



## Daily Report

Tuesday, 9 March 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 9 March 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:43 P.M., 09 March 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

## CONTENTS

<b>ANSWERS</b>	<b>8</b>	■ Minerals	21
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	8	■ Redundancy Pay	21
■ Climate Change	8	■ Sovereignty: Scotland	21
■ Construction: Carbon Emissions	8	■ Weddings: Coronavirus	22
■ Electric Vehicles: UK Trade with EU	8	<b>DEFENCE</b>	23
■ Fireworks: Sales	9	■ Armed Conflict: Explosives	23
■ Graphite	10	■ International Criminal Court	23
■ Green Homes Grant Scheme	10	■ International Military Services	23
■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Thames Valley	11	■ Reserve Forces: Wakefield	24
■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions	12	<b>DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT</b>	25
■ Minerals	12	■ Archives: Coronavirus	25
■ Retail Trade: Click and Collect Services	15	■ Broadband	25
■ Sizewell C Power Station	15	■ Events Industry: Coronavirus	26
■ Weddings: Coronavirus	16	■ Imperial War Museum: Security	27
■ Wholesale Trade: Grants	17	■ Internet: Fraud	28
■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans	19	■ Nominet	28
<b>CABINET OFFICE</b>	20	■ Ofcom: Public Appointments	29
■ Civil Servants: Pensions	20	■ Television Licences: Older People	29
■ Coronavirus: Disinformation	20	■ Tourism: Coronavirus	30
■ Electronic Government: Proof of Identity	20	<b>EDUCATION</b>	30
		■ Alternative Education: Coronavirus	30

■ Army Foundation College: Inspections	31	■ Fishing Catches	49
■ Children: Coronavirus	31	■ Fishing Vessels: Inspections	49
■ Children: Reading	31	■ Minerals	50
■ Department for Education: Consultants	32	■ Plastics: Seas and Oceans	51
■ Ecology: Education	33	■ Ports: Coronavirus	52
■ Education: Coronavirus	34	■ Redcliffe Bay Petroleum Storage Depot	53
■ Educational Visits: Coronavirus	34	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	53
■ Eleven Plus	34	■ Armed Conflict: Civilians	53
■ European Social Fund	35	■ Developing Countries: Education	53
■ Google: Remote Education	36	■ Developing Countries: Malnutrition	54
■ Migrants: Education and Free School Meals	36	■ Ethiopia: Human Rights	55
■ National Skills Fund	36	■ Ethiopia: Political Prisoners	55
■ Oak National Academy: Finance	37	■ Ethiopia: Violence	55
■ Pupil Premium	37	■ Hong Kong: Human Rights	56
■ Pupils: Hearing Impairment	38	■ Hong Kong: Politics and Government	57
■ Pupils: Lipreading	39	■ Israel: Palestinians	57
■ Schools: Coronavirus	41	■ Myanmar: Diplomatic Service	58
■ Schools: Mental Health Services	42	■ Myanmar: United Nations	58
■ Sixth Form Education: Finance	43	■ Overseas Aid	58
■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus	44	■ Overseas Aid: Environment Protection	60
■ Teachers: Training	46	■ Qatar: Muslim Brotherhood	61
■ Uni Connect Programme	46	■ Tigray: Armed Conflict	61
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	48	■ Tigray: Gender Based Violence and Sexual Offences	62
■ Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty	48	■ Western Sahara: Politics and Government	63
■ Chemicals	48	■ Western Sahara: Trade Agreements	63
■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Staff	49	■ Yemen: Food Supply	63
		■ Yemen: Humanitarian Aid	64

■ Yemen: Humanitarian Aid and Security	64	■ DNACPR Decisions: Learning Disability	78
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	65	■ Down's Syndrome: Death	79
■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties	65	■ Down's Syndrome: Screening	80
■ Betting Shops: Coronavirus	65	■ Epilepsy	80
■ Bowel Cancer: Screening	66	■ Epilepsy: Pregnancy	80
■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus	66	■ Eyesight: Diseases	80
■ Care Homes	67	■ General Practitioners: Foreign Companies	81
■ Care Homes: Coronavirus	67	■ Haemochromatosis: Screening	81
■ Care Homes: Government Assistance	68	■ Health Services and Social Services: Hong Kong	82
■ Care Homes: Inspections	69	■ Health Visitors	82
■ Care Homes: Visits	69	■ HIV Infection: Medical Treatments	83
■ Carers: Coronavirus	70	■ Hospitals: Coronavirus	83
■ Chronic Illnesses: Genetic Engineering	70	■ Kidney Diseases: Medical Treatments	83
■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	71	■ Members: Correspondence	84
■ Coronavirus: Greater London	72	■ Mental Health Services: Health Professions	85
■ Coronavirus: Higher Education	72	■ Mental Illness: Drugs	85
■ Coronavirus: Nutrition	72	■ NHS: Dental Services	85
■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing	73	■ NHS: Prescriptions	86
■ Coronavirus: Quarantine	74	■ Nurses: Pay	86
■ Coronavirus: Quarantine and Vaccination	74	■ Operose Health: Centene	87
■ Coronavirus: Screening	75	■ Pharmacy: Coronavirus	87
■ Coronavirus: Universities	75	■ Protective Clothing: Shops	88
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	76	■ Public Health: Redbridge	88
■ Cutaneous T-cell Lymphoma: Health Services	76	■ Rare Diseases: Health Services	89
■ Dementia: Coronavirus	77	■ Test and Trace Support Payment	89
■ Dementia: Diagnosis	77	■ Travel: Quarantine	89
■ Dementia: Drugs	77	■ Vaccination: Research	90
■ Dementia: Health Services	78		

