to educational resources. Families will benefit from this additional data until July 2021, and schools are able to request free mobile data uplifts via the Get Help with Technology service: <https://get-help-with-tech.education.gov.uk/>.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agricultural Products: Origin Marking

Alicia Kearns:

[159375]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to encourage the adoption of the new geographical indicator logos; and what proportion of producers have already adopted those logos.

Victoria Prentis:

Producers and retailers whose products are required to bear the new UK Geographical Indication (GI) logos have until 1 January 2024 to adopt them. However, we are aware that some would like to make that change soon and are working with industry to support their early adoption.

Defra is also communicating the benefits of the new logos across industry to encourage uptake, including publishing research which shows support from consumers and GI producers for the new design.

■ British Overseas Territories: Marine Environment

Alicia Kearns:

[\[159374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which projects funded by the Darwin Plus Programme are in respect of aquatic biodiversity; and of those projects, how many are in respect of coral (a) preservation and protection and (b) disease prevention and eradication.

Rebecca Pow:

Since 2012 Darwin Plus has contributed £10.7 million to 49 projects working on aquatic biodiversity across the UK Overseas Territories. Of these projects three have focused on coral preservation and protection to a total of £0.46 million. One of these projects successfully established a coral nursery in Little Cayman and saw coral nursery guidelines being incorporated into national policy in the Cayman Islands. There have not been any Darwin Plus projects working on disease prevention and eradication.

■ Dry Stone Walls

Alex Sobel:

[\[162688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of using the Environmental Land Management Scheme to promote the benefits of dry stone walls.

Victoria Prentis:

We are working with stakeholders and end users to determine the specific land management actions that will be paid for under our new schemes, that will pay farmers to improve the environment, improve animal health and welfare, and reduce carbon emissions. We will set out more details on this later this year. The Agricultural Transition Plan set out examples of the types of actions that we envisage paying for under the schemes, including boundary management.

■ Environment Bill

Ruth Jones:

[\[159361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish a list of the members of the independent expert groups on Environment Bill air quality, water, biodiversity and waste and resources targets.

Ruth Jones:

[\[159364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many meetings the independent expert groups on Environment Bill targets have held with stakeholders to date.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is committed to setting targets through a robust, evidence-led process that seeks independent expert advice, provides a role for stakeholders and the public, as well as scrutiny from Parliament. We are working with stakeholders and

will keep them apprised of the work of the independent experts as proposed targets develop.

We have recently set up groups of independent experts, where they did not already exist for the priority areas set out in the Bill, to provide impartial advice on the analytical methods and evidence base being used to develop targets. We plan to publish the full list of independent experts, along with high level details of their work, such as terms of references and information on meetings in due course. Defra's Science Advisory Committee and Economic Advisory Panel also play a part in advising on the target-setting process.

The Government is in regular discussion with its independent expert groups, and some independent expert groups have met with stakeholders.

Ruth Jones:

[159362]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the timetable for public consultation on targets to be set under Clause 1 of the Environment Bill.

Rebecca Pow:

We expect to carry out a public consultation on proposed targets set under the Environment Bill in early 2022. This consultation will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to share their views on the ambition, evidence and achievability of target proposals. The Government will then decide the final targets to be set. Target statutory instruments will be laid before Parliament by 31 October 2022 and come into force once approved.

Ruth Jones:

[159363]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to publish guidance on the interpretation of the significant improvement test set out in Clause 6 of the Environment Bill.

Rebecca Pow:

The requirements for the significant improvement test are laid out in Clause 6 of the Environment Bill. The Government must periodically review its targets by carrying out the significant improvement test at least every five years. The Secretary of State must consider whether meeting the long-term targets and the PM_{2.5} target set under the Environment Bill, together with any other relevant statutory environmental targets, would significantly improve the natural environment in England. The Secretary of State must lay before Parliament, and publish, a report on its conclusions and, if it considers that the test is not met, set out how it plans to use its target-setting powers to close the gap.

The Government is considering how to implement the significant improvement test and the first iteration will be conducted by 31 January 2023. In our policy paper published in August 2020, we outlined that, when we are developing targets, we will consider how they will inform the Significant Improvement Test.

Hares: Peak District National Park

Olivia Blake: [\[161884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the introduction in Scotland from 1 March 2021 of a licensing regime making it illegal to intentionally kill, injure or take mountain hares at any time without a licence, whether his Department is planning to introduce protections for the last surviving population in England of mountain hares in the Peak District National Park.

Rebecca Pow:

This Government remains committed to taking action to recover our threatened native species. We continue to consider how we might best do this for mountain hare and the role of protection of the species in law, where there is evidence that this will provide genuine benefits.

Heather Burning: Environment Protection

Olivia Blake: [\[162721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many permissions Natural England have granted for heather burning in environmentally protected areas in each of the last five years, by region.

Rebecca Pow:

Figures for the number of permissions granted are not available because of the different ways that consents may be granted. Natural England may permit burning of vegetation in response to Notices of proposal to carry out the activity on Sites of Special Scientific Interest made by land managers under s28e of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. Natural England may also have issued consent for burning vegetation as part of the prescriptions of an agreement made under the Environmental Stewardship or Countryside Stewardship schemes administered by the Rural Payments Agency. Consents may not provide detail of the vegetation to be burned and permissions attached to agreements may not detail the individual elements of management. To collect this information Natural England would need to investigate each relevant case where burning has been or may have been permitted to determine whether it allows burning of heather.

Litter

Justin Madders: [\[158096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of trends in littering; and whether he plans to launch a national campaign on litter.

Rebecca Pow:

Last year Keep Britain Tidy published, on behalf of Defra, the results of analysis of litter composition in the UK. This report was the first of its kind in terms of recording the amount of litter found by brand, on a national scale. This report is available at:

<https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/sites/default/files/resources/20200330%20KBT%20Liter%20Composition%20Report%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

Last summer, in response to Covid-19, Defra developed a 'Respect the Outdoors' campaign to encourage people to follow the Countryside Code and to highlight the impacts of littering. This was promoted both online and in locations across the country near to urban parks, beaches and national parks. We also supported, and provided funding for, Keep Britain Tidy's Love Parks campaign, which encouraged people to treat our parks with respect.

Preliminary evaluation of these campaigns indicates that they had a positive influence on the target audience's intended disposal of Personal Protective Equipment litter, with anecdotal reports from local authorities that the intervention resulted in a markedly beneficial outcome.

We are also raising awareness via social media of what individuals can do to protect others and the environment, in relation to litter.

■ **Property Flood Resilience Scheme**

Layla Moran:

[162686]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will extend the Property Flood Resilience Grants Scheme to cover people who have been flooded since December 2020.

Rebecca Pow:

Flooding has a devastating impact on communities, businesses and individuals. The Government closely monitors the impact on affected areas.

The decision to trigger financial support from central Government is taken collectively by Ministers in the event of severe weather events with significant impacts on a wide area. In reaching a decision, Ministers consider factors such as severity, duration and extent of the impacts.

During unprecedented flooding in the winter of 2019/2020, the Government announced Property Flooding Resilience (PFR) repair grants of up to £5,000 to help eligible properties affected by floods become more flood resilient. The repair grants apply to those affected in district or unitary authorities that have 25 or more severely flooded properties. Currently, 52 district and unitary councils with over 7700 properties are eligible in England for the November 2019 and February 2020 PFR repair schemes.

The reported impacts during events since December 2020 suggest the numbers of internally flooded properties have been lower than would justify activation of the PFR Repair Scheme. With localised flooding incidents, local authorities are expected to have well established contingency arrangements in place and to be able to support their local communities from within existing budgets. Councils have discretionary powers to fund grants or loans for home improvements, this can include funding for PFR measures.

■ Public Footpaths: Christchurch**Sir Christopher Chope:****[162508]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 153108, whether the Planning Inspector inquiring into the proposals has requested Natural England to provide new data or evidence or whether the letter requesting such data sent by Natural England to local residents is without the authority of the Inspector.

Rebecca Pow:

The letter requesting new data or evidence sent by Natural England was sent in relation to the European Court ruling known as People Over Wind. To comply with this ruling Natural England has completed a full review of the relevant Habitats Regulations Assessment which will be published online in due course. This review includes the important step of approaching relevant stakeholders (and objectors who have listed nature conservation concerns in their responses) to ask if they have any new data regarding the designated features relevant to the review. This approach was agreed with the department.

This assessment is part of a separate process to the Planning Inspectorate investigation into objections. The Planning Inspector paused their investigation while the review was ongoing so that they could take the results into account in their decision.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Bangladesh: Human Rights****Stephen Kinnock:****[161776]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his counterpart in Bangladesh on the upholding of (a) the right to life, (b) the right to a fair trial, (c) the right to freedom of expression and (d) other human rights since the death in custody of Bangladeshi writer and journalist Mushtaq Ahmed.

Nigel Adams:

The UK government was very concerned to hear about the death in custody of Mushtaq Ahmed, who was being held under the Digital Security Act in Bangladesh. In a statement on 26 February, the British High Commissioner in Dhaka, alongside other local Ambassadors and High Commissioners, emphasised the importance of freedom of expression and called for a swift and transparent investigation into Mushtaq Ahmed's death. In a tweet on 27 February, the Minister of State for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, also called for a full investigation.

Bangladesh remains a Human Rights Priority Country for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. We continue to stress to the Government of Bangladesh, both in public and in private, the importance of respect for human rights

and the rule of law. Lord Ahmad has raised concerns with the Foreign Minister, the State Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Bangladesh High Commissioner in London on several occasions.

We continue to urge the Government of Bangladesh to engage constructively with civil society and the media to ensure that legislation such as the Digital Security Act is implemented in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the Constitution of Bangladesh. We also regularly engage with the Government of Bangladesh on the full range of our human rights concerns, including the treatment of those in detention and the integrity and independence of the judicial process.

■ China: Uighurs

Afzal Khan:

[\[162694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Chinese Government in response to recent reports of that government trying to silence Uyghur witnesses through intimidation.

Nigel Adams:

We are aware of reports of members of the Uyghur diaspora - including in the UK - being harassed by the Chinese authorities in an effort to intimidate them into silence, force them to return to China, or co-opt them into providing information on other Uyghurs. The Government regards such activity as unacceptable and has raised our concerns directly with the Chinese Embassy in London. The FCDO continues to monitor the situation closely and we urge anyone affected in the UK to contact the police.

Afzal Khan:

[\[162695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of sending dignitaries to the 2022 Beijing Olympics in light of the human rights abuses being perpetrated by the Chinese Government in Xinjiang.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is not normally in favour of sporting boycotts. No decisions have been made about Ministerial attendance at the Beijing Olympics in 2022, or any other Ministerial travel in 2022. Participation of the national team at the Winter Olympics is a matter for the British Olympic Association, who are required to operate independently of the government under International Olympic Committee regulations.

The Government remains gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. We continue to play a leading role in holding China to account for its human rights violations in the region, working closely with international partners, including at the UN.

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

Debbie Abrahams:

[\[162614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of whether the TRIPS waiver proposal at the WTO that would suspend global patent rules during the covid-19 pandemic will enable the scale-up of manufacturing required to make enough doses to vaccinate the world.

Wendy Morton:

The UK does not consider waiving intellectual property (IP) rights to be an appropriate action to boost the manufacturing of safe, effective, and quality vaccines. The existing intellectual property framework has mobilised research and development to deliver a host of new medicines and technologies to detect, treat, and defend against COVID-19. We have not yet seen evidence of how such a waiver of IP rights would improve the current situation. The UK continues to engage in constructive and evidence-based discussions at the TRIPS Council on the waiver proposal, and to address the multiple factors outside of IP on which access to medicines depends.

The UK is among the biggest global donors on COVID-19, and committed to supporting rapid, equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. We have pledged over £1 billion of UK aid to counter the health, humanitarian, and economic risks. To support global vaccine access, we have funded a range of international organisations with the expertise to deliver an 'end to end' approach from research, development, and clinical trials, through to supporting manufacturing scale-up and delivery.

■ Developing Countries: Health Services

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[160599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of whether the planned reduction in Official Development Assistance spend from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent will affect funding for family planning and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is proud to defend comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights, including family planning; these are fundamental to the empowerment and health of girls and women in the global south. For example, between 2019 and 2020 alone, UK aid helped over 25 million women and girls use modern methods of contraception.

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

■ El Salvador: Politics and Government

Ruth Jones:

[\[160805\]](#)

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

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government welcomes the fact that the legislative and municipal elections in El Salvador on 28 February were largely peaceful, and that the results appear to reflect the will of the people. However, we were concerned at the shrinking of political and media space in the run up to the elections.

The UK is keen to strengthen its bilateral relationship with El Salvador, and will continue to follow post-election developments closely. Our Embassy in San Salvador regularly engages with the Government of El Salvador and other partners on areas of shared interest, including human rights, governance, climate change, and implementation of the new UK-Central America Association Agreement. I also raised a number of these issues with the El Salvador Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexandra Hill, when we spoke in October 2020.

■ Gaza: Food Supply**Rushanara Ali:**[\[159313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the level of food insecurity in Gaza in the context of the covid-19 pandemic.

James Cleverly:

The outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) in OPTs has exacerbated the humanitarian and food insecurity situation. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, food insecurity, driven by high poverty and unemployment, affected 1.6 million Palestinians. Latest projections from the World Food Programme show an increase to 2 million Palestinians now food insecure - 40% of the population in OPTs.

To support the humanitarian situation in the OPTs, we are providing £2.5million to the World Food Programme to provide food and cash assistance to the most vulnerable Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza. We have also contributed £1 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's Emergency Appeal in the OPTs which will help provide emergency food to over one million food-insecure refugees in Gaza.

■ Gaza: Health Services**Rushanara Ali:**[\[159312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent the collapse of Gaza's healthcare system in the context of the occupied Palestinian territory's surge of covid-19 cases.

Rushanara Ali:[\[159314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle the gap in oxygen supply for covid-19 patients in Gaza.

James Cleverly:

We have provided £1.25 million funding (the World Health Organisation with £630,000 and the United Nations Children's Fund with £620,000) to purchase and co-ordinate the delivery of medical equipment including personal protective equipment for over 4000 health workers and 15 oxygen concentrators, treat critical care patients, train frontline health workers and scale up laboratory testing capacity - mainly in Gaza.

The UK has also committed to equitable access to effective vaccines as demonstrated by our £548 million contribution to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. We are pleased that the OPTs will be among the first to benefit from the COVAX scheme with delivery of a first batch of more than 37,000 doses of the of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine anticipated shortly.

Indian Ocean Tuna Commission**Mr Andrew Mitchell:****[161682]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 155190 on the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, whether the UN Food and Agriculture Commission has accepted the UK application for membership of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission as a coastal state; and what assessment he has made of the positions taken in relation to the UK's claim to act as a coastal state by the UN General Assembly, International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

James Duddridge:

The UK deposited an instrument of accession to the Agreement for the Establishment of the Indian Ocean Commission Tuna Commission (IOTC) with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on 14 December 2020. The Agreement entered into force for the United Kingdom on 22 December 2020 as confirmed by IOTC Circular 2021-02 on 7 January (<https://tinyurl.com/vvthj86k>) and by the FAO on 14 January (<https://tinyurl.com/vp3vrbad>).

The UK is aware of the judgment delivered on 28 January by the Special Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. This judgement was formed to deal with the dispute concerning delimitation of a maritime boundary claimed by Mauritius to exist between Mauritius and Maldives in the Indian Ocean. The UK is not a party to these proceedings, which can have no effect for the UK or for maritime delimitation between the UK (in respect of the British Indian Ocean Territory) and the Republic of the Maldives. The International Court of Justice's opinion on the Chagos Archipelago is advisory and not legally binding. The UK voted against General Assembly resolution 73/295 and we remain firmly of the view that the International Court of Justice and General Assembly are not the appropriate fora for resolving what is fundamentally a bilateral matter of disputed sovereignty between two UN member states. The resolution is non-binding.

■ Israel: BBC Arabic Service

Bob Blackman:

[\[159292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the compatibility of the (a) editorial line taken by the BBC's Arabic service on matters relating to the state of Israel with (b) the Government's foreign policy objectives.

Bob Blackman:

[\[159293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of recent reports of bias by the BBC Arabic service in its reporting on Israel.

James Cleverly:

We have made no such assessment. It is not for the government to make judgements about perceived impartiality or bias at the BBC, as the BBC is operationally and editorially independent of government. This is a matter for the BBC Board and Ofcom, as the BBC's regulator. Ofcom is responsible for setting rules to ensure BBC coverage is impartial and accurate under the Broadcasting Code and for holding the BBC to account against its public purposes as the BBC regulator.

■ Mikhail Gutseriev

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[160811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will place sanctions on Russian businessman Mikhail Gutseriev in response to his funding of the Belarussian regime and president Alexander Lukashenko.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has been at the forefront of the international response towards the fraudulent election and human rights violations in Belarus. Alongside Canada, we led on implementing sanctions against Lukashenko and his inner circle under the UK's Global Human Rights Regime. We have also carried over the EU's Belarus sanctions regime into UK law. We are aware of reported links between Mr Gutseriev and the Lukashenko regime but to preserve the integrity of the sanctions process, it would be inappropriate to speculate publicly on future designations.

■ Myanmar: Military Coups

Afzal Khan:

[\[162697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, in light of the recent military coup in Myanmar, what (a) consular support the UK Government is offering to UK citizens in Myanmar and (b) what preparations he has made for repatriation of UK citizens in that country, if necessary.

Nigel Adams:

The British Embassy is following the situation carefully and we will continue to update the travel advice for Myanmar. If British Nationals have concerns for their safety in

the current situation, they should consider leaving Myanmar by commercial means. British Nationals in Myanmar are advised to stay home and stay safe and check the travel advice, which contains information on how to contact the British Embassy or Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Consular officials are working hard to respond to the concerns of British Nationals and are actively responding to events as they develop.

■ Myanmar: Politics and Government

Afzal Khan:

[\[162698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representation he has made to his Myanmar counterpart on clashes between protesters and security forces in that country.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is deeply concerned by the military's seizure of power. We have worked with partners to send a clear message that the coup must end, the democratically elected government be restored and the security forces must end the violent crackdown on peaceful protestors. No UK Minister has engaged with military. Following the recent escalation in violence I [Minister Adams] formally summoned the Myanmar Ambassador on 22 February to register the UK's extreme concern regarding the violent crackdown on protestors and stressed that the security forces must exercise restraint and not use deadly violence against peaceful protestors

■ Occupied Territories: International Court of Justice

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[159294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 18 February 2021 to Question 151690, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 73/295 on the International Criminal Court's determination that it has jurisdiction over East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza.

James Cleverly:

The United Kingdom considers these to be two separate issues. The United Kingdom voted against General Assembly resolution 73/295 and we remain firmly of the view that the International Court of Justice and General Assembly are not the appropriate fora for resolving what is fundamentally a bilateral matter of disputed sovereignty between 2 UN member states. The resolution is non-binding.

■ Occupied Territories: International Criminal Court

Andrew Percy:

[\[158002\]](#)

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

James Cleverly:

We respect the independence of the ICC, and we expect it to exercise due prosecutorial and judicial discipline.

Andrew Percy:

[\[158003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect on the Middle East peace process of the February 2021 International Criminal Court ruling on the situation of Palestine.