■ World Obesity Day	90	■ Parliament: Visits	103
HOME OFFICE	90	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND	
■ Asylum	90	LOCAL GOVERNMENT	104
■ Asylum: Military Bases	91	■ Affordable Housing	104
■ Asylum: Penally Camp	91	■ Building Safety Fund	104
■ Au Pairs: EU Nationals	91	■ Building Safety Fund: Appeals	105
■ Beijing Shuangxiong Foreign Service Company	92	■ Community Development: Finance	105
■ Domestic Abuse: Coronavirus	93	■ Community Development: Hounslow	106
■ Fire and Rescue Services: Finance	93	■ Council Tax	106
■ Fire Stations: Berkshire	94	■ Disabled Facilities Grants: Blackpool	107
■ Funerals: Coronavirus	94	■ European Social Fund	107
■ High Rise Flats: Fires	96	■ Evictions: South East	108
■ Licensing Laws: Airports	96	■ Housing: Insulation	108
■ Migrants: Rough Sleeping	97	■ Immigration: Hong Kong	109
■ Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre	98	■ Levelling Up Fund	109
■ Offences against Children	99	■ Local Government Finance	110
■ Passengers: Cyprus	100	■ Local Government: Meetings	111
■ Protest	100	■ Members: Correspondence	111
■ Refugees: Resettlement	100	■ Planning Permission: Carbon Emissions	111
■ Retail Trade: Crimes of Violence	101	■ Planning: Coronavirus	112
■ Royal Berkshire Fire Authority: Finance	101	■ Regional Planning and Development: Finance	113
■ Terrorism: British Nationals Abroad	101	■ Religious Buildings: Coronavirus	113
■ Vagrancy Act 1824: Arrests	102	■ UK Community Renewal Fund	114
■ VFS Global	102	■ UK Community Renewal Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund	115
■ VFS Global: China	102	■ Vagrancy Act 1824	115
HOUSE OF COMMONS		INTERNATIONAL TRADE	116
COMMISSION	103	■ Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia	116
■ House of Commons: Coronavirus	103		

■ Fairtrade Initiative: Trade Agreements	116	■ Transport: Greater London	130
■ Overseas Trade: USA	116	TREASURY	130
■ Trade Agreements: Canada	117	■ Aviation: Coronavirus	130
JUSTICE	117	■ Bradford and Bingley: Investment	131
■ Asylum: Appeals	117	■ Budget March 2021: Publicity	131
■ Judges: Disciplinary Proceedings	118	■ Cash Dispensing	131
■ Judges: Resignations	118	■ Coronavirus: Greater London	132
■ Judiciary	118	■ Customs Grant Scheme	133
■ Judiciary: Bullying	119	■ Employment: Coronavirus	133
■ Judiciary: Public Appointments	119	■ Events Industry: Insurance	133
■ Judiciary: Training	122	■ Financial Services: UK Trade with EU	134
■ Legal Aid Scheme: Asylum	123	■ Free Zones: Finance	134
■ Ministry of Justice: Employment Tribunals Service	123	■ Gift Aid	135
■ Prisoners: Gender	124	■ Hospitality Industry and Tourism: VAT	135
■ Prisons: Body Searches	124	■ Housing: Energy	136
■ Probation: Coronavirus	125	■ Infrastructure: Finance	136
■ Treatment of, and Outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Individuals in the Criminal Justice System Independent Review	126	■ International Monetary System	136
SCOTLAND	126	■ International Transport: Republic of Ireland	137
■ Devolution: Scotland	126	■ Landfill Tax	137
■ Sovereignty: Scotland	126	■ Motor Vehicles: VAT	138
TRANSPORT	127	■ Night-time Economy: Coronavirus	138
■ Aviation: Allergies	127	■ Public Sector Debt: Gifts and Endowments	139
■ Aviation: Antisocial Behaviour	127	■ Public Works Loan Board: Housing Revenue Accounts	139
■ Bus Services	127	■ Railways: North of England	140
■ Bus Services: Coronavirus	128	■ Regional Planning and Development: Scotland	140
■ Holyhead Port	129	■ Regional Planning and Development: Tees Valley	141
■ Road Traffic Control: Schools	129		
■ Taxis: Exhaust Emissions	129		

■ Revenue and Customs: Equal Pay	141	■ Social Security Benefits: Canada	151
■ Revenue and Customs: Public Appointments	142	■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus	151
■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme	142	■ Social Security Benefits: Death	152
■ Sick Pay	142	■ Social Security Benefits: Mental Health	153
■ Taxation: Self-assessment	143	■ State Retirement Pensions: Australia and Canada	154
■ Treasury: Social Media	143	■ State Retirement Pensions: EU Countries	154
WALES	143	■ Universal Credit	155
■ Large Goods Vehicles: Wales	143	■ Universal Credit: Deductions	155
WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	144	■ Universal Credit: Poverty	156
■ Equal Pay	144	■ Universal Credit: Self-employed	156
WORK AND PENSIONS	144	■ Work Capability Assessment	157
■ Access to Work Programme	144	<b>MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS</b>	<b>159</b>
■ Access to Work Programme: Coronavirus	145	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	159
■ Child Maintenance Service: ICT	145	■ Public Health: Redbridge	159
■ Department for Work and Pensions: Complaints	145	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	159
■ Disability: Coronavirus	146	■ Fairtrade Initiative: Trade Agreements	159
■ Employment: Learning Disability	146	<b>WRITTEN STATEMENTS</b>	<b>161</b>
■ Jobcentres: Leicestershire	147	BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	161
■ Local Housing Allowance	147	■ Use of the Industrial Development Act 1982 for Coronavirus related assistance	161
■ Local Housing Allowance: Blackpool	148	CABINET OFFICE	162
■ Pension Credit	148	■ Update on tackling intimidation in public life	162
■ Personal Independence Payment	149	DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	165
■ Personal Independence Payment: Death	149	■ National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists	165
■ Social Security Benefits	149		
■ Social Security Benefits: Apprentices	151		

---

EDUCATION	167	JUSTICE	173
■ Children's Social Care Update	167	■ Police, Crime, Sentencing and	
HOME OFFICE	171	Courts Bill: Ministry of Justice	
■ Police, Crime, Sentencing and		measures	173
Courts Bill: Home Office			
Measures	171		

**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

#### ■ Climate Change

**Ms Harriet Harman:**

[\[160509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the (a) Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and (b) local authority leaders on supporting councils' programmes for tackling climate change and improving climate resilience.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy recently met with my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, reiterating the commitment to tackling climate change and agreed for the two departments to continue working together to drive forward the Net Zero Agenda.

The Secretary of State is clear that local places play a key role in tackling Climate Change and meeting the Net Zero target. In September last year, the then Secretary of State, Alok Sharma, met with the Mayoral and Regions Advisory Group with the next meeting taking place this month. This group is made up of Mayors, Devolved Administrations and the LGA with the purpose to engage with communities and emphasize their role in Climate Change, especially in the run up to the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) as part of the UK Presidency's aim to make this inclusive and representative of all of the UK.

#### ■ Construction: Carbon Emissions

**Nadia Whittome:**

[\[160896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to reduce unregulated carbon emissions produced by the construction industry.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

We are working with the construction sector to reduce its emission contributions to help meet our net zero target, with a focus on construction processes including transport and the plant and machinery it uses, and in the built environment. We are also working with the sector to reduce embodied carbon and are looking at a range of means for doing so.

#### ■ Electric Vehicles: UK Trade with EU

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[160801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the need to support UK manufacturing capacity for vehicle



batteries to avoid future tariffs on electric vehicles under the rules of the UK-EU free trade agreement.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement provides for zero tariff zero quota trade, with modern rules of origin for the automotive sector that reflect UK manufacturing and are designed to support the industry through its transition to electrification. The phased approach to rules of origin for batteries gives industry time to localise supply chains for electrified vehicles.

The Government has prioritised securing investment in battery cell gigafactories, which is key for anchoring the mass manufacture of electric vehicles, safeguarding and creating high quality jobs across the UK, and driving emissions to net zero by 2050.

As part of my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a green industrial revolution, nearly £500m of funding for the Automotive Transformation Fund will be made available in the next four years to build an internationally competitive electric vehicle supply chain. This is a UK-wide programme, and we are welcoming applications for support from businesses and investors across the country.

We continue to work closely with investors to progress plans for manufacturing the batteries that we will need for the next generation of electric vehicles here in the UK.

The Government is also investing £318m, through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund in the Faraday Battery Challenge, to put the UK at the global forefront of the design, development, manufacturing, and recycling of electric batteries.