James Cleverly:

We respect the independence of the ICC, and we expect it to exercise due prosecutorial and judicial discipline.

■ Overseas Aid

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[161840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the planned reductions to the UK Official Development Assistance budget, whether FCDO country teams are mandated to produce impact assessments and assess the potential effect of reductions in aid on marginalised communities.

Nigel Adams:

The impact of the global pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take the tough but necessary decision to temporarily reduce how much we spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA). The move to a target of spending 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) on ODA, rather than 0.7%, is a temporary measure and we will return to 0.7% when the fiscal situation allows. The UK remains a world leader in international development, and based on current GNI forecasts will spend over £10bn of ODA in 2021. Our aid budget will continue to serve the primary aim of reducing poverty in developing countries.

My department is now working through the implications of the overall reduction in spending for individual programmes. No decisions have yet been made on individual budget allocations. Decisions on aid allocations will take into account the impact on marginalised communities.

■ Overseas Aid: Climate Change

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[161832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the OCED report, 2020 Projections of Climate Finance Towards the USD 100 Billion Goal, whether the UK's contribution to international climate finance took the form of loans note grants to date; and what form the UK's contribution will be in the next five years.

James Duddridge:

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

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 and 10% (£556 million) as equity investments.

Decisions on future programming will be made in due course.

■ Overseas Aid: Females

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[160596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the proposed reduction in Official Development Assistance spending on improving the health of women and girls in the global south.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is proud to defend comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights, including family planning; these are fundamental to the empowerment and health of girls and women in the global south. For example, between 2019 and 2020 alone, UK aid helped over 25 million women and girls use modern methods of contraception.

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

■ Pakistan: Blasphemy

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[161820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Pakistani counterpart on the imprisonment of Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Emmanuel.

Nigel Adams:

The UK government is concerned about the use of blasphemy laws, which are only compatible with international human rights law in narrow circumstances. It is our longstanding policy to oppose the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle. We are therefore concerned about the case of Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Emmanuel, who were sentenced to death in 2014 after being convicted for blasphemy.

We regularly raise at a senior level our concerns about the human rights situation with the Government of Pakistan. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, discussed Freedom of Religion or Belief, including the use of blasphemy laws, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 20 February 2021. Lord Ahmad also raised concerns about the protection of religious minorities with Pakistan's Special Advisor to the Prime Minister for the Interior, Shahzad Akbar, on 7 December 2020.

■ Rohingya: Refugees

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[161733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of recent reports of Rohingya refugees stranded in the Andaman Sea.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government shares concerns over the safety of the Rohingya refugees stranded in the Andaman Sea. The British High Commission in Delhi has made representations to the Government of India, and we understand that India has provided humanitarian support to those on board. We continue to engage with governments in the region, UN agencies and other international partners to support the safety and well-being of all Rohingya refugees. The UK is the second largest donor to the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh, having committed close to £300 million since August 2017. We are also one of the largest donors in Rakhine State, having provided over £25 million for the Rohingya since 2017.

■ Sustainable Development

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[161836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which (a) Minister and (b) official has lead responsibility on Sustainability, Transitions and Co-Financing.

Nigel Adams:

Each Minister takes oversight of these issues as they pertain to the geography that they lead on. The Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, is also responsible for Finance and therefore plays an oversight role.

■ Turkey: Politics and Government

Hilary Benn:

[\[160536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has to his Turkish counterpart on reported threats to Mr. Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu MP.

Wendy Morton:

We are aware of reports of threats being made against Mr Gergerlioğlu, MP for the People's Democratic Party (HDP). We have made it clear to Turkey that we expect the government to undertake any legal processes or actions against opposition parties, MPs, party officials, elected mayors, human rights defenders and journalists, fairly, transparently and with full respect for the rule of law.

We will continue to engage closely with Turkey to encourage the full protection of fundamental rights of all peoples, regardless of their legitimate political affiliations, particularly in the area of freedom of expression and assembly, press freedom and

the treatment of detainees. We note that Turkey adopted a national human rights action plan on 2 March 2021. We welcome this positive development and we encourage the Turkish government to ensure its swift implementation.

■ **UN Human Rights Council**

Craig Williams:

[\[159331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether it is the Government's policy that permanent Agenda Item 7 at the United Nations Human Rights Council represents systematic institutional bias.

James Cleverly:

The UK has stood up for Israel when it faces bias and unreasonable criticism, and has been clear that the existence of a dedicated agenda item ('Item 7') damages the prospect for a two-state solution and does little to advance dialogue, stability or mutual understanding. As such, at the 40th session of the Human Rights Council in March 2019 we moved to voting against all resolutions under Item 7. However, the UN and its member states have every right to address issues of concern in a measured, balanced and proportionate way. We will continue to support scrutiny of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the Human Rights Council, so long as it is justified, proportionate, and not proposed under Item 7.

John Howell:

[\[162543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what position the Government plans to take in the vote in the UN Human Right Council in relation to the Accountability resolution under Item 2 at the current UNHRC session.

John Howell:

[\[162544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the UK Government's policy is in regard to permanent Item 7 at the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Nigel Adams:

The UK has stood up for Israel when it faces bias and unreasonable criticism, and has been clear that the existence of a dedicated agenda item ('Item 7') damages the prospect for a two-state solution and does little to advance dialogue, stability or mutual understanding. As such, at the 40th session of the Human Rights Council in March 2019 we moved to voting against all resolutions under Item 7. However, the UN and its member states have every right to address issues of concern in a measured, balanced and proportionate way. We will continue to support scrutiny of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the Human Rights Council, so long as it is justified, proportionate, and not proposed under Item 7.

■ Volunteering for Development

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[162569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has to approve the next phase of the Volunteering for Development grant in a timely manner.

Wendy Morton:

The impact of the global pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take the tough but necessary decision to temporarily reduce our aid budget.

We are now working through the implications of these changes for individual programmes, including for the Volunteering for Development grant. No decisions have yet been made.

We understand the need to communicate with VSO in a timely manner regarding this grant.

■ Yemen

Anna McMorris:

[\[161846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which international counterparts he discussed the humanitarian and conflict situation in Yemen with prior to the UN Yemen pledging conference on 1 March 2021.

James Cleverly:

Ministers and officials regularly engage with international actors, including the UN and other donors, to ensure life-saving humanitarian aid reaches the millions of Yemenis in need. The only sustainable way to protect civilians and bring long-term stability to Yemen is an inclusive political settlement and an end to the conflict.

On 25 February, the Foreign Secretary spoke to Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan about the Yemen peace process and he has also recently discussed this with US Secretary of State. I discussed Yemen with the Omani Ambassador to the UK on 4 February, and spoke to Yemeni Foreign Minister on 20 January regarding the attack on Aden and the formation of the new cabinet. We fully support the efforts of the UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths to secure a lasting political settlement to the Yemen conflict. I spoke with Martin Griffiths on 1 March to discuss how the UK can best support the UN-led peace process.

■ Yemen: Overseas Aid

Anna McMorris:

[\[161845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the decision to reduce the Government's Official Development Assistance spend in Yemen was made.

Anna McMorris:

[\[161847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) criteria and (b) conditionality his Department has set for increases in the UK's aid contribution to Yemen in 2021-22; and what steps will be taken to establish such criteria.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary has set out seven core priorities which will inform FCDO ODA budgets for 2021/22. These are: climate and biodiversity; Covid and global health security; girls' education; science and research; defending open societies and resolving conflict; humanitarian assistance; and promoting trade and economic growth. FCDO does not apply conditionality to our aid, except where those conditions are linked to the purpose of the funding at hand (for example in results-based aid funding).

The UK's minimum commitment of £87 million to Yemen for financial year 2021/22 was decided and approved by the Foreign Secretary ahead of the UN Pledging Event on 1 March. This is a floor, not a ceiling. Despite the financial pressures at home, the UK remains a leading donor to Yemen and made the 5th highest pledge at the UN pledging conference. In previous years, the UK has exceeded its announced annual commitment to Yemen in response to developments on the ground.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion: Surgery

Ian Paisley:

[\[148787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many women received Evacuation of Retained Products of Conception following a medical abortion between 30 March and 30 November for each of the last five years.

Helen Whately:

The information is not held in the format requested.

■ Additional Restrictions Grant

Helen Hayes:

[\[133080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the adequacy of the Additional Restrictions Grant for local authorities under (a) Tier 3 and (b) Tier 4 covid-19 restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the COVID-19 response. The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) provides an even distribution across England and is equivalent to £20 per head of residential population. Local authorities have discretion on how to support business which may include support for those business not mandated to close but were affected by the restrictions in tier 3 and tier

4. On 5 January the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that local authorities have also been allocated a further £500 million in discretionary funding via the ARG in addition to £1.1 billion already provided.

■ Antenatal Care

Rosie Cooper:

[\[161723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether GPs are required to carry out a mandatory pelvic floor health check on all postnatal patients.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In April 2020 a requirement for general practitioners to offer a universal six to eight week post-natal check was introduced for new mothers. In line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidance, the check should focus on is early identification of pelvic health issues.

■ Asthma: Children

Jim Shannon:

[\[159305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the implications for its policies of the University of London's recent study finding that eating at least two portions of fish a week was associated with a fifty percent reduction in the risk that a child would develop asthma between the ages of 11 and 14 if they carried a certain version of the FADS gene.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England has not made a formal assessment.

■ Betting Shops: Coronavirus

Scott Benton:

[\[102942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government has received evidence that betting shops have contributed to a rise in the transmission of covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have not received any specific evidence.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[119983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of prioritising the use of lateral flow testing for COVID-19 for (a) staff, (b) residents and (c) visitors of care homes to allow safe visitation over the Christmas period.

Helen Whately:

Care home residents are able to access monthly polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests. Staff are able to access weekly PCR testing, as well as twice weekly rapid

lateral flow device (LFD) testing to identify and isolate positive cases. Testing for visitors using LFD was rolled out nationwide from December 2020.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[142074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support he is providing to care homes to help them prepare and manage lateral flow testing for visitors.

Helen Whately:

We consulted with the sector in November and December 2020 via regular working group meetings and in December 2020, the Government announced an extra £149 million of funding to support lateral flow testing in care homes, with testing for visitors a key part of this.

Care homes were provided with guidance, a letter for visitors to set out clear expectations, and a video for visitors explaining how to get tested, use personal protective equipment and practice social distancing.

Jim McMahon:

[\[90200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many care home staff were tested for covid-19 in each Greater Manchester local authority area in each week since 1 July 2020.

Helen Whately:

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

Dan Jarvis:

[\[93599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 testing kits have been distributed to care homes in (a) the Sheffield city region, (b) Yorkshire and the Humber and (c) England.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 September 2020]: We do not hold data for Sheffield and the Yorkshire and Humber region in the format requested. We have sent more than 22 million polymerase chain reaction swab test kits and 16 million lateral flow devices to care homes for testing all residents and staff.

■ Care Homes: Portsmouth

Stephen Morgan:

[\[90219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 test results for care home residents in Portsmouth were deemed to be inconclusive for each month since February 2020.

Helen Whately:

We do not hold data in the format requested.

■ Care Quality Commission: Convictions and Prosecutions

Justin Madders:

[\[157182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) prosecutions have been commenced and (b) convictions have been secured by the CQC against (i) individuals and (ii) organisations in each of the last five years.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The following table details convictions secured by the Care Quality Commission against individuals and organisations in the last five financial years.

FINANCIAL YEAR	ORGANISATION	INDIVIDUALS
2015/16	1	4
2016/17	4	1
2017/18	5	1
2018/19	6	5
2019/20	13	7
2020/21	12	2

As of 25 February 2021, there are 14 prosecutions that have been commenced without a conviction secured of which one is pending trial and the remainder are either guilty pleas or awaiting first hearings.

■ Coronavirus: Children's Play

Nadia Whittome:

[\[160892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will issue guidance on whether outdoor play in public spaces is permitted under covid-19 social distancing regulations.

Nadia Whittome:

[\[160893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing children under 12 to play outside during the period of covid-19 restrictions announced in January 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

It is against the law for anyone, including children under 12 years old, to meet socially with friends outside unless they are part of their household or support bubble.

However, there is an exemption from the stay at home rule for exercise which means that children can take part in physical activity outdoors with their own household.

Playgrounds are permitted to open but children should not mix with other households.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Caroline Lucas:

[89669]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the organisational structure of NHS Test and Trace; how many (a) clinicians, (b) public health directors and (c) members overall there are on the executive committee; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

As of 1 March 2021, the Executive Committee of NHS Test and Trace comprises Baroness Harding and 14 members including one public health clinician. The Executive Committee does not include local directors of public health.

NHS Test and Trace is currently part of the Department and from 1 April will form part of the new National Institute of Health Protection. Organisational structures will be published in line with the policy for this body. We will not be publishing the full NHS Test and Trace organisation structure at this point.

Barbara Keeley:

[91599]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce the time taken for close contacts' details to be obtained by email from people who have tested positive for covid-19 through the test and trace system.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: Once entered into the contact tracing system, positive cases are asked to provide details of their close recent contacts via an online form. Between 14 to 20 January, 42.9% of positive cases responded in this way.

If this process is not completed within eight hours, the case is handed over to a clinical case worker who will attempt to make contact by telephone and will call up to ten times over the next 24-hour period. After 24 hours have elapsed, the case will then be passed on to the relevant local authority for follow up, where a local tracing partnership is in place.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Bill Esterson:

[112034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he was advised that the NHS would be overwhelmed if a national covid-19 lockdown was not implemented in November 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 10 November 2020]: The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies noted on 29 October that in order to manage the overall epidemic, interventions should seek to prevent areas of low prevalence from becoming areas of high prevalence, as well as reducing prevalence where it is high. In the face of continued growth, the 'R' rate should be brought below 1. Failure to do so would have risked very significant pressures on the healthcare system.

Andrew Rosindell:

[118504]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of levels of covid-19 transmission in (a) mobile and static personal hair, beauty and barber mobile services, (b) the hospitality sector and (c) the leisure sector.

Helen Whately:

The Transmission Group within the Department has conducted a qualitative comparative assessment of COVID-19 transmission across various settings.

In hair, beauty and barber services, there is potential for higher than average risk of infection due to people working in close proximity over prolonged periods of time within closed settings with variable hygiene practices.

In the hospitality sector there is potential for higher than average risk due to venues for socialisation such as bars, pubs and restaurants having higher than average proximity and occupant density, prolonged duration of exposure, challenge in maintaining adequate ventilation due to cold weather, enhanced potential for aerosol generation, and face masks not being easily compatible with eating and drinking.

In the leisure sector, settings may vary in terms of air circulation, contact frequency among clients, occupational and socioeconomic factors. Gyms have a much higher than average potential for viral transmission due to increased aerosol generation and high risk of shared surface usage.

Barbara Keeley:

[123553]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the imposition of local covid-19 restrictions on 29 June 2020, what (a) discussions he had and (b) representations he received on the merits of implementing restrictions at a district level.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: Discussions about implementing tier restrictions take place at the COVID Operations Committee. These decisions are based on public health recommendations from senior clinical and scientific advisors, guided by five key indicators - the case detection rate in all age groups; case detection rates among the over 60 year olds; the rate at which case rates are rising or falling; the positivity rate; and pressures on the National Health Service.

A search of the Department's Ministerial Correspondence database for any such representations could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Tulip Siddiq:

[157224]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Prime Minister's statement on 22nd February, whether the rule of six will include and apply to children of all ages.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The rule of six will include and apply to children of all ages. In recognition of the need for greater flexibility for families, we have enabled people to meet outdoors in a group

larger than six people if everyone present is from the same two households. The rule of six restrictions will be kept under continual review.

Munira Wilson: [\[161874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a plan to support GPs to manage the long-term consequences of covid-19 in the community.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 8 March 2021]: Communication with general practitioners (GPs) and the wider health provider community is a key priority in ensuring the best treatment can be provided to patients suffering from 'long' COVID-19. In December 2020, the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence published a rapid guideline on managing the long-term effects of COVID-19. This was developed in partnership with the Royal College of General Practitioners.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have also worked alongside the Royal College of General Practitioners to produce advice for GPs in the management of the long-term effects of COVID-19 and Health Education England to produce e-learning modules on COVID-19 recovery and rehabilitation to support the educational development of healthcare professionals.

■ **Coronavirus: Hospitality Industry**

Daisy Cooper: [\[120149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the spread of (a) droplets and (b) aerosols in hospitality venues that were following covid-secure guidance for Tier 1 before the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 30 November 2020]: We have made no such assessment.

■ **Coronavirus: North of England**

Mr Richard Holden: [\[97048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in (a) County Durham local authority area, (b) North West Durham parliamentary constituency and (c) North East England have (i) been tested for, (ii) tested positive for and (iii) been hospitalised due to covid-19.

Helen Whately:

We do not publish data in the format requested.

■ **Coronavirus: Nurseries**

Sir Desmond Swayne: [\[140730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will extend lateral flow covid-19 testing to privately run nurseries.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: At present, private nurseries are not in scope to receive lateral flow device testing specifically. However, we are encouraging local authorities to prioritise appropriate testing for early years staff via community testing programmes, which now cover all local authorities.

■ Coronavirus: Portsmouth**Stephen Morgan:**[\[87631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 laboratory processing times in the South East on the ability of people in Portsmouth to access such tests.

Helen Whately:

There is no connection between processing times for samples taken in the South East and the ability of people to access testing. Laboratory capacity is sufficient such that anyone currently wishing to access a test should be able to do so. Turnaround times have been improving throughout January and published metrics will show the significant and sustained increase in performance across the network in 2021.

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[140921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the risk of further transmitting covid-19 where NHS Track and Trace informs patients diagnosed with covid-19 that their 10 day isolation period has ended while those patients are still symptomatic and continue to test positive with a covid-19 test.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: Those testing positive for COVID-19 are legally obliged to self-isolate until 10 days after the onset of symptoms or for people who did not have symptoms, 10 days after the date they were tested. In the circumstances where a person remains symptomatic after an initial period of self-isolation, they would be told to continue to self-isolate.

■ Coronavirus: Retail Trade**Rebecca Long Bailey:**[\[112072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of allowing specialist running shops to remain open for the duration of covid-19 lockdown periods, in line with the rules on cycle shops.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government keeps its restrictions, including those relating to specialist running shops, under continual review and will make changes if the data and science supports it.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Emma Hardy:** [\[113627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether covid-19 tests proposed for mass testing of university students prior to Christmas will be rapid lateral flow tests manufactured by Innova Tried and Tested.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: The COVID-19 tests deployed to universities for testing before Christmas were the INNOVA SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Rapid Qualitative Test. These tests are produced by the legal manufacturer Innova and distributed by Tried and Tested.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[133891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to publish the number of lost covid-19 tests.

Helen Whately:

We do not hold the data in the format requested.

Matt Rodda: [\[138029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on the regularly covid-19 testing of asymptomatic NHS staff working in community hospitals in (a) Berkshire and (b) the rest of the country.

Helen Whately:

All National Health Service patient-facing staff in acute, mental health, ambulance and community trusts have been provided with lateral flow tests to enable them to test themselves at home twice a week. Over 25 million tests have been distributed nationally. Lateral flow tests are also being provided across primary care including general practice, community pharmacy, dentistry and optometry. In addition tests have been provided to independent sector providers and community interest companies providing NHS care.