■ **Fireworks: Sales**

**Nadia Whittome:**

[\[160890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to amend regulations in respect of fireworks to strengthen controls on who can purchase them.

**Paul Scully:**

This Government is committed to taking further action to promote the safe and considerate use of fireworks. There is a comprehensive regulatory framework already in place for fireworks that controls who can purchase them, their availability and use, curfews and their safety as a product.

We agree with the conclusion of the Petition Committee's 2019 inquiry into fireworks, that any further restrictions on fireworks sold to the public by retail outlets could lead to more individuals buying products inappropriately, through online social media sources or from outside the UK. This could drive individuals to source fireworks from illegitimate or unsafe suppliers, where products may not meet the UK's safety requirements.

**■ Graphite**

**Alexander Stafford:** [160877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the amount of graphite the UK will need to meet its requirements in each year to 2030.

**Alexander Stafford:** [160878]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the amount of lithium the UK will need to meet its requirements in each year to 2030.

**Alexander Stafford:** [160879]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the amount of cobalt the UK will need to meet its requirements in each year to 2030.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government has not published estimates for these materials. However, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) published an external report regarding UK materials and future resource risk in July 2020. Consultant's views regarding UK needs can be found [here](#). Further questions regarding this research can be directed to DEFRA.

**■ Green Homes Grant Scheme**

**Caroline Lucas:** [163197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Budget 2021 statement on 3 March 2021, what his funding plans are for the Green Homes Grant for the financial years (a) 2021-2022, (b) 2022-2023 and (c) 2023-2024.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

In his Spending Review in November 2020, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £320 million for the scheme in the next financial year 2021-2022, as part of funding to make homes and public buildings more energy efficient.

**Helen Hayes:** [163263]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the value for money of the Green Homes Grant scheme; and if he will make a comparative assessment of the amount allocated to set up and administer that scheme and the value of vouchers offered by that scheme.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

An evaluation of the effectiveness of the voucher scheme, including a comprehensive analysis of scheme outcomes and evidence collected from scheme applicants and other stakeholders will be undertaken.

**Helen Hayes:**

**[163264]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason funding will be reduced to the Green Homes Grant scheme from April 2021.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The funding of up to £1.5bn for the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme was designed to provide a short-term economic stimulus for financial year 2020/21 while helping to tackle our contribution to climate change. In his Spending Review, 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.

**Helen Hayes:**

**[163265]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his Department's findings were from discussions with industry and providers on the effectiveness of the Green Homes Grant Scheme; and what steps he has taken in response to those findings.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

We have numerous channels for dialogue with the supply chain and consumer groups, including roundtables with certification bodies, trade bodies and representatives from the industry.

The Department has been working closely with the scheme administrator to refine and improve the processes for: customer application to the scheme; the processing of applications; the issuance and redemption of vouchers; and payment to installers on completion of the work.

An evaluation of the effectiveness of the voucher scheme, including a comprehensive analysis of scheme outcomes and evidence collected from scheme applicants and other stakeholders will be undertaken.

## ■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Thames Valley

**Layla Moran:**

**[163294]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people in (a) Thames Valley region, (b) Oxfordshire and (c) Oxford West and Abingdon constituency (i) applied for and (ii) successfully received a Green Homes Scheme Grant in 2020.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Official statistics for the Green Homes Grant (Voucher) Scheme were released on 18 February. The data published in this release is for all applications to the end of January 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/green-home-grant-statistics>.

Further scheme statistics will be published in due course.

## ■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions

**Matthew Pennycook:**

[160756]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish an updated series of Carbon Values consistent with the Government's latest commitments under the Paris Agreement and Climate Change Act 2008.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

BEIS is reviewing the Carbon Values used to value emissions in government policy appraisal. Once this review is completed the updated values will be published later in the year.

## ■ Minerals

**Steve Double:**

[160723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the critical minerals the UK will require to (a) power every house via wind turbines by 2030, (b) ensure all cars sold in the UK are electric by 2035 and (c) develop industrial rare earth magnets in the UK.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The UK's world-leading offshore wind industry provides a critical source of renewable energy for our growing economy. As set out in my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial revolution we will quadruple our offshore wind capacity by 2030 to further decarbonise our electricity to power our homes and businesses, and create high-quality green jobs by investing in our ports and coastal regions. Critical minerals will be important in developing offshore wind and coordinated work is taking place across Whitehall departments to ensure there continues to be a secure, long-term supply chain.

The Advanced Propulsion Centre has published analysis identifying opportunities for UK suppliers from the electrification of passenger vehicles over the coming 5 years ( <https://www.apcuk.co.uk/app/uploads/2020/06/APC-Passenger-car-electrification-report-online-v1.pdf>, June 2020).

Our priority is to ensure that the UK continues to enjoy the benefits from our transition to ultra low and zero emission vehicles by continuing to build an agile, innovative and cost-competitive supply chain. With that in mind, we remain committed to securing UK battery manufacturing. As part of the Prime Minister's 10-point plan, we have already announced £500 million to support the electrification of vehicles and their supply chains, and other strategically important technologies, through the Automotive Transformation Fund over the next four years. We continue to work with investors through the Automotive Transformation Fund, and to progress plans for manufacturing the batteries that we will need for the next generation of electric vehicles here in the UK.

The Government's Driving the Electric Revolution Challenge is investing £80 million in electrification technologies including power electronics, electric machines and

drives (PEMD), providing support for innovation and targeted investment to support development. This includes projects relating to the recovery and recycling of rare earth elements, and activities to facilitate the development of rare earth magnet supply chains in the UK.

BEIS is also supporting innovation in this area, and for example is providing innovation support to Greenspur, a company based in Hertfordshire, to trial a new type of magnet – which does not use rare earth minerals - at the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult.

**Steve Double:**

**[160724]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to improve domestic critical minerals supply, with specific regard to (a) mineral rights and (b) planning applications.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The UK is supporting opportunities to secure the domestic extraction of critical materials, such as lithium. For example, we are supporting Cornish Lithium and Geothermal Engineering, who are collaborating to build a zero-carbon lithium extraction pilot plant at an existing site in Cornwall.

The UK is also playing a crucial role in ensuring that strong environmental standards are upheld in the growing deep sea mining industry, to ensure that the International Seabed Authority (ISA) regulatory regime effectively protects these ecosystems for years to come.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that it is essential that there is a sufficient supply of minerals to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy and goods that the country needs. The NPPF states that mineral planning authorities should plan for a steady and adequate supply of industrial minerals, including by encouraging safeguarding or stockpiling so that important minerals remain available for use. The NPPF states that when determining planning applications, great weight should be given to the benefits of mineral extraction, including to the economy.

**Alexander Stafford:**

**[160875]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many points of the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution are dependant on a secure critical mineral supply chain.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

As set out in my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial revolution, we will quadruple our offshore wind capacity by 2030 and end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans, 10 years earlier than planned, announcing the first £500 million of investment this Parliament to drive the electrification of the UK automotive sector. This will bring investment, create high-quality jobs, and strengthen British industry. Critical minerals will be important in developing offshore wind and zero-emission vehicles to meet these targets, and

coordinated work is taking place across Whitehall departments to ensure there continues to be a secure, long-term supply chain.

**Alexander Stafford:** [160876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to attract critical mineral processors to the UK.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

As my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade has stated, the Global Supply Chain Directorate, led by the Department for International Trade (DIT), interrogates vulnerabilities in UK global supply chains for critical goods (excluding food) and develops strategies to strengthen supply chain resilience. The Global Supply Chain Directorate's strategic framework acts as a guide for Departments to select the actions they can take to strengthen resilience, taking a market-first approach which supports the UK's free trade stance.

DIT is actively engaging with a number of potential critical minerals processing and refining companies with a view to securing investment to the UK. Further questions related to steps to attract international actors to the UK should be addressed to DIT.

**Alexander Stafford:** [160880]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many UK critical mineral companies there are (a) in the UK and (b) internationally.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government does not have a published definition of a critical mineral company. International horizon scanning questions are a matter for the Department for International Trade.

**Alexander Stafford:** [160881]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government has an official critical minerals list.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Up until EU Exit, the UK might refer to the European Commission's latest list. A copy can be found [here](#). Following EU Exit, the UK has not published an official critical minerals list.

**Alexander Stafford:** [160882]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to publish a critical minerals strategy before the next G7 meeting.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The UK Government has not made a commitment to publish a critical mineral strategy before the next G7 meeting. Questions regarding the next [G7](#) event can be referred to the Cabinet Office.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[160884]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what organisations the Government has worked with on the UK's critical mineral supply chain requirements.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government has engaged with a number of organisations regarding mineral supply chain requirements.

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has led an analysis of several critical raw material supply chains. The analysis included input from UK Government Departments and industry sources.

The Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) have supported UK Research and Innovation ( [UKRI](#) ) and their partners, including UK universities. For example, the Critical Elements and Materials ( [CrEAM](#) ) network, new circular economy [centres](#), and the [Government Office for Science](#). Finally, BEIS Ministerial meetings with external organisations are available [here](#).

**Alexander Stafford:**

[160885]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the Government's critical mineral strategy for the UK is.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government has not published a discrete critical minerals strategy for the UK.

## ■ Retail Trade: Click and Collect Services

**Mr Steve Baker:**

[R] [160644]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether greeting card and gift shops, classed as non-essential retail, are permitted to offer a telephone click and collect service under covid-19 restrictions.