Matt Rodda: [\[138030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to regularly test asymptomatic NHS staff working in community hospitals for covid-19 in (a) Berkshire and (b) England.

Helen Whately:

All National Health Service patient-facing staff in acute, mental health, ambulance and community trusts have been provided with lateral flow tests to enable them to test themselves at home twice a week with over 25 million tests distributed. Lateral flow tests are also being distributed across primary care including general practice, community pharmacy, dentistry and optometry. In addition tests have been provided to independent sector providers and community interest companies providing NHS care.

Tulip Siddiq:

[143028]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cost is of NHS distributed covid-19 home testing kits from dispatch to test result.

Helen Whately:

The cost of COVID-19 home testing kits, including the logistics and laboratory processing costs, depends on the type of testing technology being used. We continuously review our testing technology and delivery channels to ensure we provide sufficient overall testing capacity whilst securing value for money for the taxpayer. The precise information is commercially sensitive.

Peter Kyle:

[146960]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made on supplying high risk supported living care settings with rapid tests as proposed in the November Covid-19 Winter Plan presented by the Prime Minister.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: Following the single round of national testing in the most high-risk extra care and supported living settings, we launched regular polymerase chain reaction retesting on 9 December with weekly testing for staff and monthly for residents. We currently do not offer any rapid lateral flow device testing for high-risk supported living settings. However, we are currently reviewing our position and will provide more information in due course.

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[148816]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what statistical data is publicly available on the (a) location of test centres, (b) records of tests conducted daily, (c) types of tests used daily and (d) results from testing daily.

Helen Whately:

We publish a daily dashboard containing data on daily polymerase chain reaction, antibody and lateral flow testing, with daily data on positive cases by specimen date. The location of test sites is not published on GOV.UK but data on testing is published at national, regional and local authority level. The dashboard is available at the following link:

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

Rachel Reeves:

[150776]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what basis (a) Omega Diagnostics, (b) SureScreen and (c) Global Access Diagnostics were chosen for contracts to produce lateral flow devices for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

SureScreen, Global Access Diagnostics and Omega were selected via targeted engagement with the wider United Kingdom testing industry. This engagement was coordinated via the Rapid Antigen Consortium – an open forum bringing together UK

companies with applicable experience and expertise. Due diligence and relevant commercial processes were applied prior to the contract award.

Jane Hunt: [95251]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the feasibility of extending priority covid-19 testing to the children of key workers.

Helen Whately:

Essential workers can order four test kits for themselves and other symptomatic members of their households. For households of more than four, the 119 contact centre can raise an order on their behalf.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Dr Matthew Offord: [151686]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to implement a long term study of immune responses in people vaccinated against covid-19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England's surveillance strategy will monitor how effective the vaccine is at protecting against a range of outcomes, including infection, symptomatic disease, hospitalisations, mortality, and onward transmission. The surveillance strategy is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-surveillance-strategy>

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation are jointly funding the UK Coronavirus Immunology Consortium to address key questions around the immune system's response to COVID-19. The NIHR's Health Protection Research Unit in Respiratory Infections is also looking at the size and longevity of the immune response.

Justin Madders: [151743]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to commission a long term study of immune responses in people vaccinated against covid-19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England's surveillance strategy will continue to monitor how effective the vaccine is at protecting against a range of outcomes including infection, symptomatic disease, hospitalisations, mortality and onwards transmission. The surveillance strategy is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-surveillance-strategy>

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and the UK Research and Innovation are jointly funding the UK Coronavirus Immunology Consortium to address key questions around the immune system's response to COVID-19. The NIHR's

Health Protection Research Unit in Respiratory Infections is also looking at the size and longevity of the immune response.

Ruth Jones:

[151844]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to implement a long term study of immune responses in people vaccinated against covid-19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England's surveillance strategy will monitor how effective the vaccine is at protecting against a range of outcomes, including infection, symptomatic disease, hospitalisations, mortality and onward transmission. The surveillance strategy is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-surveillance-strategy>.

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), are jointly funding the UK Coronavirus Immunology Consortium (UK-CIC) to address key questions around the immune system's response to COVID-19. The NIHR's Health Protection Research Unit in Respiratory Infections is also looking at the size and longevity of the immune response.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[161848]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) covid-19 testing staff and (b) all covid-19 vaccinators are included in the covid-19 vaccination priority group of frontline health and social care workers.

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. They will be considered frontline healthcare workers as advised by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). Laboratory staff and those at sites for asymptomatic testing are not considered frontline healthcare workers and therefore will not be eligible for early vaccine prioritisation.

Debbie Abrahams:

[162613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of care home workers have received a covid-19 vaccine to date.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England publish weekly data on the number of social care staff who are eligible for vaccination and the number of vaccines delivered to social care staff. The data is available at the following link:

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

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**Sarah Owen:****[138087]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that his Department responds to named day Written Questions within five sitting days.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 19 January 2021]: Since March 2020, the Department has received a huge increase in the number of Written Question tabled. In the last calendar year to 1 March 2021, we have received over 13,000 Written Questions and as a result response times have significantly fallen. We have created and put into action an iterative recovery plan, the objectives of which are to increase the number of questions answered on time, to clear the backlog of overdue questions and to ensure high-quality answers.

■ Doctors: Civil Proceedings**Alex Norris:****[161849]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2021 to Question 147020, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that doctors do not face excessive litigation as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Alex Norris:**[161850]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2021 to Question 147020, what discussions he has had with (a) medical defence organisations and (b) other professional bodies on the long-term impact the fear of litigation has had on doctors during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In April 2020, the Department wrote to National Health Service staff to reassure them that state indemnity for clinical negligence is in place to cover their work on the COVID-19 response even where services are reorganised. To enable this, in March 2020 the Government secured new indemnity powers in the Coronavirus Act 2020, to cover any parts of the response not in scope of the existing state indemnity schemes administered by NHS Resolution.

Also in March 2020, the regulators of health and care professionals, including the General Medical Council, issued a joint statement. This made clear that any concerns about registered professionals will always be considered on the specific facts of the case, taking into account the environment in which the professional is working, including the challenging circumstances brought about by COVID-19.

There have been no specific discussions between the Department and medical defence organisations and other professional bodies on this issue.

■ Down's Syndrome: Screening

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[157172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to guidance published by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Royal College of Midwives and the Society and College of Radiographers that emphasises the need to discuss the results of prenatal testing for Down's syndrome in a 'non-directive' manner, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that that guidance is being followed.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department expects clinicians to take note of the consensus statement published by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Royal College of Midwives and the Society of Radiographers on pregnancy screening.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists are currently reviewing their clinical guidelines on non-invasive prenatal testing and guidance for the care of women through antenatal screening and further diagnostic testing.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Retail Trade

Alex Cunningham:

[\[110821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will reconsider the decision to close specialist shops selling vaping products during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown in England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: Hygiene and social distancing measures are vitally important for reducing the transmission risk of COVID-19. We know that the virus spreads readily in any indoor environment where members of different households and/or support bubbles spend time together, so the transmission risk in indoor settings, such as specialist shops selling vaping products, remains high. On this basis the decision was made to close non-essential shops during the November 2020 national restrictions.

■ Endometriosis: Diagnosis

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[161819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking in response to the recommendations by the APPG on Endometriosis Inquiry Report 2020 entitled Endometriosis in the UK: to reduce diagnosis to four years or less by 2025, and a year or less by 2030.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The report raises a number of important issues concerning the treatment and diagnosis of endometriosis which will be carefully considered as part of our ongoing work in women's health.

■ England Infected Blood Support Scheme

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[161705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to provide assurance to people receiving regular support through the England Infected Blood Support Scheme that they will not be forced to leave that scheme after the Inquiry.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We will consider any recommendations when the Infected Blood Inquiry reports, including any around financial support. There is no intention to reduce the amount of financial support given to beneficiaries.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[161706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that after the Inquiry into Contaminated Blood no beneficiary of the England Infected Blood Support Scheme will be financially worse off.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We will consider any recommendations when the Infected Blood Inquiry reports, including any around financial support.

■ Health Services: Haringey

Catherine West: [\[162666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing funding for health-related capital investment in Haringey.

Edward Argar:

Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust has recently received £773,000 as part of the critical infrastructure risk fund. The capital settlement has now been confirmed with HM Treasury and we will consider carefully how the next round of projects are prioritised.

Local health systems, including North Central London Partners in Health and Care, will shortly be receiving confirmation of their capital funding for 2021/22, which will enable them to progress priority investments agreed with local health partners.

■ Home Care Services: Coronavirus

Mr Richard Holden: [\[109726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when asymptomatic testing for covid-19 will be rolled out for domiciliary care workers in England.

Helen Whately:

Home carers working for Care Quality Commission registered organisations are able to access weekly polymerase chain reaction tests to administer at home to help

identify more asymptomatic cases and protect care recipients who are more vulnerable to COVID-19.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[142981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the guidance for eligibility for regular covid-19 testing for (a) personal assistants providing social and health care in the homes of their clients and (b) people working for agencies not registered with CQC is planned to be updated.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: On 23 November 2020, we began offering Care Quality Commission registered domiciliary care organisations access to regular, weekly COVID-19 testing for their carers looking after people in their own homes. We have also extended testing to personal assistants.

Agency staff working for care homes or domiciliary care organisations should access regular testing through the organisation they are working for. Agency staff working for an individual receiving care will be able to access testing in the same way as personal assistants.

■ Hospitals: Admissions

Jim Shannon:

[\[160659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the proportion of people of hospital being treated for (a) covid-19 and (b) other reasons in each region of the UK in each of the last 12 months.

Edward Argar:

Data on the percentage of patients admitted to hospital with COVID-19 and for other reasons is attached. Data is only available for England from August 2020 – January 2021.

■ Infant Mortality

Mohammad Yasin:

[\[157237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, following the publication in December 2020 of the MBRRACE-UK Perinatal Mortality Surveillance Report for births in 2018, which showed that since 2016 the rate of neonatal deaths for twins had increased and the gap between the stillbirth rate for multiples compared to singletons had widened, what steps he is taking to tackle that inequality.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are on track to surpass the 2020 ambition for a 20% reduction in the stillbirth rate and the neonatal mortality rate for babies born after 24 weeks gestation.

Through the Maternity Safety Strategy, we are working to understand the causes of stillbirths and neonatal deaths to prevent avoidable deaths.

■ Joint Biosecurity Centre**Andy Slaughter:**[\[123541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November to Question 95024, how many consultants from the Boston Consulting Group were deployed at the new Joint Biosecurity Centre as of 29 September 2020; and what the average day rate for each consultant was.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: The Joint Biosecurity Centre does not employ any consultants from Boston Consulting Group.

■ Laboratories: Coronavirus**John Spellar:**[\[87479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what laboratory capacity in universities and colleges he has secured for covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 14 September 2020]: We do not publish data on individual laboratory capacities. We have six Lighthouse Laboratories operating with a range of partners across the United Kingdom at Milton Keynes, Alderley Park, Glasgow, Cambridge, Newport and Charnwood. We have additional Lighthouse Laboratories in Newcastle, Brant's Bridge and Plymouth opening over the coming months.

In addition to the growing Lighthouse Laboratory network, there are partnership agreements with the public, private and academic sectors. This includes Antrim Laboratory in Northern Ireland, and partner laboratories at Birmingham University, Imperial College London, Queen Mary University of London, Kings Health Partners and a partnership between Health Services Laboratories and University College London.

■ Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review**Cat Smith:**[\[158111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken steps to create a redress agency for people harmed by medicines, including sodium valproate, as recommended in the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have no current plans to establish a redress agency. The Government is able to establish redress schemes on individual issues without the need for a new organisation and has done so several times. Our primary focus is on improving medicines and medical devices safety, setting high standards for industry to market and manufacture products, with the aim of reducing harm in the future.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Andrew Selous:

[\[160553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set out a timetable for the inclusion of couples therapists trained to address parental conflict in the specification for multi-disciplinary teams working in child and adolescent mental health services.

Andrew Selous:

[\[160554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set out a timetable for the inclusion of parental conflict being in factors routinely assessed in mental health services for children and young people.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have no plans to do so.

The inclusion of family-focused interventions are for local commissioning and clinical determination. There is no single 'specification' for children and young people's mental health services or child and adolescent mental health services. It is not a single service or pathway and the term refers to the range of services that offer support based on different needs. In response to a National Health Service benchmarking project on children and young people's mental health services, 99% of providers that responded confirmed that they offer family therapy in joint and group work.

■ Mental Health Services: Finance

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[162669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to page 84 of Budget Report 2021, how much funding in total will be allocated to mental health services

Ms Nadine Dorries:

As highlighted in the Budget Report 2021, the 2020 Comprehensive Spending Review confirmed an additional £3 billion for the National Health Service in 2021/22, on top of the already agreed funding for the NHS Long Term Plan settlement, to support the NHS recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of that £3 billion, the NHS will receive around an additional £500 million in 2021/22, to address waiting times for mental health services, provide more people with mental health support and invest in the workforce.

■ Mental Health: Law

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[\[157097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to bring forward legislative proposals to reform mental health laws.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

On 13 January 2021 we published our white paper on reform of the Mental Health Act 1983. We have launched a 14-week consultation inviting views from the public, professionals, service users and carers and will also engage with those from protected groups to ensure we get this once in a generation opportunity right. The consultation ends 21 April 2021. This will inform the development of a Mental Health Bill.

■ National Food Crime Unit**Sir Greg Knight:**[\[162522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to improve the (a) effectiveness and (b) powers of the National Food Crime Unit, and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 8 March 2021]: The Government recognises the importance of the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) and its achievements so far in tackling serious and complex food crime. It has developed effective capabilities in intelligence and investigations but its capacity to operate with full autonomy and achieve a maximum return on investment would be enhanced with additional investigative powers. This would relieve the burden on other law enforcement partners who face other competing demands and is fully supported by the police and food industry. Ministers are in dialogue with the NFCU, industry and the police with a view to relieving police forces from some of the application of justice in this area.

■ NHS Test and Trace**Munira Wilson:**[\[127001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much of the £22 billion allocated to NHS Test and Trace is being spent on local authority contact tracing teams.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: The Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) provides funding to local authorities in England to be used for test, trace and contain activity in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their area.

To date, over £1 billion has been committed to English local authorities through the fund. The Government is providing further funding worth over £225 million per month during the national restrictions which can be used to fund local public health activities, such as additional contact tracing, testing for hard-to-reach groups and public health communications. Funding from the COMF has undergone a review with HM Treasury in January 2021. The outcome of this review will inform funding from the COMF between now and the end of the financial year.

Justin Madders:

[129038]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the performance of the online systems used by the NHS Test and Trace service.

Helen Whately:

No such assessment has been made.

■ **NHS: Private Finance Initiative**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[161772]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many private finance initiative contracts related to energy there are in the NHS.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[161773]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) guidance and (b) mechanisms are available to NHS trusts that are seeking to close a private finance initiative contract.

Edward Argar:

We are not aware of any Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) contracts listed on the HM Treasury database for the National Health Service which are primarily related to energy, although energy provision may be included in some of the NHS' larger acute care sector PFI contracts.

In 2014 HM Treasury provided advice to Accounting Officers on considerations they should make when agreeing to the early termination of contracts. An addendum was provided to this letter in 2015 that related specifically to Public Private Partnership (PPP) and PFI contracts. These are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dao-0214-early-termination-of-contracts>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dao-0214-early-termination-of-ppp-and-pfi-contracts>

The precise mechanism to terminate a PFI or PPP contract early will depend on the terms of the individual contract. Early termination of a PFI or PPP contract would require approval from NHS England and NHS Improvement, the Department for Health and Social Care and HM Treasury.

■ **Patient Safety Commissioner**

Rosie Duffield:

[161843]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps have been taken to appoint a Patient Safety Commissioner as recommended by the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

On 14 December 2020, the Government tabled an amendment to the Medicine and Medical Devices Bill to establish an independent Patient Safety Commissioner for

England and so accepting the second recommendation of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review. The Medicines and Medical Devices Act achieved Royal Assent on 11 February 2021 and establishes the Commissioner position and its main duties and powers.

The everyday workings of the Commissioner are to be finalised and regulations will be made setting out further details about the appointment and operation of the Commissioner such as the terms of office, finances and other support. Officials are now working with legal and appointment colleagues to confirm timelines and begin both the regulation and appointment process for the Commissioner.

■ Pharmacy: Coronavirus

Kate Hollern: [\[159323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of waiving the repayment of the £370 million allocated to community pharmacies during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Discussions are ongoing with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC) on additional funding for costs incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. The PSNC has proposed that the £370 million increased advance payments are not paid back to cover the COVID-19 costs incurred by community pharmacies. That proposal is being looked at as part of the Government's ongoing assessment of COVID-19 costs incurred by the sector.

■ Protective Clothing: Production

John Spellar: [\[160527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he taking to encourage the production of high grade personal protective masks in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

In April 2020, Lord Deighton was appointed to spearhead Make UK and increase manufacturing of personal protective equipment (PPE) from United Kingdom-based companies.

We have established UK manufacturing across all product categories except gloves and body bags, establishing our domestic supply base in a way that will build resilience in UK supply chains in the future. We now have four Make UK providers manufacturing FFP3 facemasks in the UK.

■ Secure Psychiatric Units

Derek Twigg: [\[160538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant his to Answer of 25 February 2021 to Question 145740, on Secure Psychiatric Units, what is the expected date of publication of the 2020 report.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Officials at Manchester University have advised the estimated publication date for the report is spring 2021.

■ Test and Trace Support Payment**Emma Hardy:**[\[120128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to make the Track and Trace Support Payment Scheme available to people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to covid-19 and who are shielding.

Helen Whately:

The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme will continue to assist low-income workers who cannot work from home as a result of being told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

Jon Trickett:[\[91938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether local councils have the jurisdiction to issue self-isolation payments to people who have been instructed to self-isolate but do not possess a reference number from NHS Test and Trace.

Helen Whately:

The Test and Trace Support Payment is available to people who are required to self-isolate, are on a low income and will lose income because they are unable to work from home. A pre-requisite for applying for a Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment is an NHS Test and Trace Account ID. Those contacted by NHS Test and Trace local contact tracers will be provided with an account ID. Those contacted by the app will need to request an account ID. Local authorities do not have the jurisdiction to issue self-isolation payments without this reference number.

Alec Shelbrooke:[\[99590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether low-income parents or guardians of a child who has been instructed to self-isolate by their school will be eligible to apply for the covid-19 £500 Test and Trace Support payment.

Helen Whately:

The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is for people on low incomes who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or the NHS COVID-19 app, either because they have tested positive or because they are a close contact of someone who has tested positive. We have worked closely with local authorities to monitor the effectiveness of the scheme and have listened to feedback from charities and support groups. We are now extending the scheme to summer 2021 and expanding eligibility to cover parents and guardians who have to take time off work to care for a child who is self-isolating.

■ University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[147724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) outpatient and (b) inpatient appointments were generated by University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust in (i) October, (ii) November and (iii) December 2020; and how many of those appointments in each category were subsequently cancelled within fourteen days.

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[147725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) outpatient and (b) inpatient appointments were generated by University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust in (i) December 2019 and (ii) December 2020; and how many of those appointments in each category were subsequently cancelled within fourteen days.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: Data on outpatient and inpatient appointments for University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust in October, November and December 2020 and the number cancelled within fourteen days is shown in the following table.