**Paul Scully:**

All shops in England are permitted to operate click-and-collect services online, by telephone/text or via post.

Customers must remain outside of the store to collect their goods.

## ■ Sizewell C Power Station

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[160613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure that the proposed EDF development of Sizewell C nuclear power station promotes and embeds widespread and ongoing community engagement beyond what is required during the planning process in the event he decides to approve the Development Consent Order for that development.



**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

As part of his assessment of the Sizewell C application, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State may have to consider the extent of possible post-consent community engagement on a number of issues. Because of his quasi-judicial responsibility in respect of the decision on whether or not to grant development consent and, if he were to decide to grant consent, what form that consent would take, we cannot comment on the extent of measures which might be included in any consent that the Secretary of State might decide to grant.

**Dr Dan Poulter:**[\[160614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure that the Transport Review Group proposed by EDF for the development of Sizewell C nuclear power station has permanent and wider community representation in addition to drawing on the involvement of East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Interested parties may wish to make representations about the composition of the Transport Review Group during the examination of the application for development consent for the Sizewell C nuclear power station. As that matter may form part of the examination and my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State's consideration of that application, we are not able to comment further about the composition of that group.

**■ Weddings: Coronavirus****John Spellar:**[\[160528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on the economy of limiting the number of guests at weddings until 21 June 2021.

**Paul Scully:**

BEIS officials and I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce established to represent all parts of the Weddings sector [in England], to understand the impact of the pandemic on jobs and businesses. On 22 February, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister published the Government's 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021'. The roadmap is a step-by-step plan to ease restrictions in England cautiously, starting with education. Across the four steps, the roadmap sets out the sequencing and indicative timing for easing restrictions, including those on the wedding sector.

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

**John Spellar:**[\[160529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect on Asian wedding businesses of the limit on the number of guests permitted weddings until 21 June 2021.



**Paul Scully:**

BEIS officials and I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce established to represent all parts of the Weddings sector [in England], including Asian wedding businesses, to hear their feedback about the impact of the restrictions on them and the business support available. 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 on the wedding sector.

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

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**[\[163256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when wedding venues are allowed to resume viewings for prospective couples as part of the reopening during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Paul Scully:**

The 'Stay at Home' restrictions will be lifted from 29 March, at which point wedding couples will be able to visit venues which are legally open (indoors in household groups, or outdoors following the Rule of 6 or 2 households). The categories of venues that can legally open under each of the Steps are set out in our 'COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021' document.

**■ Wholesale Trade: Grants****Andrew Gwynne:**[\[163170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether guidance issued by his Department to local authorities relating to the £425 million discretionary business grant funding announced in Budget 2021 will include reference to wholesale distribution businesses.

**Paul Scully:**

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced an additional £425m will be made available via the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) meaning that more than £2bn has been made available to Local Authorities since November 2020.

Local Authorities are responsible for managing grants schemes locally and determining eligibility. Local Authorities can determine how much funding to provide to businesses from the discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant funding provided, and exactly which businesses to target. They may choose to target business who have not been mandated to close but have had their trade adversely affected. It is for Local Authorities to determine the best use of the Additional Restrictions Grant in their area, this is reflected in the guidance published on the 4<sup>th</sup> March for both Local Authorities and Businesses.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

**[163171]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the inclusion in guidance issued to local authorities of instructions to include wholesale distribution businesses in the eligibility for the £425 million discretionary business grant funding announced in the 2021 Budget on the financial viability of those businesses.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government has introduced an unprecedented package of support for businesses that are required to close, or which are severely affected by the restrictions put in place to tackle Covid-19 and save lives. Local Authorities are responsible for managing grants schemes locally and determining eligibility.

The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) continues to enable Local Authorities to put in place discretionary business support. Local Authorities are free to provide support that suits their local area including to support those businesses not required to close but which have had their trade severely affected by the restrictions and those businesses that fall outside the business rates system such as market traders.

This grant scheme forms part of a wider package of support, including business loans and the Coronavirus Job Support Scheme, to assist businesses during this unprecedented time.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

**[163172]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the inclusion in guidance issued to local authorities instructions to include wholesale distribution businesses in the eligibility for the £425 million discretionary business grant funding announced in the 2021 on the levelling up agenda.

**Paul Scully:**

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

The discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) forms part of a wider package of support for business that have been mandated to close and also had their trade adversely affected by the Covid-19 Restrictions. Local Authorities can determine how much funding to provide to businesses from the discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant funding provided, and exactly which businesses to target.

Levelling up is central to the Government's agenda and we are working with local leaders to ensure every region, city and town will recover from Covid-19 and ultimately level up. The pandemic has rightly necessitated resources across Whitehall and in local government being re-allocated to tackling Covid-19 and on economic recovery. The Spending Review announced a £27 billion investment towards transport, energy and digital communications this year to level up the country.