OCTOBER 2020	NOVEMBER 2020	DECEMBER 2020	
Total inpatient appointments offered	7,929	8,245	7,431
Total inpatient appointments cancelled	639	799	773
Total outpatient appointments offered	66,866	67,230	63,234
Total outpatient appointments cancelled	3906	4076	3865

Data on how many outpatient and inpatient appointments for University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust in December 2019 and December 2020 and the number cancelled within fourteen days is shown in the following table.

DECEMBER 2019	DECEMBER 2020	
Total inpatient appointments offered	6,575	5,888
Total inpatient appointments Cancelled	872	687

TOTAL OUTPATIENT

APPOINTMENTS OFFERED	63,197	85,082
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Total outpatient appointments cancelled	556	660
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HOME OFFICE

■ **Animal Experiments: Licensing****Alex Sobel:**[\[161856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for project licences to conduct experiments on animals under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 were refused permission between January and December 2020.

Victoria Atkins:

No applications for a project licence to conduct experiments on animals under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 were refused between 01 January and 31 December 2020.

Alex Sobel:[\[161857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's transparency data, Non-technical summaries granted in 2020: Projects granted under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 in 2020, published on 15 December 2020, what steps are being taken to ensure that licence applicants conduct more extensive research into non-animal methods that could be used as an alternative to animals.

Victoria Atkins:

Standard Condition 1 of all Establishment licences under The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 requires each establishment to have systems in place to ensure activities at the establishment follow the principles of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement). On inspection, The Home Office requires documented evidence that establishment licence holders are fulfilling this standard condition. The Home Office will require documented evidence on compliance by delivery of governance structures at the establishment, including, but not limited to; the functioning of the local Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB); the functioning of named persons (particularly the Named Information Officer) and documented evidence that licences are reviewed during their lifetime for application of the 3Rs. The Home Office may also review applications as required and can require them to be amended if 3Rs developments become available in their lifetime.

Project licence applicants are required to ensure their programme of work does not involve any regulated procedures for which there is a scientifically satisfactory

alternative method or testing strategy that does not entail the use of a protected animal. The Home Office requires applicants to provide information on which non-animal alternatives they have considered for the work they propose and describe why they are not suitable in achieving the objectives. Applicants are expected to make best endeavours in using search strategies. This should include the available searchable databases and resources such as those available through the NC3Rs website.

To ensure licence applicants effectively apply the 3Rs it is mandatory that all licence holders have undertaken accredited modular training on the 3Rs.

Alex Sobel: [\[161858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many licences to conduct animal experiments under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 were granted between July 2020 and December 2020.

Victoria Atkins:

A total of 231 project licences were granted under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 that authorised the use of animals in experiments between 01 July and 31 December 2020.

■ Asylum

Helen Hayes: [\[161815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average duration of the Dublin III regulation procedure is, from the moment an outgoing request is issued to the UK until the effective transfer to the Member State responsible.

Helen Hayes: [\[161816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average duration of the Dublin III regulation procedure is, from the moment another Member State accepts responsibility until the effective transfer from the UK.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office did not centrally record the duration of the various processes whilst bound by the Dublin regulations and this information could now only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Asylum: Detainees

Helen Hayes: [\[161817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum applicants were in immigration removal centres at the end of 2020.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not centrally record the asylum status of individuals detained within the immigration estate. In order to determine this figure individual case records would need to be reviewed, which could only be completed at disproportionate cost.

■ Au Pairs: EU Nationals

Ed Davey:

[\[162505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what explicit provision she plans to make in the UK visa system to allow young people to come to the UK from the EU to work as an au pair.

Kevin Foster:

As has been the case since 2008, the UK's points-based immigration system does not include a dedicated visa route for au pairs. We will not introduce one for similar reasons to why successive governments deciding not to reintroduce a route for non-EEA nationals.

Those who have general rights to work in the UK, such as those who arrive under our Youth Mobility Schemes (YMS), as dependants of those settled in the UK or those who have settled status, would be able to undertake such roles.

We remain committed to operating and expanding our YMS, yet each YMS is based on a reciprocal arrangement with another country to reflect them delivering an element of exchange, they are not a one-way route for recruiting overseas.

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine

Rachel Reeves:

[\[145002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Data on health measures at the UK border, published on 10 September 2020, when she plans to publish further statistics on the performance of the Isolation Assurance Service.

Kevin Foster:

The Government continues to identify whether it is possible to publish a further data set which will provide more detail in support of the measures at the UK border.

No date is yet set for publication.

■ Members: Correspondence

John Spellar:

[\[159239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Warley of 3 December 2020 on Mr Abdul Rahi.

Chris Philp:

UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded on 1 March 2021.

■ Migrant Workers: Au Pairs and Day Care

Nickie Aiken:

[\[161869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 155387, how private individuals or households can employ

skilled childcare workers from overseas since they are unable to register as approved UK employers.

Kevin Foster:

It is possible for skilled professional childcare workers to be employed through the Skilled Worker route. This would require the salary to reach a sufficient threshold, along with the employment structure of such roles to be facilitated through a registered company, whom holds a valid sponsor licence.

In addition, there are other immigration routes which lead to general work rights in the UK, such as those who arrive under our family routes or our Youth Mobility Schemes (YMS). Although it should be noted our YMS is primarily an exchange system based on reciprocal arrangements, it is not intended as a one-way route to sourcing labour overseas.

While I recognise the importance of childcare for many people, immigration cannot be the first recourse for employers, especially at a time when many UK based workers are facing uncertainty due to the economic impact of the global pandemic. There are many childcare options available from within the resident labour market which should be considered in the first instance.

■ **Migrants: Detainees**

Apsana Begum:

[159372]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many non-British nationals who have served their sentence remain held in prison under immigration powers awaiting deportation.

Chris Philp:

This Government puts the rights of the British public before those of criminals, and we are clear that foreign criminals should be deported from the UK wherever it is legal and practical to do so.

The Home Office publishes data on people in detention as at the last day of the quarter in the ' [Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#) '. The number of people in detention held in an HM Prison under immigration powers, published on the 25 February 2021, is available from table Det_D02 of the [Detention detailed datasets](#). Information on those who have served their sentence and remain held in prison under immigration powers awaiting deportation is not available in a reportable format.

We make every effort to ensure that a person's removal by deportation coincides, as far as possible, with their release from prison on completion of sentence. Where an FNO refuses to cooperate with the removal or deportation process, they may be detained. Foreign national offenders held in detention have the option to apply to an independent immigration judge for bail at any point.

Since January 2019, we have returned 7,240 FNOs, and we make no apology for protecting the public.

■ Protest

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[161694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment has been made of the effect on freedom of speech of bringing forward further legislative proposals to limit protests.

Kit Malthouse:

In the development of legislation that will allow police to take a more proactive approach in managing highly disruptive protests, the Home Office has paid due regard to the European Convention on Human Rights, most notably articles 10 and 11 which relate to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association, respectively.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Jim Shannon:

[\[159304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has held discussions with Cabinet colleagues on how the UK will allow international travel when the global covid-19 infection rate decreases.

Kevin Foster:

As set out in the Roadmap to Recovery, future decisions will be considered by the Global Travel Taskforce which will report with recommendations for resuming international travel on 12 April.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Regulations: Fire Prevention

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[161704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what building types will be covered by the research into property protection for the technical review of Approved Document B as anticipated by the workplan adopted in April 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

The research team will be expected to consider evidence regarding all building types within scope of the statutory guidance to the Building Regulations with regards to fire safety (Approved Document B).

■ Building Safety Fund

Hilary Benn:

[\[162511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether, in respect of buildings with unsafe cladding, he has inserted a contract clause to say that leaseholders cannot claim assistance for cladding repairs from the Building Safety Fund unless they can prove that they have sufficient funding to complete all necessary fire safety works; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Safety Fund will cover all safety works directly related to the removal and replacement of unsafe non-ACM cladding systems. However, we must ensure that the remediation of the unsafe cladding systems is not delayed by any funding shortfalls for any additional works the applicant may want to take forward at the same time that are not eligible for funding. There is no requirement within the contract for applicants to perform other fire safety works at the same time as cladding works, and if the applicant chooses to perform other works as separate projects, this will not affect the payment of funding for cladding remediation.

■ Building Safety Fund: Leeds**Hilary Benn:**[\[162512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason the managing agent of Clarence House, Leeds has not yet been informed of the outcome of the full review of the evidence supplied in connection with their appeal against refusal of Building Safety Fund support given the 15 working day deadline for that response.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department is continuing to work with building owners to advance applications and appeals for the Building Safety Fund. Any registrants wishing to check their appeal progress can contact the Appeals team through the email address used to submit their appeal.

■ Buildings: Insulation**Rushanara Ali:**[\[159308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to mandate developers to take full responsibility for covering the costs of unsafe cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has been clear that it is the building owner or responsible person that is responsible for removing unsafe cladding from their buildings and it is the building owner or responsible person that faces enforcement action if they do not do so.

Depending on the terms of individual leases, building owners may be entitled to pass on costs to leaseholders. However, the Government expects building owners to meet remediation costs without passing them on to leaseholders wherever possible, through their own resources or by recovering costs from applicable warranty schemes or from the developers or contractors who were responsible for the installation of unsafe cladding, as is happening with more than half of the private sector buildings with unsafe ACM cladding.

Where this may not be possible the Government is providing over £5 billion of funding to protect leaseholders living in residential buildings over 18m with unsafe cladding from the costs of remediation.

However, it is fundamental that the industry that caused this legacy of unsafe buildings is made to contribute for compromising public safety. We will be setting out details of a forthcoming industry/developer levy.

Florence Eshalomi:

[R] [\[161889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if his Department will publish in full the evidential basis for the 18 metre threshold criteria required to apply for Government grants for the removal of dangerous cladding.

Florence Eshalomi:

[R] [\[162723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if his Department will publish in full the evidential basis behind his decision to disqualify buildings under 18 metres from the (a) Building Safety Fund and (b) Waking Watch Relief Fund; and which industry experts were consulted ahead of that decision.

Christopher Pincher:

We are taking decisive action to improve building safety and prioritising unsafe cladding which is a higher risk and can act as a fire accelerant – and is a greater risk in higher rise blocks. Home Office analysis of fire and rescue service statistics shows buildings between 18 and 30 metres are four times as likely to suffer a fire with fatalities or serious casualties than apartment buildings in general. 18 metres is also the height at which building standards become more restrictive in England and presumptions about firefighting tactics change

It is right that we prioritise action on higher rise buildings (over 18 metres) where risk to multiple households is greater when fire spreads. It is therefore the height criterion we have chosen for the Building Safety Fund and the Waking Watch Relief Fund. For the purposes of the Building Safety Fund we are allowing a tolerance of 30cm to this measurement so where there is appropriate evidence that a building measures 17.7 metres or above it will be eligible in regard to its height. This is to allow for measurement error, the potential for ground levels to have varied from the original design and the settlement of the building over time.

■ Children: Social Services

Rushanara Ali:

[\[159306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the report by children's charities, entitled Children and young people's services: Funding and spending 2010-11 to 2018-19, published in May 2020, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the £2.2 billion reduction in funding available for local authority children's services since 2010-11 identified in that report.

Luke Hall:

The last three local government finance settlement announcements have all included real terms increases to local authorities. For 2021-22, Government is making £2.3 billion extra available to local government in 2021-22. This means that next year, Core Spending Power in England will rise by up to 4.6% in cash terms.

Supporting councils to maintain critical mainstream services, such as Children's Services continues to be our key priority. This year's local government finance settlement rolled forward £1.4 billion of Social Care Grant funding from 2020-21, and added a further £300 million funding, taking the total Social Care Grant to £1.7 billion for 2021/22.

Rushanara Ali:[\[159307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that funding allocations for local authority children's services account for (a) geographical differences in deprivation and (b) levels of need.

Luke Hall:

The 2021-22 Local Government Finance Settlement provided £1.7 billion in Social Care Grant, which will support local authorities to provide care to vulnerable children, children in care, looked after children, and children with disabilities. Councils are also free to use any un-ringfenced funding, including their annual core settlement allocation, to support local priorities, such as Children's Social Care

This Government is committed to putting funding where there is relative need. Both Social Care Grant and the core settlement are distributed through relative needs formulas, and these formulas take into account local levels of need and deprivation

We are also in the process of updating both the Adult and Children's needs formulas, and will work with councils on how best to use these new formulas in the future.

■ Coventry City Council: Coronavirus**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[161781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to provide (a) financial and (b) other support to Coventry Local Authority during the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

The Government has allocated over £8 billion directly to councils since the start of the pandemic

In addition, local authorities are expected to receive over £3 billion of support in 2021-22, for both additional expenditure pressures and loss of income

This takes the total support committed to councils in England to tackle the impacts of COVID-19 to over £11 billion. This includes an additional £1.55 billion of grant funding to meet additional service pressures, £670 million of new grant funding to enable them to continue reducing council tax bills for more than 4 million vulnerable

households, and an estimated £800 million to compensate local authorities for 75% per cent of irrecoverable losses of council tax and business rates revenues this year

Coventry City Council received over £54 million in additional funding in 2020/21, and will receive at least an additional £11 million in unringfenced funding in 2021/22

Next year, Core Spending Power in England will rise by up to 4.6% in cash terms, from £49.0 billion in 2020-21 to up to £51.3 billion in 2021-22. This real terms increase builds on the largest year on year increase in spending power in a decade last year, and recognises the resources councils need to meet their pressures and maintain critical services. For Coventry City Council, this corresponds to an increase of over £13 million, or 5.1%

We continue to keep the financial position of councils under close review, and have been clear that we will stand behind councils and ensure they have the resources to play their part in the COVID response

We would ask that any local authority that is faced with an unmanageable pressure or is concerned about its future financial position should approach MHCLG for discussion.

■ **European Social Fund: Northern Ireland**

Jim Shannon:

[\[159302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the opportunities within the community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland to help shape the successor programme to 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. The Government will publish a UK-wide investment framework in Spring 2021 and confirm multi-year funding profiles at the next Spending Review.

The Government has been engaging with key stakeholders on the design and priorities of the UKSPF since 2016, including holding a series of engagement events. Over 500 stakeholders attended these events across a variety of sectors, including businesses, public bodies (such as Local Enterprise Partnerships, Mayoral Combined Authorities, local governments), higher education institutions, voluntary and charity sector and rural partnership groups. Our engagement events have taken place across the UK including in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. We will continue to work closely with interested parties as we develop the Fund.

■ **Evictions: Coronavirus**

Debbie Abrahams:

[\[162615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the (a) number and (b) proportion of (i) private and (ii) social

renters who are at risk of eviction in 2021 as a result of rent arrears accrued during the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

Data from the English Housing Survey (EHS) Household Resilience Study for June-July 2020 shows that 7% of private rented households and 11% of social rented households were in rent arrears in June/July. The Department does not hold data to estimate the number or proportion of renters who are at risk of eviction in 2021 as a result of those arrears.

■ **High Rise Flats: Insulation**

Mike Amesbury: [\[162692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish further details on the proposed levy on developers building certain high-rise buildings in England to fund the remediation of dangerous high-rise buildings.

Christopher Pincher:

We will be setting out details of the levy in due course, and it will be implemented through the forthcoming Building Safety Bill.

Mike Amesbury: [\[162692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what his planned timescale is for the release of the additional funding for the remediation of buildings with unsafe non-ACM cladding over 18 metres.

Mike Amesbury: [\[162693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when further details of the £3.5 billion additional funding for the remediation of buildings with dangerous non-ACM cladding over 18 metres will be released.

Christopher Pincher:

We will publish more details on how the additional funding for the removal of unsafe cladding announced on 10 February will work alongside existing funds.

■ **Housing: Carbon Emissions**

Catherine West: [\[162665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward proposals for new housing regulations to help decrease carbon emissions from new housing.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government remains committed to meeting its target of net zero emissions by 2050 and recognises the important contribution that the energy efficiency of buildings has to make in meeting it. We must ensure that the energy efficiency standards we set through the Building Regulations for new homes put us on track to meet the 2050

target. From 2021, new homes will be expected to produce 31% less CO₂ emissions compared to current standards, and from 2025, the Future Homes Standard (FHS) will ensure that new homes produce at least 75% lower CO₂ emissions compared to those built to current standards. Homes built under the FHS will be 'zero carbon ready', which means that in the longer term, no further retrofit work for energy efficiency will be necessary to enable them to become zero-carbon homes as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise.

We must ensure that all parts of industry are ready to meet the FHS from 2025, which will be challenging to deliver in practice, by supporting industry to take a first step towards the new standard. The interim uplift in 2021 will deliver a meaningful reduction in carbon emissions and provide a stepping stone to the FHS in 2025. Our work on a full technical specification for the FHS, which will provide proposals for the technical detail and associated draft guidance of the FHS, has been accelerated and we will consult on this in 2023. We also intend to introduce the necessary legislation in 2024, ahead of implementation in 2025.

■ Housing: Insulation

Mike Amesbury:

[\[162689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish details of the funding scheme for loans for leaseholders in buildings under 18 metres that require the remediation of dangerous cladding.

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[R\] \[162722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if his Department will publish details of (a) how and (b) when the loan scheme announced in February 2021 for the costs of remediating buildings under 18 metres with dangerous cladding can be accessed by leaseholders.

Christopher Pincher:

On 10 February, we announced a generous finance scheme, which will provide leaseholders in buildings of 11-18m with access to finance for cladding remediation costs, and a commitment that their monthly cladding repayment costs will not exceed £50 a month.

We will publish more information soon.

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[R\] \[162724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if his Department will undertake a comprehensive review into the number of multi-residential buildings under 18 metres which require fire safety remediation work in England.

Christopher Pincher:

MHCLG has begun a pilot data collection project for 11-18m residential buildings to identify materials in use and to inform the design of a wider national 11-18m data collection exercise, and we will be publishing further details.

Florence Eshalomi:

[R] [\[162725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if his Department will publish an estimated timescale for the completion of remediation work on all multi-residential buildings of all heights with dangerous cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has rightly targeted funding at the removal of unsafe cladding on higher rise buildings (over 18 metres), where the risk is greater and the cost of cladding remediation is higher. It is our strong expectation that building owners will have completed ACM remedial works on all high-rise residential buildings by the end of 2021. We also expect owners of buildings with unsafe non-ACM buildings systems supported by the Building Safety Fund to be started on site by September 2021. Our monthly published updates on ACM remediation progress and Building Safety Fund statistics can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/building-safety-programme.

We will announce further details on the additional £3.5 billion in funding announced on 10 February, and how it will work alongside existing funding schemes.

Florence Eshalomi:

[R] [\[162726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has undertaken an assessment of the potential effect of the loan scheme announced on 10 February 2021 for remediating buildings under 18 metres with dangerous cladding on the future sale of affected properties.

Christopher Pincher:

On 10 February, we announced a generous finance scheme, which will provide leaseholders in buildings of 11-18m with access to finance for cladding remediation costs, and a commitment that their monthly cladding repayment costs will not exceed £50 a month.

The package of measures that we announced will not only provide greater certainty to leaseholders but also to mortgage lenders and the housing market and will help to restore the effective lending, purchasing and selling of properties.

We will publish more information on how the finance scheme will work as soon as we are in a position to do so.

■ Leasehold: Fees and Charges

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[161695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to bring forward legislative proposals to protect leaseholders from unreasonable charges when they seek to extend the lease on their property; and if he will make a statement.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor

service. We are taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market.

Through our reforms, the length of a statutory lease extension will increase to 990 years, from 90 years (for flats) and 50 years (for houses). Leaseholders will be able to extend their lease with zero ground rent on payment of a premium. Leaseholders will also be able to voluntarily agree to a restriction on future development of their property to avoid paying 'development value'.

The Law Commission's report on enfranchisement includes recommendations relating to lease extensions, including payment of costs incurred by this process and the terms of the new lease. We will bring forward a response to these and the other remaining Law Commission recommendations in due course.

■ Local Government Finance: Redbridge

Wes Streeting:

[158134]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding his Department has allocated to the London Borough of Redbridge in each year since 2010.

Wes Streeting:

[158138]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what funding his Department has allocated to the London Borough of Redbridge to support (a) faith communities and (b) inter-faith work, in each year since 2010.

Luke Hall:

We have spent over £80 million to support integration and faith since 2010.

Some of our funded programmes, such as Near Neighbours, have delivered projects and events in the London Borough of Redbridge to support local inter faith work.

In addition, the London Borough of Redbridge received £249,527 from the ESOL for Integration Fund in 20/21 to provide community-based English language sessions, clubs and activities to residents with little or no English who will be from diverse faith groups.

However, to supply the information for all our funding streams for the previous ten years would involve a disproportionate cost to my Department.

Most of the funding in the Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) is unringfenced, and councils are free to choose to which local priorities to spend it on, including work with faith communities, and other projects to support integration and communities.

This year's LGFS, including a breakdown of Core Spending Power (CSP) for each local authority, including the London Borough of Redbridge, going back to 2015/16 can be found in the supporting information document here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/core-spending-power-final-local-government-finance-settlement-2021-to-2022>

Core Spending Power was introduced in 2015. Comparisons before that date do not apply, because the system of local government finance changed, councils' responsibilities changed and because grants have been incorporated into the annual Settlement over time.

■ **Local Government: Coronavirus**

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger: [\[159249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure the appropriate use of funds allocated to local authorities for the covid-19 response.

Luke Hall:

The Government has allocated over £11 billion directly to councils this year and next to tackle the impacts of COVID-19, the majority of which is unringfenced funding

Councils are primarily accountable to local residents for the delivery and quality of services, and are therefore responsible for their own governance, setting their own budgets and for prudent financial planning and management of their resources.

MHCLG does not performance manage councils. They are instead subject to internal scrutiny arrangements and external audit.

We do, however, consider the financial stability and service delivery of individual authorities as part of our oversight of the functioning of the local government system. Our accountability system includes a range of checks and balances on local authorities that provides assurance that there is effective governance and that the funds they receive are spent properly.

■ **Local Government: Somerset**

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger: [\[159242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the budget is for the ongoing Somerset Unitarisation consultation.

Luke Hall:

There is no specific budget for the consultation, the resources for which are provided by the Department's administration budget.

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger: [\[159243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to publish the total number of respondents to the Somerset Unitarisation consultation.

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger: [\[159244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to publish the number of respondents in favour or against each proposal within the Somerset Unitarisation consultation.

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:

[\[160541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the proportion of eligible people that are required to respond to the Somerset Unitarisation consultation for that consultation to be effective.

Luke Hall:

We will publish the Government's response to the consultation as soon as practicable following the consultation. The Government welcomes the views of all those interested in the proposals for local government reorganisation in Somerset, including local residents, town and parish councils, businesses and the voluntary sector. The Secretary of State will have regard to all the representations received from the consultation, along with all other relevant representations and information available to him when deciding subject to Parliamentary approval which, if any, of the proposals are to be implemented, with or without modification.

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:

[\[159245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what checks, beyond providing a valid email address, his Department is using to ensure that respondents to the Somerset Unitarisation consultation are genuine residents of Somerset.

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:

[\[159246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether people resident abroad are eligible to respond to the Somerset Unitarisation consultation.

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:

[\[159247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether respondees to the Somerset Unitarisation consultation are required to have reached voting age.

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:

[\[159248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he has taken to stop multiple applications being submitted improperly to the Somerset Unitarisation consultation.

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:

[\[159250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will include a requirement for respondents to the Somerset unitarisation consultation to declare employment by any local authority subject to that consultation.

Luke Hall:

The Department welcomes the views of all those interested in the proposals, including local residents, town and parish councils, businesses and the voluntary sector. The process is not a poll or referendum, and hence there are no limitations on who is able to respond, nor is there a process of validating the details of respondents. Those responding to the consultation are asked to declare whether they are responding as a resident (and if so whether they are resident in the area concerned

or elsewhere including overseas), or whether they are responding on behalf of an organisation. The Department's online platform, Citizen Space, which is used widely across the public sector for consultation activities, requires a response to this question, and asks the name of any organisation on whose behalf a response is being made and the email address of the respondent; no further details about a respondent's personal or family's interests such as employment status are requested.

■ Park Homes: Fees and Charges

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[162506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will bring forward legislative proposals in the next Session of Parliament to amend and clarify the definition of a pitch fee for park home residents and prevent the use of variable service charges in written agreements pursuant to the undertakings given in 2018.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government remains committed to improving protections for park home residents.

We will introduce primary legislation to amend and clarify the definition of a pitch fee and prevent the use of variable service charges in written agreements, when the parliamentary timetable allows.

■ Pedestrian Areas: Licensing

Rachael Maskell:

[\[161809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government plans to extend the granting of pavement licences beyond the current expiry date of 30 September 2021.

Luke Hall:

The ability to obtain a licence to place tables and chairs on the highway is a permanent measure set out in the Highways Act 1980. Last summer the Government introduced temporary pavement licence provisions in the Business and Planning Act 2020 which created a quicker and cheaper process for obtaining a licence. This Act contains an enabling power allowing the Secretary of State to extend the provisions beyond the current expiry date of 30 September 2021, where it is considered reasonable to do so to mitigate an effect of coronavirus.

The Secretary of State has written to local council leaders and made a statement ([HCWS829](#)), on Planning and Hospitality, setting out his intention to extend these temporary pavement licence provisions for 12 months until September 2022, subject to Parliamentary approval.

■ Prisoners' Release: Females

Catherine West:

[\[159341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department has taken to implement the recommendations of the Safe Homes for Women Leaving Prison initiative's findings and recommendations report; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is aware of the Safe Homes for Women Leaving Prison reports. My Department continues to work closely with the Ministry of Justice to ensure this vulnerable group are supported.

We have announced new support for prison leavers at risk of homelessness into private rental tenancies and will set out further details in due course.

As part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Justice secured £11.5 million to support individuals at risk of homelessness on their release from prison and to help them move on to permanent accommodation. In addition, following investment of £5.1 million in women's services in the two years following publication of the Female Offender Strategy, a further £2.5 million was made available in 2020/21 for women's community sector organisations. The Female Offender Strategy also committed to piloting at least five Residential Women's Centres.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Finance

Steve Reed:

[\[162623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the metrics that inform the index local authorities most in need of capacity funding for allocation under the Levelling Up Fund, as published alongside the Levelling Up Fund prospectus.

Luke Hall:

As set out in the prospectus published at Budget, the index used for the Levelling Up Fund places areas into category one, two or three based on the local area's need for economic recovery and growth, improved transport connectivity, and regeneration.

We will shortly publish further detail on the methodology used to calculate the index

■ Retail Trade: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[161782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what (a) financial and (b) other steps his Department is taking to support high streets in Coventry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

Up to 18 December 2020, Coventry City Council has received £5,477,193 of funding for the Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSG) (Closed and Open) and the

Christmas Support Payment, and £7,430,420 under the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG).

As at 18 January 2021, Coventry reported payments to local business under the LRSG (Open and Closed) and the Christmas Support Payment to a value of £2,216,236 and under the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) of £4,957,060.

Coventry City Council have also been allocated £335,000 through the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund (RHSSF) to support the recovery of their high streets and city centre.

More widely, the Levelling Up Fund will directly support communities across the UK. It will make available up to £4.8 billion over four years from 2021-22 to 2024-25. The Fund will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities - including regenerating town centres and high streets, investing in local transport schemes, and upgrading local culture and heritage assets. The prospectus published at Budget sets out how local areas can access the first round of funding.

Government is also providing support to local leadership through the High Streets Task Force, giving places expert advice to support their high streets and town centres to adapt and thrive. Coventry has been able to benefit from this as one of the pilot areas that have been leading the way in benefiting from expert and tailored support from the High Streets Task Force, before this offer is rolled out across the country later this year.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Digital Technology: Overseas Trade

Emily Thornberry: [\[161715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the 6 July 2020 Statistics on DIT export support objectives (2019 to 2020), what were (a) the 1,238 barriers to digital market access identified and (b) the 175 barriers to digital market access solved.

Emily Thornberry: [\[161716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the 6 July 2020 Statistics on DIT export support objectives (2019 to 2020), how many of the 465 priority barriers to digital market access have been solved.

Emily Thornberry: [\[161717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the 6 July 2020 Statistics on DIT export support objectives (2019 to 2020), what factors her Department uses to assess barriers to digital trade.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

To be clear, the statistics to which the Rt Hon. Lady refers are not reflective of digital barriers alone. The 1,238 barriers on the Digital Market Access Service system in

2019/2020, and the 175 resolved barriers, cover a range of sectors, countries and issues, not just digital barriers.

The Digital Market Access Service is an internal digital platform used by government officials to help improve access and opportunity for British businesses around the world. The platform enables officials to record up to date information on market access barriers, and supports joint working to remove them where it is possible to do so.

We have begun to publish information on [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk), in a form that enables users to search for barriers based on their location or sector and read descriptions explaining their effect. Users can search for barriers that have been resolved too. Barriers published on this service are not an indication of government priority.

■ **Forced Labour: Uighurs**

Afzal Khan:

[162696]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to ensure that UK companies are not complicit in the use of Uyghur forced labour in the (a) manufacture of products of (b) chains of supply.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Department for International Trade has been taking forward measures to help make sure British businesses are not complicit in violations of rights and responsibilities in Xinjiang, as announced in Parliament by the Foreign Secretary on 12th January. This includes a review of export controls as they apply to Xinjiang, to make sure that we are doing everything that we can to prevent the export of any goods that could directly or indirectly contribute to any such violations. It includes updating our Overseas Business Risk guidance too, underlining the specific risks faced by companies with links to Xinjiang and the challenges of conducting effective due diligence there.

We continue to advise businesses with supply chain links in Xinjiang to conduct appropriate due diligence to satisfy themselves that their activities do not support, or risk being seen to be supporting, any violations of rights or responsibilities.

JUSTICE

■ **Courts: Coronavirus**

Alex Cunningham:

[161750]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many confirmed cases of covid-19 there have been among (a) staff, (b) judiciary, (c) jurors and (d) other attendees at each court between 19 February 2021 and the most recent date for which that information is available.

Chris Philp:

We follow all Public Health and Government COVID-secure guidelines and have put measures in place to keep all court and tribunal users safe. When Government or Public Health guidance changes, our measures are updated, an approach which is endorsed by Public Health England and Public Health Wales.

The table below sets out the number of new confirmed COVID-19 cases reported to HMCTS among (a) staff, (b) judiciary, (c) jurors and (d) users between 19 February 2021 and 24 February 2021. Due to the time taken for individuals to take a test, receive test results, and then communicate this to HMCTS (which information is then recorded against the date initially reported), further cases may be added to the table after the time of publishing. The table only includes court locations within the HMCTS estate where we have learnt about a new positive case within the dates given above. All other court sites have not reported any new cases between these dates.

HMCTS employs around 19,800 staff (payroll and non-payroll). There are around 19,400 judicial office holders covering all jurisdictions, including coroners and magistrates. The population of jurors fluctuates each week, but we estimate around 4,000 jurors attend weekly.

For staff and agency staff in HMCTS as a whole (including tribunals), positive test rates are falling in line with national numbers. The incident rate amongst staff is trending around the national average. As at 24 February, the HMCTS staff positive incident rate is 124.6 cases per 100,000, compared to 100.4 cases per 100,000 in the UK.

Comparability with national statistics will be affected by our staff locations (staff are not evenly distributed across the country) and when the numbers are changing rapidly the difference between incident date (our figures) and date of positive test (national figures) becomes relevant. However, overall, the trend is not dissimilar to national averages over time and prevalence rates amongst staff have been trending below the national average. Accordingly, there should be no assumption that a positive case indicates that there has been transmission within a court building.

Note that courts without any confirmed positive cases in the time period are not listed.

	STAFF	COURT AND TRIBUNAL USER	JUDICIARY	JUROR
BLACKBURN MAGISTRATES COURT	1			
BRISTOL CROWN COURT				1
BROMLEY COUNTY COURT	1			

	STAFF	COURT AND TRIBUNAL USER	JUDICIARY	JUROR
AND FAMILY COURT				
CAMBRIDGE COUNTY COURT AND FAMILY COURT		1		
EALING MAGISTRATES COURT			1	
GREAT GRIMSBY COMBINED COURT CENTRE				1
GRIMSBY MAGISTRATES COURT AND FAMILY COURT	1			
LIVERPOOL CROWN COURT		2		
MANCHESTER CROWN COURT (CROWN SQUARE)		1		
MILTON KEYNES COUNTY COURT AND FAMILY COURT			1	
NORWICH COMBINED COURT CENTRE	1			
PRESTON MAGISTRATES COURT	2			
READING CROWN COURT		2	1	
READING		1		

	STAFF	COURT AND TRIBUNAL USER	JUDICIARY	JUROR
MAGISTRATES COURT AND FAMILY COURT				
STEVENAGE MAGISTRATES COURT	1			
SWANSEA CIVIL AND FAMILY JUSTICE CENTRE	1			
TRURO COMBINED COURT	1			
WIMBLEDON MAGISTRATES COURT			1	
WOLVERHAMPTON COMBINED COURT CENTRE	1			
TOTAL	10	7	4	2

■ Courts: Protective Clothing

Alex Cunningham:

[162583]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether court service staff who are required to wear goggles as part of their duties are (a) issued with their own personal sets or (b) required to share communal sets of goggles.

Chris Philp:

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is not typically required by court or tribunal staff, given the nature of the roles they undertake, the way they are undertaken, and the framework of risk mitigations (in respect of Covid-19 transmission or more generally) entrenched. Wherever PPE is risk-assessed as necessary, it is provided by HMCTS. Wherever there is a specific need for goggles or protective glasses, they are issued to the individual member of staff concerned. The protective equipment is personal to that individual. Glasses/goggles are not shared.

■ Courts: Young Offenders

Alex Cunningham:

[\[162584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the comprehensiveness of maturity assessments in pre-sentence reports for defendants aged 18-25 in the (a) magistrates' court and (b) Crown Court.

Chris Philp:

The assessment of the comprehensiveness of maturity assessments in pre-sentence reports (PSRs) is captured within National Internal Audits and through the application of the Quality Development Tool (QDT) at a local level.

As a result of an internal audit on court reports in 2018, work was undertaken by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to develop staff knowledge and skills in this area, which led to the development of a briefing video and Maturity Assessments Guidance for court officers. HMPPS are currently undertaking a further internal audit on the quality of reports undertaken during the pandemic and are due to report their findings later this month. In addition to the National Internal Audit, regional teams utilise the QDT to oversee the quality of PSRs and to support staff development.

The Sentencing White Paper published in September 2020 contained a commitment to improving the quality and delivery of advice to courts, including through a PSR pilot. One element of this pilot targets fast delivery reports at specific cohorts including young adults (from 18 to 25 years of age) to take account of the more complex needs that this cohort of service users generally has. As part of this pilot, we are providing refresher training on maturity assessments for court probation staff to ensure staff are able to capture the complexity of needs of this cohort of service users.

There also a number of measures in place to support the type of individualised practice that benefits this cohort. An evidence-informed screening tool is available across prisons and probation to assess young adults who are still maturing neurologically, and a resource pack is also available to help staff work with those identified as needing more support.

■ Prisoners on Remand: Remote Hearings

Alex Cunningham:

[\[161751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 8 February to Question 147845 on Remote Hearings, if he will carry out and publish an assessment of the impact of the withdrawal of video remand hearings.

Chris Philp:

The National Police Chiefs' Council decided that all forces should withdraw from the use of video remand hearings (VRH) by the end of December 2020. HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) and the Home Office have temporarily provided joint funding to 6 police forces in priority areas (Derbyshire, Devon and Cornwall, Durham,

Kent, Norfolk, and Suffolk) to enable them to operate VRH in the 5 weeks to the end of the financial year 20/21.

While we are not formally evaluating the withdrawal of police forces from VRH hearings, the MoJ and HMCTS are evaluating HMCTS Reform, of which Video Remand Hearings form a part, to understand what effects the programme has had.

■ Prisoners' Release: Temporary Accommodation

Catherine West:

[\[159342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how the pilot temporary accommodation service for prison leavers will ensure vulnerable female prison leavers with complex needs (a) receive appropriate support from local services and (b) are provided with housing beyond the 12 weeks emergency accommodation.

Alex Chalk:

We are investing more than £20m in supporting prison leavers at risk of homelessness into temporary 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; East of England, Yorkshire and the Humber, North West, Greater Manchester and Kent, Surrey and Sussex the service will support around 3,000 offenders in its first year. This service will be in operation during the next financial year 2021-22, with a view to rolling out nationally, and funding will be allocated according to the number of people we forecast being released homeless in each of the five areas, and will reflect the learning gathered from both the Covid-19 emergency scheme and the offender accommodation pilot.

The service will take account of the needs of women, including those with complex needs, and accommodation provision will be dedicated to single gender usage as required. It is the responsibility of the Community Offender Manager, working together with local partners, to ensure vulnerable female prison leavers with complex needs receive appropriate support and are provided with housing beyond the 12 weeks emergency accommodation. The temporary accommodation service provider will work with the Community Offender Manager to support the vulnerable female prison leaver move on into settled accommodation.

■ Prisoners: Older People

Alex Cunningham:

[\[162585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress he has made on developing the older offenders strategy; and what the timescale is for its publication.

Alex Chalk:

Following the Justice Select Committee's inquiry into the ageing prison population last year, we commenced work on an older offenders strategy. Our strategic priorities for this work are that it will ensure that older offenders:

- Are held in the most appropriate environments;

- Can access a purposeful and rehabilitative regime within prison;
- Can access health and care services equivalent to those within the community; and
- Are prepared for their release and resettled effectively.

We have established a steering group to oversee progress on the strategy, and officials have undertaken fieldwork which has included meetings with prison governors, scrutiny bodies, academics and third sector organisations. We are developing proposals to be included in this strategy in advance of publication this summer.

■ Probation: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[159259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's report, A thematic review of the quality and effectiveness of probation services recovering from the impact of exceptional delivery models introduced owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, published on 25 February 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) remote supervision methods and (b) alternative delivery arrangements for accredited programmes and rehabilitation activity requirements are robustly evaluated based on their effectiveness and outcomes for different types of service user.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice is committed to ensuring suitable evaluation of the interventions that we use.