## ■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[163218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his policy is on the rate of return for shareholders in companies that were successful in Round 4 of the Crown Estate's Offshore Wind Leasing process.

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[163219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether there are requirements in the Crown Estate offshore wind leasing process for bidders from the oil and gas sector to include workforce transition plans in their applications.

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[163220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the annual option fees that the Crown Estate will receive from developers of six offshore wind farm sites leased in Round 4 of the Offshore Wind Leasing process.

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[163221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to ensure that the outcome of Crown Estate's Round 4 Offshore Wind Leasing process is discussed with trade union representatives on the Green Jobs Taskforce.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

As manager of the seabed around England, Wales and Northern Ireland, The Crown Estate is responsible for the award of leases for new and existing offshore wind projects, including the current Round 4 exercise. The Crown Estate works independently of government under the mandate set out in the Crown Estate Act 1961.

The rate of return for the shareholders of the companies who were successful in Round 4 are a matter for the companies concerned.

The Department was not involved in the leasing process. The Crown Estate published information about criteria to be assessed at the pre-qualification and the Invitation to Tender stages, which applied to all bidders.

We will agree a transformational North Sea Transition Deal to deliver new business opportunities, high-quality jobs and skills, as well as protect the wider communities most affected by the move away from oil and gas production.

Regarding the annual options fees, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer and I are both in agreement that the results are a sign of confidence both in the UK as an attractive place to invest and in our offshore wind market.

I am aware the Crown Estate will be happy meet the Green Jobs Taskforce, on which trade unions are represented.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Civil Servants: Pensions**

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[160814\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil service widows and widowers have had their pensions revoked as a result of (a) remarriage and (b) cohabitation in (i) England and Wales and (ii) Scotland.

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[160815\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil service widows and widowers have had their survivors pension restored on compassionate grounds.

**Julia Lopez:**

The data obtained shows a total of 1472, an average of around 114 per year, pensions ceasing on remarriage or cohabitation for the period 2008 to 2020. The split of the data between those whose pension was stopped due to remarriage and cohabitation, and the breakdown between England, Wales and Scotland, and the number of survivor pensions restored on just compassionate grounds, is not available at this point.

**■ Coronavirus: Disinformation**

**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[161875\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking to reduce covid-19 misinformation and suspected scam-related phone calls to the general public.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

Government takes the issue of disinformation very seriously. The Cross-Whitehall Counter Disinformation Unit was stood up on 5 March 2020 to look for trends on social media platforms so that we can work with them and other partners to respond to misleading content rapidly.

The Rapid Response Unit in the Cabinet Office has also tackled a range of harmful narratives online. Up to 70 incidents a week have been identified and resolved - from false public health advice to criminal fraudsters running phishing scams. When alerted to Covid-19 vaccination fraud or scams in particular, the unit works alongside partners across the government and beyond, including NHS England to address and resolve the issues quickly.

**■ Electronic Government: Proof of Identity**

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[160654\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to centralise digital identification verification processes for Government Departments.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government committed funding at last year's Spending Review to develop the first stage of an ambitious cross-government single sign-on and digital identity solution. Our vision is for members of the public to be able to access any online central government service simply, safely and securely using a single sign-on.

**■ Minerals****Alexander Stafford:**[\[160883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether critical minerals supply will be part of the UK's G7 objectives.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

Critical Minerals supply is an important global issue as we use our G7 Presidency to help drive the global economic recovery, harnessing green technologies and renewable energy generation and storage.

The security of critical supply chains - including critical minerals - is being considered as a possible area of focus for the G7 Panel on Economic Resilience, chaired by Lord Sedwill of Sherborne in his capacity as the Prime Minister's G7 Envoy on Economic Resilience. The Panel will consult widely across and beyond the G7 and report its recommendations at the Leaders' Summit in June.

**■ Redundancy Pay****David Linden:**[\[160776\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the cost to the public purse has been of severance payments for staff working as part of the Downing Street Union Unit.

**Julia Lopez:**

Information on Cabinet Office staff costs and exit packages are routinely published as part of the Cabinet Office Annual Report and Accounts. Future information will be published in the usual way.

**■ Sovereignty: Scotland****Mhairi Black:**[\[161791\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the (a) total expenditure on and (b) cost to the public purse of the Union Unit was; what the cost to the public purse of the Union Taskforce was in each financial year since 2010-11; and what the budget for that taskforce will be in the financial year 2021-22.

**Mhairi Black:**[\[161793\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much the (a) Union Unit and (b) Union Taskforce spent on paid-for social media advertising and promotion in each financial year since 2010-11; and how much is budgeted for that purpose for each of those groups for 2021-22.

**Mhairi Black:** [161794]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much the (a) Union Unit and (b) Union Taskforce spent on paid-for listing in search results in each financial year since 2010-11; and how much is budgeted for that purpose for each of those groups for 2021-22.