Officials are currently scoping potential research on offender supervision undertaken using a "blended" approach (that is, using a mixture of remote and face to face activity). In addition, my officials are exploring ways we can incorporate the alternative delivery formats used for accredited programmes during the pandemic into our strategies for future retrospective evaluations of affected accredited programmes. On the alternative delivery of rehabilitation activity requirements deployed during the pandemic, we have contacted CRCs and supply chain providers to capture good practice and learning and are planning more formal evaluation going forward.

We will be publishing a full action plan in response to the recommendations in Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's thematic report in due course.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[159260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's report, A thematic review of the quality and effectiveness of probation services recovering from the impact of exceptional delivery models introduced owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, published on 25 February 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure that the digital technology used by probation services is compatible with that used by key partners to facilitate effective liaison and remote service provision.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[159261]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's report, A thematic review of the quality and effectiveness of probation services recovering from the impact of exceptional delivery models introduced owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, published on 25 February 2021, what steps he is taking to establish the extent to which service user digital exclusion affects access to available service support and provision and resolve shortfalls.

Alex Chalk:

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) thoroughly reviewed technology requirements to ensure that Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) and partner organisation staff could access Microsoft Teams collaboration tools remotely and helped purchase laptops and mobile phones as part of Covid-19 relief and change notice 41. Several CRCs have also adapted their own ICT approach to enable remote working in advance of migration to HMPPS.

As part of the transition activity, the Probation Reform Programme has begun migrating CRC staff over to the same Ministry of Justice (MoJ) equipment and environment used by National Probation Service (NPS) which will allow CRCs to access the digital solutions they require for partnership liaison and remote service provision. People Plus (WWM) were the first CRC to successfully migrate on February 14th; all remaining 21 CRCs will migrate by June 13th.

Remote supervision has played a key part of our exceptional delivery models through the pandemic. Whilst video call capability has offered a digital solution for maintaining virtual contact with our service users, we recognise that digital poverty disproportionately impacts the people we supervise. In recognition of this, we sourced 6500 talk and text devices in April 2020 for NPS service users without access to a mobile phone. The CRCs separately sourced 11,000 at the same time. Whilst these devices do not provide access to digital applications for video calling, they form part of a mixed approach which underpins remote supervision. We believe there is an ongoing need for text and talk devices for service users. We are therefore scoping requirements for the probation service to cover demand during 2021/22.

■ Prosecutions

Alex Cunningham:

[161747]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what provision is made for the inspection and scrutiny of prosecutions carried out by (a) the BBC, (b) transport companies, (c) the police and (d) local authorities.

Chris Philp:

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has a responsibility to take over all prosecutions instituted by the police, with the exception of prosecutions for specified offences that are uncontested. The CPS is inspected by HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate and superintended by the Law Officers, as is the Serious Fraud Office. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services has a

statutory duty to inspect the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces in England and Wales in the delivery of their functions, including the provision of information to support prosecutions.

Prosecutions instituted by other bodies are usually (and loosely) described as private prosecutions and there are no arrangements for inspecting them. The Justice Select Committee's report *Private Prosecutions: Safeguards*, published in October 2020, recommended that organisations which bring significant numbers of private prosecutions should be subject to inspection. The Government's response, published on 4 March 2021, was that we were not persuaded that such an inspection regime would be proportionate, bearing in mind the Committee's conclusions that 'existing safeguards in place to regulate private prosecutions are effective at filtering out weak claims', and that 'the judicial process that applies to all prosecutions ensures that private prosecutions are rigorously tested'.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission: Public Appointments

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[162673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment he made for the implications of his policies of the UK's commitments under the Paris Principles for National Human Rights Institutions when making appointments to the NI Human Rights Commission.

Mr Robin Walker:

Appointments to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and made by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Governance Code for Public Appointments.

A key part of the process is to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that there is pluralist representation by drawing from a strong and diverse field of candidates who have experience in the protection and promotion of human rights. This well-established approach supports the Government's commitment to the Paris Principles.

The Government recognises the importance of the NIHRC retaining its 'A status' under the Paris Principles. We remain committed to supporting the work of the NIHRC and continuing to engage with the Commissioners going forward.

TRANSPORT**■ Air Pollution: Speed Limits****Jeff Smith:**[\[160726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Highways England air quality speed trials will recommence; and what criteria Highways England used to identify areas in which to introduce those trials.

Rachel Maclean:

Highways England was initially asked to look at 101 sections of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) based on the Government's national air quality model, which had identified potential exceedances of the annual mean nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) limit values on those sections of the SRN.

Following completion of this work by Highways England, a number of links were confirmed as above the annual mean NO₂ limit value. Investigations of possible mitigation measures for these links identified four sections of motorway where reducing the speed limit to 60mph could help reduce levels of NO₂. Those sections were:

- M6 junctions 6 to 7 Witton
- M1 junctions 33 to 34 Rotherham
- M602 junctions 1 to 3 Eccles
- M5 junctions 1 to 2 Oldbury.

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and associated reduced traffic flows, Highways England has temporarily removed the 60mph air quality speed limit trials that were already in place on the M6 and M1. Highways England will recommence the speed limit trials when traffic flows are above 85% of their pre-COVID lockdown levels.

■ Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme**Chris Elmore:**[\[160759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reasons the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme is capped; and what assessment he has made of the effect of that cap on larger airports.

Robert Courts:

The Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme intends to allow commercial airports and ground handlers operating at airports in England to be able to apply for support to the equivalent of their site's business rates liabilities or their COVID-19 losses – whichever is lower – up to a cap of £8m, if they meet the qualifying criteria and conditions.

The cap strikes an appropriate balance between supporting airports in financial distress while protecting the interests of the taxpayer.

■ Aviation: Job Creation

Bill Esterson:

[\[161746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what representations he has received from airlines on job creation in the aviation industry.

Robert Courts:

The Government is developing a strategic framework for the longer-term recovery of the sector, which will focus on building back better and ensuring a successful UK aviation sector for the future. In addition, the Government recognises that aviation is home to many highly skilled and highly trained workers, who are essential to the recovery and future growth of the sectors, and we have launched the Aviation Skills Retention Platform to help retain vital skills in the sector and support its recovery.

■ Bus Services: Social Distancing

Tony Lloyd:

[\[160539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance his Department has issued to bus operators on the need to provide safe seating to ensure that people from different households do not sit next to each other on buses; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport has issued safer transport guidance for operators, which aids transport operators to understand how to provide safer services for passengers. It outlines measures to assess and address the risks of COVID-19 on public transport.

■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus

Mary Glendon:

[\[159299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will (a) extend the validity period for driving theory test passes and (b) waive the re-sit fee in the event that a driving theory test certificate has expired during the covid-19 lockdown.

Rachel Maclean:

The maximum duration of two years between passing the theory test and a subsequent practical test is in place for road safety reasons; to ensure that a candidate's knowledge is current. This validity period is set in legislation and the Government has no current plans to lay further legislation to extend it.

It is important that road safety knowledge and hazard perception skills are up to date at the critical point that they drive unsupervised for the first time. Those with theory test certificates expiring may have taken their test in early 2019. Since then, their lessons and practice sessions will have been significantly curtailed during recent lockdowns and it is likely that their knowledge base will have diminished. Research suggests that this would be particularly harmful for hazard perception skills, a key factor in road safety.

Ensuring new drivers have current relevant knowledge and skills is a vital part of the training of new drivers, who are disproportionately represented in casualty statistics. Taking all this into consideration, the decision has been made not to extend theory test certificates and learners will need to pass another theory test if their certificate expires.

There are no current plans to waive the charge of a theory test for those whose theory test certificates have expired, given that they will have already received the service for which they paid.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) pays its contractor, Pearson, per theory test delivered. If candidates were exempted from having to pay for a retake then the DVSA and in turn other fee payers would incur these costs. This would be unfair to fee payers who would not benefit from the arrangement.

In addition, applications for a re-test would need to be validated and systems amended to remove the requirement for payment in these cases. The DVSA's focus should rightly be on developing solutions to address the backlog of practical driving tests that has arisen as a result of the pandemic.

■ Ferries: Hythe

Dr Julian Lewis:

[162502]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the (a) economic contribution and (b) historic significance of the Hythe ferry service and associated (i) pier and (ii) light railway; what additional assistance is available to that ferry operating company from (A) the provisions of Budget 2021 and (B) other public purse sources; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

The Department does not have a recent assessment of the economic contribution and historic significance of the Hythe ferry service or associated pier and light rail to the surrounding areas. However, we recognise the important role the Hythe ferry provides to the local area and residents.

We recognise the difficulties companies continue to face as a result of the global Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to the unprecedented £330 billion worth of financial guarantees announced last March, the Chancellor has launched a new package of support measures to protect businesses and jobs beyond the spring as part of the 2021 Budget. Amongst them is the Government's flagship Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme which will now be extended until September.

My Department's officials and I continue to engage closely with all parts of the maritime sector to support them as best we can during this challenging period.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Environment Protection

Paul Maynard:

[\[160602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to complete the environmental impact assessment for Phase 2b of the High Speed Two project.

Andrew Stephenson:

The results of the HS2 Phase 2b Western Leg environmental impact assessment will be published in the Environmental Statement at hybrid Bill Deposit. We are aiming for the Phase 2b WL Bill to be deposited in Parliament by early 2022 and sooner if possible.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Euston Station

Paul Maynard:

[\[160610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the reduction in the number of high speed platforms from 18 to 16 at Euston on high speed services to (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Preston.

Andrew Stephenson:

Work is ongoing to develop an optimised design and delivery strategy for Euston Station, including consideration of opportunities, efficiencies and scope reductions to address identified cost pressures noted in the first HS2 six-monthly report to Parliament (October 2020). As part of this work, the Department and HS2 Ltd have, with the involvement of other partners including Network Rail, been investigating whether building the HS2 station in a single phase would speed up delivery and reduce the overall cost. This work is currently indicating that moving to a slightly smaller HS2 station at Euston would have some benefits in terms of reducing costs and risks.

This work will help inform the way forward, with a final decision expected in Spring 2021. Initial HS2 Ltd analysis indicates that a slightly smaller station will not preclude the future operation of high speed services to Stoke-on-Trent and Preston.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: EU Countries

Ruth Jones:

[\[160802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of restrictions imposed on UK hauliers operating in the EU on the haulage sector since the end of the transition period.

Rachel Maclean:

Under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the UK and the EU, UK hauliers can continue to undertake unrestricted bilateral journeys to and from the EU, and transit journeys to a non-EU country. The TCA also allows UK hauliers to undertake up to 2 additional laden journeys within the EU after a laden international journey from the UK (either cabotage or cross-trade, with a maximum of one cabotage movement – i.e. two cross-trade, or one cabotage and one cross-trade).

The Department for Transport's assessment is that the TCA will allow for the vast majority of UK haulage operations to and from the EU to continue exactly as they did before the end of the transition period.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: France

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[162503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what representations he has made to the French authorities on their recent decision to withdraw access to Roaming Permits to UK abnormal load hauliers for use on the French road network; what assessment his Department has made of the disadvantages to the UK abnormal load hauliers sector of having to apply for Route Specific Permits in lieu of those Roaming Permits; and if he will make it his policy to seek to negotiate a bilateral agreement with French authorities to resume UK access to Roaming Permits on the model of that agreement which exists between France and Switzerland.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport is working to resolve this disruption as quickly as possible through diplomatic channels and at ministerial level. We are working urgently with our colleagues in the British Embassy in Paris to engage with the French Government on this critical issue.

The Department has been engaging with the Abnormal Loads Haulage Sector to establish the impact that this change in process will have on the industry, and we recognise that the process of applying for Route Specific Permits is more time consuming and provides less flexibility for UK hauliers transporting loads from the UK to France, which will have an immediate impact on the sector.

■ M1: Accidents

Sarah Champion:

[\[161774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many serious collisions involving vehicles being stranded in a live lane have taken place from (a) junction 32 to (b) junction 35A of the M1 since March 2017.

Rachel Maclean:

Between Junctions 32 and 35a of the M1, from March 2017 and up to 31 December 2019 (the latest period for which validated collision data is available), there was 1 collision which involved stationary^[1] vehicles.

M1 J32-35A	2017*	2018	2019
Fatal and Serious collisions with stationary vehicles in a live lane	0	0	1**

* Assumed SM ALR opening is March 2017 ** 1 collision led to 2 casualties

^[1] In the absence of a Stats19 collision data field that identifies whether a vehicle was broken down or stranded, the field 'parked' has been used as a proxy. This will indicate that the collision involved a vehicle that was stationary without offering commentary on the reasons for it being so.

■ Motorways: Accidents

Jim McMahon:

[\[162668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the total number of driving deaths on smart motorways in each of the last five years.

Rachel Maclean:

The *Smart Motorway Safety Evidence Stocktake and Action Plan*, published by the Department in March 2020, provides a table in Annex D, page 76, showing the number of reported fatal casualties between 2015 and 2018. This is reproduced here:

	ROAD CLASS		NUMBER OF REPORTED FATAL CASUALTIES	
2015	2016	2017	2018	
Conventional Motorway ¹	81	72	83	67
Controlled Motorway ¹	6	2	3	8
Dynamic Hard Shoulder ¹	5	2	1	1
All Lane Running ¹	0	1	4	10
All SRN 'A' Roads ²	132	154	145	16
				5

Sources: 1 - STATS19, Highways England Statistics on motorway fatal casualties in England from 2015-18. 2 - STATS19, DfT Statistics on fatal casualties on the Strategic Road Network in England from 2015-18

The latest strategic safety evidence, which includes data for 2019, will be published as part of the one-year stocktake progress update report.

■ Motorways: Road Traffic Offences

Jim McMahon:

[\[162667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many fines were handed out to motorists for offences committed on smart motorways in each of the last five years.

Rachel Maclean:

Highways England install and maintain speed cameras and Red X compliance technology to allow the police to issue fines. Information on enforcement and prosecutions is not held by Highways England or the Department, but by the individual police authorities who act as the enforcement authority.

Public Transport: Coronavirus**Sam Tarry:**[\[159378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Covid-19 Response: Spring 2021 roadmap, published on 22 February 2021, what assessment his Department has made of the risk of transmission of covid-19 on (a) rail, (b) bus, (c) tram and (d) London Underground settings.

Rachel Maclean:

There are significant uncertainties around transmission of COVID-19 in public transport and work is currently underway to better understand and model this. The measures we have introduced seek to reduce any risk of transmission on public transport, including making it the law to wear a face covering (unless exempt), and requiring passengers to stay 2 metres apart where possible.

As restrictions ease, we will expect journeys on public transport to increase. Safer travel guidance for both passengers and operators will ensure that passengers, including those who rely on public transport, can travel safely.

Sam Tarry:[\[159379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to standardise covid-19 transmission risk modelling across the transport sector to help give passengers confidence to return to public transport.

Sam Tarry:[\[159380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking with international counterparts to compare the risks of covid-19 transmission in the provision of transport services.

Rachel Maclean:

Due to the diversity of the transport sector, the science evidence base for each mode will differ and the Department has commissioned research to reflect this.

The Department has worked with SAGE, Industry and Academia to develop the Transport Risk Assessment for COVID Knowledge (TRACK) project. This is an 18 month, £1.7 million UKRI-funded project to understand and model transmission of COVID-19 on public transport.

■ Railway Stations: Pedestrian Areas

Marion Fellows:

[159332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of train stations in (a) the UK, (b) Scotland and (c) Motherwell and Wishaw constituency are fitted with tactile markings at the platform edge.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Rail Delivery Group are currently responsible collating data on facilities at stations and ensuring this is kept up to date. This is published on the National Rail Enquiries website.

Information on specific National Rail stations is here:

https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/default.aspx

■ Railway Stations: Visual Impairment

Ruth Jones:

[160807]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to a partially-sighted man being struck by a train after falling on the tracks from a platform without tactile edging, what steps he is taking to make all railway platforms in England safe for blind and partially sighted people.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

This was a tragic incident and we fully accept the recommendations in the Rail Accident Investigation Board's Report. Whenever industry installs, replaces or renews platform infrastructure they are required to install tactiles. I have asked Network Rail to work up a costed plan for a wider roll out of tactiles for stations where tactiles are not being delivered as part of an existing enhancements or renewal project.

■ Restoring Your Railway Fund

Paul Maynard:

[160611]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with representatives of Highways England's Historic Railways Estate body on the compatibility of that body's policy on infilling and demolition with his Department's Restoring Your Railways fund.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Discussions have taken place on an on-going basis between Department for Transport officials with the officials in Highways England who manage the Historical Railway Estate (HRE). In addition policy officials in DfT are working collaboratively to ensure opportunities for re-use of HRE assets are maximised where possible, whilst ensuring the safety of the public and, wherever practicable, enabling continued access for pedestrians and cyclists

■ Shipping: Government Assistance**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[159251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department is providing to the maritime sector.

Robert Courts:

My officials and I work extensively with our maritime sector. We continue to support the sector on the operational, crew and financial challenges they face during the Covid-19 pandemic. We are working closely with stakeholders from across the sector as we look to restart domestic and international travel through the Global Travel Taskforce. My department continues to assist on critical issues such as decarbonisation, promoting global competitiveness and our future seafarer needs. We will work closely with the sector to seize the opportunities our departure from the EU creates and are fully committed to the long-term success of the sector which is so critical to the UK as a trading nation.

■ Taxis: Exhaust Emissions**Stephen Morgan:**[\[160779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of Clean Air Zones on wheelchair accessible taxi and private hire vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

Clean Air Zones (CAZ) charge taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs) as due to high mileage they can significantly contribute to air pollution, especially in the case of older vehicles. Local Authorities implementing CAZs assess impacts on taxis and PHVs which include wheelchair accessible vehicles. JAQU provides clean air funding (CAF) to mitigate these impacts has paid nearly £400m CAF funding to date. Portsmouth has been awarded £1.8m from this fund and a further award is expected to be made shortly.

Government continues to offer the Plug in Taxi Grant, which provides a grant of up to £7,500 off the cost of eligible ULEV taxis, which must be wheelchair accessible, and has supported over 4,400 vehicles so far. Government has also awarded over £20 million to 27 local authorities to deploy almost 800 rapid and fast chargepoints, dedicated to electric taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs).

■ Transport for London**Helen Hayes:**[\[160751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the value of Transport for London to the national economy.

Rachel Maclean:

No specific assessment has been made. London's economy represents 23% of UK GDP. Transport for London has continued to provide transport services over the last

year, allowing key workers to get to their workplaces and other essential journeys to take place. It will play an important part in London's economic recovery.

■ **Transport: Carbon Emissions**

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[162529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to page 105 of the Government's Build Back Better: our plan for growth report, published on 3 March 2021, whether the inclusion of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan under the table of forthcoming publications with the title of in the next six months is consistent with the Government's commitment to publish that plan in Spring 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

We are working to produce a bold and ambitious plan to decarbonise transport and expect to publish it in Spring 2021.

■ **Union Connectivity Review**

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[160822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress has been made on the (a) Union Connectivity Review and (b) needs of the A5 as a major trunk road from Bosworth; and what the timeframe is for publishing that review.

Rachel Maclean:

The Union Connectivity Review is an independent review led by Sir Peter Hendy. The Interim Report will be published shortly with final recommendations expected in summer 2021.

The focus of the Review is on improving connectivity between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and Sir Peter will be prioritising transport links that help to achieve that objective. The Review published a Call for Evidence in November 2020 to which several stakeholders with an interest in the A5 have responded.

These will be part of Sir Peter's deliberations and will inform the development of his final recommendations. Highways England's work to update its Route Strategies, starting this year, will also consider the needs of the trunked A5 and inform future road investment decisions.

TREASURY

■ **Biodiversity**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[159269\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the written statement of 2 February 2021, HCWS752 on the publication of the Independent Review on the Economics of Biodiversity led by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta, what methodology his Department is using to assess the findings of that review; what cross-departmental work

is involved in that assessment; and what his timescale is for reporting the Government's formal response to that review to Parliament.

Caroline Lucas: [\[159270\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Independent Review on the Economics of Biodiversity led by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta, what steps he is taking to evaluate and adopt alternative metrics of economic success other than Gross Domestic Produce.

Caroline Lucas: [\[159271\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his response to the publication of the Independent Review on the Economics of Biodiversity led by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta, published on 2 February 2021, what plans he has to use the UK's (a) co-presidency of COP26 on climate change action and (b) presidency of the G7 to help ensure that the natural world is prioritised in the global agenda.

Caroline Lucas: [\[159273\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how he plans to integrate the findings of the Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity into his plans for the COP26 on climate change relating to (a) the need for Governments to change their primary measures of economic success away from GDP and (b) other priority areas for action outlined in those findings.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government welcomes the recent publication of the Dasgupta Review as a strong example of UK thought leadership on an important environmental issue with clear – but often overlooked – economic consequences. The Government will closely examine the Review's findings - including those concerning measures of economic success. It will call on international partners, including through the UK's Presidencies of the G7 and COP26, to do the same and will respond formally to the Review in due course.

On 12 February, the Chancellor co-hosted the first G7 meeting with the Governor of the Bank of England and called on the G7 to take the lead in shaping support for vulnerable countries in 2021. He stated that climate and nature considerations will be a central priority for this year's Finance Agenda, paving the way to a truly green global economic recovery. The Chancellor urged his counterparts to match the UK's ambitions ahead of COP26 and stressed the importance of working together to support a smooth and effective transition of our economies to net zero.

■ Bowling: VAT

Andrew Rosindell: [\[159253\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will apply the 5 per cent VAT rate to all ten-pin bowling income and bring it into line with the leisure and hospitality sectors.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT for hospitality and tourism was introduced on 15 July 2020 to support the cash flow and viability of businesses in the hospitality and tourism sectors which have been severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Hospitality for the purposes of this relief includes the supply of food and non-alcoholic beverages from restaurants, cafes, pubs and similar establishments for consumption on the premises. It also includes the supply of hot food and non-alcoholic hot beverages to take away.

Where a ten-pin bowling business provides such hospitality, that hospitality will benefit from the reduced rate. In general, admission charges that entitle a person to participate in events where the primary focus is a sporting activity will not be eligible for the reduced rate. While the Government keeps all taxes under review, there are no plans to expand the scope of the reduced rate.

The Government has made available a wider package of support worth billions which includes extensions to the furlough scheme; extensions to the COVID-19 loan schemes; grant support; a business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality and leisure business properties; mortgage holidays; enhanced Time to Pay for taxes; and VAT deferrals.

■ Children: Day Care**Ed Davey:**[\[161669\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the amount of unspent (a) childcare vouchers and (b) money in tax-free childcare accounts.

Steve Barclay:

We do not publish data on the amount of unspent childcare vouchers or money in Tax-Free Childcare accounts. Data on the number of unspent childcare vouchers would rest with each individual provider. However, I recognise that the number of parents with unspent childcare vouchers has increased as a result of the pandemic.

The Government is continuing to work with the childcare sector in order to understand how to best support them to ensure that safe, appropriate and affordable childcare is available for those returning to work now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

Parents with Childcare Vouchers they do not need can seek to get a refund from their employer. However, whether the refund is possible depends on the contract between the voucher provider, employee and employer. Any amounts refunded would also be subject to the appropriate tax and NICs deductions.

Childcare Vouchers are now closed to new entrants. They have been replaced with Tax-Free Childcare (TFC). TFC is fairer as it makes access to childcare support available to more working families, including the self-employed and those working for employers who don't offer vouchers. Lone parent households also receive the same support as those with more than one parent, unlike Childcare Vouchers where

support is allocated per working parent. In addition, parents can withdraw the money they have paid in at any time, with the top-up going back to the Government.

■ **Construction: VAT**

Debbie Abrahams: [161764]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the construction industry VAT reverse charge on cashflow for small businesses in the context of the economic effect of the (a) covid-19 pandemic and (b) end of the transition period.

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 previously in order 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.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Ethnic Groups**

Afzal Khan: [160786]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many workers from (a) white, (b) Black, (c) Asian, (d) other minority ethnic backgrounds have been furloughed (a) in total and (b) as a proportion of the working population of that group.

Navendu Mishra: [160846]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what data his Department holds on the ethnicity of recipients of support through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

Information on the ethnic breakdown of recipients supported by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is not available.

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) publish statistics on the CJRS.

The latest release was published on GOV.UK on 25 February 2020:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-february-2021>.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Dan Jarvis: [161771]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what further plans he has to make financial support available to (a) people and (b) businesses that have been excluded from Government financial support during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

In response to the unparalleled economic shock created by COVID-19, the government quickly provided one of the most comprehensive and generous packages of economic support globally, adapting the help offered as the situation evolved. This has provided timely and targeted temporary support to individuals, families and businesses up and down the UK. At the Budget, the Chancellor announced an additional £65 billion of further measures to support the economy this year and next year, taking the total cumulative cost of the COVID-19 rescue package since the start of the pandemic to £352 billion.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has now supported 11.2 million jobs across the UK, worth £53.8 billion, and has been extended until the end of September. At the Budget, the Chancellor also announced two further grants of the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme. Self-employed people who filed their 2019/20 tax returns by 2 March will be eligible for both grants, meaning that over 600,000 self-employed individuals may be newly eligible for the SEISS, including many new to self-employment.

The government has also extended support for the lowest paid and most vulnerable. The temporary £20 uplift to Universal Credit will continue for a further six months. Working Tax Credit claimants will receive an equivalent of six months of support through a one-off £500 payment.

To support businesses through the next stage of the pandemic, the government is providing a Restart Grant of up to £18,000 to over 680,000 business premises, giving them the cash certainty they need to plan ahead and safely relaunch trading over the coming months. To replace the Bounce Back Loans and Business Interruption Loans, the government is introducing a new Recovery Loan Scheme. The government is also providing English local authorities with an additional £425 million of discretionary business grant funding on top of the £1.6 billion already allocated. In addition, the government is extending previous VAT reductions and business rates reliefs for sectors heavily impacted by the pandemic.

Finally, we must recognise that it will not be possible to preserve every job or business indefinitely, nor stand in the way of the economy adapting and people finding new jobs or starting new businesses.

■ Corporation Tax: Coronavirus**Chi Onwurah:**[\[161752\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on corporate profit and loss during the 2020-21 financial year on corporation tax revenues for the next three years.

Jesse Norman:

This assessment is set out in the Office for Budget Responsibility's March 2021 Economic and Fiscal Outlook, published alongside Budget 2021.

■ Crown Estate Commissioners: Wind Power

Alex Cunningham:

[\[162586\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will list the annual fees to date paid to the Crown Estate by developers granted leasing rights during Round 3 of the Offshore Wind Leasing process in 2010.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Treasury has asked for this information from The Crown Estate, who have provided the following figures for total cash receipts from Round 3, for each year since 2010. More information on the revenues generated from offshore wind, including details of co-investment made by The Crown Estate into Round 3 projects, is published in The Crown Estate's annual report and accounts.

CALENDAR YEAR	TOTAL R3 RELATED CASH RECEIPTS
2010	-
2011	£1.9m
2012	£3.0m
2013	-
2014	-
2015	£23.0m
2016	£21.8m
2017	£8.1m
2018	£2.9m
2019	£14.3m
2020	£47.8m
Total	£122.9m

■ Equipment: Tax Allowances

Chi Onwurah:

[\[162596\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the super deduction tax allowance announced in Budget 2021 is intended to increase investment in (a) new technologies, (b) sustainability and (c) skills development

Jesse Norman:

The 130% super-deduction for main rate plant and machinery assets, and 50% first-year allowance for special rate (including long-life) plant and machinery assets, both greatly enhance the incentive for companies to invest. Many of the latest green technologies, including solar panels, wind turbines and electric vehicle charging points, qualify for the reliefs. Expenditure on the learning and development of staff does not qualify for the super-deduction but is already an allowable expense for tax purposes.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus**Jamie Stone:**[\[162674\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that the live events industry receives ample notice of the implementation of any Government-backed insurance scheme during the covid-19 outbreak due to long lead times inherent in the production of large live events.

Jamie Stone:[\[162675\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of whether the time taken to create a Government-backed insurance scheme for the live events industry will lead to the cancellation of live events in summer 2021.

Jamie Stone:[\[162676\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to create a Government-backed insurance scheme to prevent the cancellation of festivals, live music and events in summer 2021.

John Glen:

On 22nd February, the Prime Minister announced the Government's roadmap to cautiously ease lockdown restrictions in England, including an ambition to lift restrictions on large events in Step 4, subject to the outcome of the Events Research Programme.

Officials are considering the most appropriate way to support the events sector, informed by the findings of the scientific programme in the Spring.

We will continue to engage closely with insurers and the events sector to understand the barriers faced by the sector as we recover from the pandemic. Any changes would be communicated to the sector with suitable notice.

■ Housing: Construction**Mike Amesbury:**[\[162691\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish further details of the tax on the UK residential property development sector, announced on 10 February 2021.

Jesse Norman:

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.

That statement announced plans to introduce a new tax for the UK residential property development sector in 2022, to ensure the largest developers make a fair contribution to cladding remediation costs.

The details of the policy design will be made public as soon as possible, and the Government will begin the consultation process in due course, to facilitate introduction for 2022.

Motorcycles: EU Countries**Tracy Brabin:**[\[162671\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the EU on allowing motorcycles purchased in the UK to be moved and used in the EU, without the need to pay EU VAT, where those motorcycles are temporarily in the EU for a recreational period and will not be sold in the EU.

Jesse Norman:

Discussions about VAT on goods have featured as part of discussions with the EU in the context of the Withdrawal Agreement.

The VAT treatment of goods entering the EU, including on a temporary basis, is a matter for the EU. EU Member States are responsible for the implementation of those rules.

National Infrastructure Bank and Treasury: Employment**Steve Reed:**[\[162625\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many new full-time equivalent jobs will be created by the location of (a) HM Treasury's Northern Campus in Darlington and (b) the new national infrastructure bank in Leeds.

Kemi Badenoch:

At least 750 roles from across HM Treasury, the Department for International Trade, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Office for National Statistics will be based at the Darlington economic campus. The UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB) is a new institution and will be headquartered in Leeds. The UKIB will be launched in interim form later in the Spring with the recruitment of the bank's Chair currently underway.

■ Pool Re: Disasters

Neil Coyle:

[\[161778\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending the scope of Pool Re insurance to cover all major incidents and disasters in the UK.

John Glen:

We are working closely with the insurers, the trade bodies and regulators to understand what more the industry can do to help individuals and businesses during the current crisis, and to learn lessons for future risks.

Whilst the scope of the current Government review of Pool Re is limited to its role as a reinsurer of terrorism risk, the conclusions from this work will also have important implications for how we manage systemic risks more broadly.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Maternity Leave

Royston Smith:

[\[159335\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that women who previously took maternity leave are not unfairly treated in their applications to the Self Employed Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is aware that some people's eligibility for SEISS was affected if they had taken time out of their trade while pregnant or to care for their new-born or newly adopted child, and so had not submitted a tax return for 2018-19 or had trading profits in 2018-19 that were less than their other income and were therefore ineligible for the SEISS.

Taking parental leave does not mean that the trade has ceased and should not therefore affect a person's eligibility for SEISS if they intend to resume trading after the leave is taken.

In June 2020 the Government announced that HMRC would determine the eligibility and grant amount for people in this situation using either their 2018-19 self-assessment return or the average of their 2016-17 to 2018-19 returns. Claimants still had to meet the other standard eligibility criteria for support under the SEISS.

The Government has now announced a fourth and fifth round of SEISS. HMRC now have tax returns covering 2019-20, and will include these returns when calculating eligibility for the SEISS and the grant amount. The arrangements that ensured that people were not made ineligible for previous rounds of the SEISS as a result of parenthood have been replicated for the fourth and fifth rounds.

For those who had a new child in 19/20 which either affected their trading profits or total income or meant that they did not submit a Self-Assessment tax return in 2019/20, they may still be able to make a claim.

If new parents are in this position and are applying for SEISS 4, their eligibility will be determined based on either their 2018-19 self-assessment return or an average of their 2016-17 to 2018-19 returns, to determine both their eligibility and grant calculation. They will also need to meet the other standard eligibility criteria for support under the SEISS.

The amount of the SEISS grant is determined based on the applicant's average profits from self-employment in the previous four tax years, as reported through their tax returns. By calculating the grant on a four-year average of profits, the SEISS supports individuals who may have had fluctuating profits for any reason and gives the best average of an individual's usual trading profits.

■ Small Businesses: Insurance

Alex Sobel:

[\[162687\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to prevent insurance companies from implementing high increases to annual indemnity insurance costs during the covid-19 outbreak for small companies who have not had to make a claim.

John Glen:

Insurers make decisions about the terms on which they will offer cover following an assessment of the relevant risks. The respective capabilities of insurers to assess risk is a key element on which they compete. This competition is important and leads to better products and lower prices for consumers.

Insurers must treat customers fairly and firms are required to do so under the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) rules. In addition, the FCA has said that, in light of COVID-19, insurers must consider very carefully the needs of their customers and show flexibility in their treatment of them.

The Government is working closely with the FCA to ensure that the rules are being upheld during this crisis and fully supports the regulator in its role.

■ Treasury: Social Media

Steve Reed:

[\[162621\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his video using HM Treasury branding and promoted on social media channels on 2 March 2021 is consistent with the (a) civil service code and (b) Government Communications Propriety Guidance.

Kemi Badenoch:

All digital content posted on HM Treasury's social media channels in the lead up to Budget 2021 was produced by the Department's in-house communications team as part of its Budget communications strategy in full accordance with the civil service code and Government Communications Propriety Guidance.

The HM Treasury-branded videos published on March 1 and March 2 provide an overview of the COVID-related support the government has introduced to protect

lives and livelihoods since the start of the pandemic, as well as featuring real people impacted by the measures.

The videos are objective, explanatory and relevant to government responsibilities, coming at no additional cost to the taxpayer.

Steve Reed:

[\[162622\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the cost to the public purse was of his video using HM Treasury branding and promoted on his social media channels on 2 March 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

All digital content posted on HMT's social media channels in the lead up to Budget was produced by the department's in house communications team at no additional cost.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[162664\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the 1 March video posted on HM Treasury's social media, what cost-benefit analysis he has made of the £400 spent to licence music at the start of the video.

Kemi Badenoch:

HM Treasury's communications team holds a subscription to a music licencing service costing £239 per year. Therefore, no additional cost was involved with the piece of music used in this video.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus

Carolyn Harris:

[\[159337\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will extend the (a) reduced VAT rate of 5 per cent and (b) business rates relief to the wedding industry.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July 2020 to support the cash flow and viability of about 150,000 businesses and protect over 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors.

This relief comes at a significant cost to the Exchequer, and there are no plans to extend the scope of the reduced rate. This policy will cost over £7 billion, and while some businesses in some sectors are disappointed, a boundary for eligibility had to be drawn.

Due to the direct adverse effects of COVID-19, the Government has extended the unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties for three months, and will provide up to 66% relief for the rest of 2021-22 financial year. The Government has also frozen the business rates multiplier for all businesses for 2021-22.

The Government has made available a wider package of support worth billions which includes extensions to the furlough scheme; extensions to the COVID-19 loan

schemes; grant support; a business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality and leisure business properties; mortgage holidays; enhanced Time to Pay for taxes; and VAT deferrals.

■ Wholesale Trade: Non-domestic Rates

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[162530\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 157029, for what reason the Government has excluded wholesalers in the retail, hospitality or leisure supply chain from the business rates relief available for retail, hospitality or leisure businesses.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided enhanced support to the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors through business rates relief given the direct and acute impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on those sectors, and their direct relationship with consumers at the end of supply chains that include wholesalers.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has published guidance on eligibility for the relief, which is targeted at premises that are wholly or mainly used as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues; for assembly and leisure; or as hotels, guest and boarding premises, and self-catering accommodation.

A range of other measures have been made available for all businesses, including wholesalers, such as the extension of the furlough scheme, extension to VAT cuts, Recovery Loan schemes, and enhanced Time to Pay for taxes.

■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Alex Cunningham:

[\[162587\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Net Zero Review will forecast the effect on the (a) labour market and (b) households following the recent outcome of the Crown Estate's Round 4 Offshore Wind Leasing process.

Kemi Badenoch:

HM Treasury's Net Zero Review will explore how the transition to a net zero economy could be funded and where the costs could fall. It will look at options for a balance of contributions between households, businesses and the taxpayer, and how to maximise economic growth opportunities from the transition.

WORK AND PENSIONS■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[913012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of families in temporary accommodation subject to the (a) benefit cap and (b) two-child limit.

Will Quince:

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

The Benefit Cap and the two-child limit policies restore fairness between those receiving working age benefits and taxpayers in employment and a benefits structure adjusting automatically to family size is unsustainable

Alun Cairns:[\[913013\]](#)

What assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the level of welfare support required by disabled people.

Justin Tomlinson:

This Government is committed to supporting disabled people affected by the Covid-19 outbreak and has delivered an unprecedented package of support, putting £7 billion into the welfare system.

We continue to monitor the impact on disabled people using existing and new data sources, whilst ensuring that they are able to access the support they need.

Christian Wakeford:[\[913014\]](#)

What steps she has taken to strengthen protections for pension savers.

Guy Opperman:

The Government is committed to safeguarding pension savings.

The Pension Schemes Act 2021, notably Section 125, will strengthen rules around pension transfers and introduce new criminal offences for unscrupulous employers who mismanage schemes. These measures will protect savers in Bury South and across the United Kingdom

Many pension scams are initiated and perpetuated online, and that is why I am meeting with Google on 10 March to explore what action is being taken against online pension fraud and persuade them to stop fraudsters using their site.

Jonathan Edwards:[\[913023\]](#)

What assessment she has made of the effectiveness of statutory sick pay.

Justin Tomlinson:

Statutory Sick Pay provides a minimum level of income for employees who are unable to work and we have made temporary changes to support people to follow public health advice on coronavirus.

Individuals can receive further financial support through the welfare system and the Test and Trace support payment scheme depending on individual circumstances.

■ Access to Work Programme

Debbie Abrahams: [162612]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many new applications for Access to Work funding have been received by her Department from March 2020 to date.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested on number of applications received is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate costs.

However, the Access to Work statistics includes how many applications result in provision being approved from 2007/08 to 2019/20. Please see Table 3 of the Access to Work statistics.

The latest Access to Work statistics can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/access-to-work-statistics-april-2007-to-march-2020>

■ Bereavement Support Payment

Seema Malhotra: [162618]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claims for bereavement support payment were (a) made and (b) successful in each month since March 2019.

Guy Opperman:

Monthly official statistics for Bereavement Support Payment, including claims received and decisions made between April 2017 and September 2020, are published and can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Children: Maintenance

Ruth Jones: [161868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of self-reported reductions in paying parent income in February 2020 on payments made by the Child Maintenance Service.

Guy Opperman:

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) made temporary changes to its services to support wider departmental efforts through the Covid19 pandemic whilst remaining committed that over time everyone pays or receives the right amount of child maintenance.

During the early stages of the pandemic, the CMS began accepting on a temporary basis verbal evidence of a reduction in income and advised paying parents to reduce their payments and then retrospectively reviewed the calculation. This gave rise to the normal appeal rights for both parents.

The CMS has now restored most of its full capacity with new digital services. The Service has reverted to normal methods of evidence and are checking, reviewing and backdating income changes, ensuring the correct maintenance is being paid to the children.

The Service continued to ensure compliance where possible through Deductions from earnings orders and as a result, in the quarter ending March 2020, £28 million was collected via this method. Other substantial enforcement action relies on third parties, including Her Majesty's courts, bailiffs and the banks, which were not in a position to support further enforcement action during the early stages of the COVID-19 crisis. The Service is now working with these parties to re-establish enforcement activity, where necessary.

■ Disability: Coronavirus

Debbie Abrahams:

[161760]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the extent of the financial effect of the covid-19 outbreak on disabled people.

Justin Tomlinson:

This Government is committed to supporting disabled people affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and has delivered an unprecedented package of support, injecting billions into the welfare system. We continue to monitor the impact on disabled people using existing and new data sources, whilst ensuring that they are able to access the support they need.

We are ensuring that disabled people continue to have access to disability benefits and other financial support, the food and essential goods that they need, as well as accessible communications and guidance during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Government continues to support disabled employees to access assistive technology and other forms of support they need to remain in work.

Access to Work prioritises applications from disabled people who have a job to start within 4 weeks of their application. Recognising the impact of COVID-19 has had on disabled people, Access to Work has expanded the prioritisation to include those in the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable group, keyworkers and introduced a new more flexible package of support to enable flex to work from more than one location, the workplace and home.

The disability benefits are not means-tested, non-contributory and thus paid regardless of any income or savings. They are also tax-free and worth up to £151.40 a week. PIP and DLA were not subject to the benefits freeze and were most recently uprated by 1.7 per cent from 6 April 2020.

The Government has introduced temporary measures to support those hardest hit, including the furlough scheme, self-employed income support scheme, and the £20 UC uplift. We spend over £55 billion a year on benefits to support disabled people and people with health conditions – This is around 2.6% of GDP. We have (up until the 20/21 year):

- o Increased Employment and Support Allowance for people with the greatest needs – with the Support Group rate up by around £870 per year since 2010.

- o Increased the higher rate of Attendance Allowance for people over State Pension Age who need someone to care for them – meaning around an additional £923 a year for disabled people since 2010.

- o Increased Carer's Allowance for those people who care for someone – meaning nearly an additional £700 a year for carers since 2010.

- o Increased the rate of DLA paid to the most disabled children by over £130 a month since 2010, and spending more than ever on DLA for disabled children.

- o Increased the enhanced rates of PIP which helps people meet the on-going costs of their disability – up by over £880 a year since its introduction in 2013.

- o And there is a higher proportion of people on the top rates of Personal Independence Payment than there were on DLA – 33 per cent vs 15 per cent.

■ Employment: Driving Instruction

Royston Smith:

[\[160736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of allocating funding for driving lessons for jobseekers to help enable them to find work.

Mims Davies:

No assessment has been made of the potential merits of allocating specific funding for driving lessons.

Service Leaders in Jobcentres can allocate funding for driving lessons through the Flexible Support Fund, where they feel this is an appropriate use of funds. Each request is considered on a case by case basis.

■ Funeral Payments

Seema Malhotra:

[\[162619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claims for funeral expenses payment were (a) made and (b) successful in each month since March 2019.

Guy Opperman:

The number of Funeral Expenses Payment (FEP) applications received, and awards, for each month since March 2019 is provided in the table below.

FEP devolved to Scotland on 16 September 2019. From this date FEP is only awarded in England and Wales. Therefore, the figures report on Great Britain up to 16 September 2019, and on England and Wales from that date onwards.

NUMBER OF FUNERAL EXPENSES PAYMENTS APPLICATIONS RECEIVED, AND AWARDS, 1 MARCH 2019 TO 31 JANUARY 2021

Month	Number of Applications Received	Number of Awards
March 2019	3,620	2,510
April 2019	3,410	2,090
May 2019	3,730	2,080
June 2019	2,730	1,790
July 2019	3,020	1,790
August 2019	2,960	1,910
September 2019	2,710	1,860
October 2019	3,300	2,480
November 2019	3,000	2,550
December 2019	2,580	1,510
January 2020	2,730	1,270
February 2020	3,910	1,270
March 2020	3,660	1,330
April 2020	2,790	2,920
May 2020	5,880	4,420
June 2020	4,760	4,480
July 2020	3,850	3,090
August 2020	3,100	2,040
September 2020	3,520	2,360
October 2020	3,450	2,220
November 2020	3,600	2,370
December 2020	3,060	1,830

NUMBER OF FUNERAL EXPENSES PAYMENTS APPLICATIONS RECEIVED, AND AWARDS, 1 MARCH 2019 TO 31 JANUARY 2021

January 2021	3,890	2,050
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■ Members: Correspondence

Drew Hendry: [\[162655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey of 9 November 2020 and the follow-up sent on 19 February 2021.

Guy Opperman:

A reply was sent to the hon. Member on behalf of the Secretary of State by a Director on 5 March.

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Debbie Abrahams: [\[161761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the 0.5 per cent increase in legacy benefits in meeting the costs incurred by claimants as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

In April 2020, legacy benefits were increased by £600m (1.7%), and, as part of the Government's annual up-rating exercise, we will ensure that benefits retain their value against prices by raising benefits by a further £100m (0.5%) from April, in line with CPI

■ Social Security Benefits: Mental Health

Munira Wilson: [\[161873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of benefit assessors receiving mental health first aid training.

Guy Opperman:

The department has 1700 trained Mental Health First Aiders. They are there to provide peer to peer assistance to the department's employees across the UK.

There is mental health training available to all staff in the department who have contact with customers, however, training paused in 2020, resources were diverted to train staff from Other Government Departments, new recruits and staff redeployed to process UC claims.

Our ambition is to restart this training in 2021/22. The mental health training is a blended approach of facilitated, e-learning and leader led training.

The additional mental health training is designed to help remove any bias or stigma around mental health, and to enable staff to respond appropriately to each customer's issues.

■ **Work Capability Assessment: Brain**

Hilary Benn:

[\[162513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the merits of repeated DWP assessments where an individual applicant has had a (a) brain tumour or (b) severe head injury when there is no evidence that the person's condition will improve.

Justin Tomlinson:

In both Work Capability Assessments (WCA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments, healthcare professionals advise on a review period that is appropriate to the individual claimant. In the WCA, if a claimant has a condition that causes severe functional impairment and there is no realistic prospect of recovery of function they can be placed in the severe conditions group and would not be routinely reassessed. In PIP, claimants receiving the highest level of benefit whose functional ability will not improve will receive an ongoing award with a light touch review at the 10-year point. The up-coming Health and Disability Green Paper will focus on how we can make further improvements to assessments and seek views on future changes

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Hospitals: Admissions

Jim Shannon:

[\[160659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the proportion of people of hospital being treated for (a) covid-19 and (b) other reasons in each region of the UK in each of the last 12 months.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 8 March 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Edward Argar:

Data on the percentage of patients admitted to hospital with COVID-19 and for other reasons is attached. Data is only available for England from August 2020 – January 2021.

Attachments:

1. **PQ160659 - final data - Copy.xlsx**

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HOME OFFICE

■ **Government response to Consultation: Strengthening Police Powers to Tackle Unauthorised Encampments**

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): [\[HCWS826\]](#)

Today, I am announcing the government's response to the November 2019 consultation entitled, 'Strengthening Police Powers to Tackle Unauthorised Encampments.' The consultation sought views on how to address and prevent the harm and distress caused by some unauthorised encampments and followed a public consultation in 2018 which demonstrated support for more police action.

The vast majority of travellers are law-abiding citizens. As of January 2020, the number of lawful traveller sites increased by 41% from January 2010. However, there continues to be unauthorised encampments that can create significant challenges for local authorities and cause distress and misery to many. Harmful or disruptive encampments can also perpetuate a negative image of travelling communities.

I will therefore introduce legislation to increase the powers available to the police in England and Wales. As we pledged in our Manifesto, we will create a new criminal offence to tackle unauthorised encampments. In addition, we will give the police the power to seize vehicles, and we will strengthen existing powers.

The measures complement the ongoing work by MHCLG to strengthen councils' powers to tackle unauthorised developments (building on land that an occupier owns without planning permission).

Introduce a criminal offence of residing on land with a vehicle, causing damage, disruption or distress

A person will commit an offence if they

- Are aged 18 or over and reside or intend to reside on land without the consent of the occupier of the land;
- Have or intend to have at least one vehicle with them on the land;
- Have caused or are likely to cause significant damage, disruption or distress; and
- They

o fail, without a reasonable excuse, to leave the land with their vehicle and/or property once asked to do so by the occupier, representatives of the occupier or a constable; or

o They, without reasonable excuse, enter, or re-enter the land with an intention of residing there without the consent of the occupier, and they have or intend to have a vehicle with them, within 12 months of a request to leave and remove their property from an occupier, their representative or a constable.

Give police the power to seize any property including vehicles from those committing the new offence

The police will be empowered to seize any property including vehicles owned or in the possession of the individual on the land if they reasonably suspect that the person has committed the above offence.

Strengthen existing powers

Section 61(1)(a) of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 ("CJPOA") sets out the power of the police to direct trespassers away from land. We will amend this section to enable the police to direct trespassers away in a broader range of circumstances, including if there is damage to the environment, such as excessive noise, litter or deposits of waste, and if there is disruption to supplies of water, energy or fuel.

We also intend to increase the period in which persons directed away from the land under section 61 and 62A of the CJPOA must not return (without reasonable excuse) without committing an offence or being subject to powers of seizure from three months to twelve by amending sections 61(4)(b) 62B(2) and s.62C(2) of the CJPOA..

We will in addition strengthen measures to tackle unauthorised encampments on roads by amending section 61(9)(b) to allow police to direct trespassers to leave land that forms part of a highway.

I am grateful to everyone who took the time to respond to the two consultations carried out by the government on this issue. The views expressed in response have all been considered and have informed the decisions we have made.

The measures I intend to introduce are a proportionate increase in powers for the police. I hope they will deter unauthorised encampments from being set up in the first instance but, where that is not the case, they will allow the police to take more effective action in response to an encampment causing damage, disruption or distress, in support of those communities living with or near them.

I am confident that we have taken steps to ensure those wishing to exercise their rights to enjoy the countryside are not inadvertently impacted by these measures.

The response to the consultation will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and will also be available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-police-powers-to-tackle-unauthorised-encampments>

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Planning and hospitality update**

Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick): [\[HCWS829\]](#)

As set out in the Government's roadmap for easing the lockdown restrictions, in step 2, which will be no earlier than 12 April, hospitality venues will be allowed to serve people outdoors. I have written to Local Authority Leaders to make clear the Government's

expectation that local authorities support hospitality businesses to safely reopen, once they are permitted to do so.

Last summer the Government introduced a series of measures to support hospitality businesses to open safely when lockdown restrictions were eased. These measures were a lifeline to many businesses, enabling them to continue to serve their local communities under the challenging circumstances.

I have confirmed to local authorities that these measures will remain in place to support businesses as they reopen this year. I am also pleased to confirm that we intend to extend pavement licences for a further 12 months, making it easier and cheaper for pubs, restaurants and cafes to continue to make al fresco dining a reality with outside seating, tables and street stalls to serve food and drinks.

Providing these flexibilities will support hospitality businesses to trade in these challenging times, helping to protect jobs and livelihoods. The measures that we introduced and will remain in place are:

Al fresco dining

As part of the Business and Planning Act 2020 the Government introduced a simplified process for businesses to obtain a licence to serve food and drinks from seating, tables and street stalls outside their premises. The process was previously long, costly and inconsistent across areas. We addressed this through a capped application fee of £100 and quicker consultation and determination periods (10 days with automatic deemed consent if the authority does not make a decision on the application before the end of the determination period). This enabled business to serve more customers safely outdoors last year and support them to do so again when they are permitted to reopen.

The Government has made clear in the pavement licence guidance that we expect local authorities to grant licences for 12 months or more unless there are good reasons for granting a licence for a shorter period, such as plans for future changes in use of road space. Therefore, unless there are very good reasons, the Government expects that licences granted under these provisions continue to apply into this summer so that businesses do not have to reapply for another licence or be charged a further application fee when they are able to re-open to serve customers outdoors. These temporary legislative provisions are currently due to expire on the 30th September 2021, but to give further certainty to businesses I will introduce secondary legislation to extend these provisions for a further 12 months, subject to Parliamentary approval.

Freedom to use land for community events and outdoor hospitality

Last year the Government provided greater flexibility for individuals and businesses to use their land for temporary events, such as markets and motorsports. We increased the number of days allowed for such events from 28 to 56 without needing to apply for planning permission. In November we extended this provision until 31 December 2021 so individuals and businesses, such as pubs, can set up moveable structures like marquees and hold outdoor events without making an application for planning permission. This will help businesses take forward outdoor activities such as markets, car-boot sales, summer

fairs and sporting events. We expect local authorities to support businesses using these additional freedoms as they re-open.

Outdoor markets

We have also introduced a new temporary right, extended to March 2022, that allows local authorities, either by themselves or by others on their behalf, to use land to hold a market and erect moveable structures on it.

Takeaways

Finally, we also introduced measures to support restaurants, pubs and cafes to serve takeaway food when they were otherwise closed due to coronavirus restrictions. These measures will continue to apply until March 2022.

We introduced these changes to support hard hit hospitality businesses to reopen last year. I have encouraged all local authorities to use these measures pragmatically to help support the high street, businesses and jobs, once restrictions allow them to do so.

JUSTICE

■ **Judicial update**

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland): **[\[HCWS828\]](#)**

Following my recent announcement of the government responses on reforms to the judicial pension scheme and on proposals to address the unlawful age discrimination identified in the *McCloud* litigation, I am today publishing the government response to the Judicial Mandatory Retirement Age consultation.

Running from 16 July to 16 October 2020, the consultation sought views on proposals to increase the mandatory retirement age for judicial office holders to 72 or 75, alongside a proposal to allow public interest-based extension of magistrates' appointments beyond their existing mandatory retirement age of 70, as is currently available to other parts of the judiciary. The consultation attracted considerable interest with over one thousand responses received from across of the magistracy, the judiciary, the legal profession, and other key stakeholder groups.

It has been over 25 years since the mandatory retirement age for most judges was set at 70. A mandatory retirement age remains an important requirement of judicial office which protects judicial independence, preserves public confidence in the judiciary, and promotes opportunities within the judiciary for those who wish to apply and to progress. I believe, however, along with the majority of respondents, that it is now time the MRA is amended to reflect improvements in life expectancy and the changing demands on our courts and tribunals.

Following careful consideration, I have therefore decided to raise the mandatory retirement age to 75 to enable us to retain for longer the valuable expertise of experienced judicial office holders and to attract a wider range of applicants. I believe the

new retirement age could also have a positive impact on diversity by attracting and promoting opportunities for individuals considering a judicial career later in life, such as those who may have had non-linear careers or taken career breaks to balance professional and family responsibilities. I will legislate for this change as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Magistrates currently are unable to sit beyond the existing mandatory retirement age unlike many judges who can apply to have their appointments extended or to sit in retirement on an ad hoc basis. To further boost capacity in the magistrates' courts, I will include a transitional provision as part of the legislative change to allow recently retired magistrates who are below the age of 75 when the new MRA comes into force to be able to apply to return to the bench, where there is a business need.

As Lord Chancellor, it is my duty to ensure the courts and tribunals have the required resources to continue dispensing justice. I am grateful for the commitment and resilience of judges, magistrates and coroners across the country who have worked tirelessly throughout this challenging period. I know the changes I am announcing today will not immediately alleviate pressure on our justice system. However, this once in a generation change to the mandatory retirement age, alongside the important reforms we are making to the judicial pension scheme, will help to support and promote judicial recruitment and retention, ensuring we are able to continue resourcing our world-class judiciary for the future.

TRANSPORT

■ Government response to commercial spaceflight consultations

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Rachel Maclean):

[\[HCWS827\]](#)

On Friday 5 March 2021, I published the Government's response to the consultations which were held in the Summer and Autumn of 2020 on the secondary legislation which will implement the Space Industry Act 2018. We sought views on the operability and effectiveness of the draft Space Industry Regulations and associated guidance and supporting documents (July); as well as the Government's approach to liabilities, insurance and charging (October). We also asked respondents to provide evidence and test the assumptions in the consultation-stage impact assessment.

This Government is committed to growing the space industry in the UK and cementing our leading role in this sector by unlocking a new era in commercial spaceflight across the UK. The draft Space Industry Regulations, together with draft instruments covering accident investigation and appeals, will pave the way for a new commercial licensing regime for spaceflight activities from UK. It will support safe and sustainable activities that will drive research, innovation and entrepreneurship, exploiting the unique environment of space. This will feed into our emerging National Space Strategy as we develop our priorities for levelling-up the UK and promote the growth of this thriving sector in the long term.

We also recognise the importance of ensuring that the environment is protected from the adverse effects of spaceflight activities. This is why the Space Industry Act 2018 requires applicants for a launch or spaceport licence to submit an assessment of environmental effects as part of their application. We also published a consultation on 10 February, setting specific environmental objectives for the spaceflight regulator to take account of when considering these assessments, reinforcing Government's wider policies towards the environment and sustainability.

Our spaceflight legislation has been designed from the outset to support commercial operations. This, together with the Technology Safeguards Agreement signed with the US in June 2020, means that the UK is well-placed to attract new commercial opportunities in this rapidly growing sector. Together with industry we set a target to grow the UK's share of the global space market to 10 per cent by 2030. Today we are a step closer to reaching this goal.

The Government welcomes the thoughtful and detailed responses received from across the four nations of the UK. Invaluable insights were provided by those who responded to the consultation and included enthusiastic responses from schoolchildren. We are pleased to report that our modern regulatory framework was supported by the vast majority of respondents with many applauding the flexibility of our proposed approach, which fosters adaptability through an outcomes-based focus.

The response I am sharing today sets out the ways we have adjusted the draft Space Industry Regulations and associated guidance material to reflect, and where possible accommodate, the suggestions and recommendations made through the consultation process. We believe that this collaborative approach will not only strengthen the licensing regime we are implementing, but also demonstrates the Government's on-going commitment to growing this exciting sector.

My Department has worked closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the UK Space Agency and Civil Aviation Authority to legislate for a wide range of new commercial spaceflight technologies, including traditional vertically launched vehicles, air-launched vehicles and sub-orbital spaceplanes and balloons. It is our intention to bring this legislation before the House later this year.

Next steps

Following the publication of the Government's response I will update the House once we are ready to submit the secondary legislation for Parliamentary scrutiny.