**Mhairi Black:** [161795]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many individuals were employed by (a) the Union Unit and (b) the Union Taskforce in each financial year since 2008-09; and how many and what proportion of those people were employed in an (a) press or (b) communications capacity.

**Mhairi Black:** [161796]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish any audience targeting information used by the (a) Union Unit and (b) Union Taskforce for (i) advertising, (ii) campaigning or (iii) promotional purposes in the last 12 months.

**Julia Lopez:**

In line with the practice of successive administrations, the Prime Minister's Office is an integral part of the Cabinet Office. Details of expenditure are available in the Cabinet Office annual report and expenditure over £25,000 is published on gov.uk, in line with our transparency policy. Staff organograms are published periodically and available on gov.uk. Future details will be published in the usual way.

## ■ Weddings: Coronavirus

**Sir Christopher Chope:** [163143]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the proposed restrictions on weddings being held in April, May and June 2021 make provision for people who have been vaccinated for more than three weeks to be excluded from the calculation of the maximum number of those permitted to be present; and if he will make a statement.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

As set out in the COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021, published on 22 February, the Government will review whether COVID-status certification could play a role in reopening our economy, reducing restrictions on social contact and improving safety. The Government will set out its conclusions ahead of Step 4 of the roadmap.

The limits for weddings remain as set out in the COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021>

Further information can also be found in the guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>

## DEFENCE

### ■ Armed Conflict: Explosives

**Tony Lloyd:**

[161677]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the Government's policy is on endorsing an international Political Declaration to avoid the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[162518]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had on using an International Political Declaration to restrict the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[162519]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what representations he has received on the draft text of an International Political Declaration to restrict the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

**James Heappey:**

The final version of the Political Declaration has not yet been published.

### ■ International Criminal Court

**Chris Green:**

[160692]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2021 to Question 156447 on International Criminal Court, what assessment he has made of the implications for UK military personnel of the International Criminal Court's decision of 5 February 2021; and if he will make a statement.

**James Heappey:**

The UK respects the independence of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and we expect it to exercise due prosecutorial and judicial discipline. We continue to closely follow the ICC's work and are looking at the implications of this decision.

### ■ International Military Services

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[161822]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 155269 on International Military Services, what plans he has to bring the records of International Military Services Ltd onto a MOD secure site; and whether his Department currently has access to the records of International Military Services Ltd held at that company's office.



**Mr Ben Wallace:**

There are no plans to transfer IMS Ltd records. The Ministry of Defence has access to these in IMS Ltd.'s office which is currently closed in line with Government COVID19-related guidance.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[\[161826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether International Military Services Ltd will be fully closed down in the (a) 2020-21 or (b) 2021-22 financial year.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

A formal winding up of IMS Ltd will only be practicable once the outstanding legal dispute, to which it is a party, is resolved.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[\[161827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reasons International Military Services Ltd has not published a set of company accounts since March 2019; and when the next set of accounts will be published.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

The latest company accounts will be published by the end of March 2021 in line with legislative requirements, including changes introduced last year to allow companies to take account of the impact of COVID19 on company administration.

#### ■ Reserve Forces: Wakefield

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[160856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces reservists live in Wakefield (a) in total and (b) by each branch of the armed forces.

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[160857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces reservists who live in Wakefield are not attached to any unit within the armed forces.

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[160858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces reservists have been recruited from Wakefield since January 2020.

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[160859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces reservists in Wakefield have completed phase 2 training.

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[160861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people from Wakefield were recruited into the (a) British Army, (b) Royal Navy and (c) Royal Air Force in 2020.



**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[160862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people on Full Time Reserve Service, home commitment and full commitment in all services have a home address of Wakefield.

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[160863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service families and dependents of people in the armed forces live in Wakefield.

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[163321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of current armed forces personnel have been recruited from (a) Wakefield and (b) West Yorkshire.

**James Heappey:**

The detailed information requested to answer the hon. Member's questions will take time to collate, and I will write in due course.

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ Archives: Coronavirus

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[160785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, on what date archives are able to reopen under the Government's roadmap for easing covid-19 restrictions.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

It is our expectation that the reading rooms and study areas of archives in England will be able to reopen as part of step 2 of the Government's roadmap to ease COVID-19 restrictions, in line with similar functions in libraries. The Devolved Administrations will publish their own plans. As laid out in the Government's roadmap, step 2 will not commence until 12 April at the earliest.

Many archives provide a range of functions and services, for which they may need to refer to other areas of guidance on reopening; for example exhibition spaces should not reopen until Step 3 of the roadmap, in line with the museums and galleries guidance.

We recommend that archives consult the guidance relevant to their functions. The National Archives will provide further detail to the archives sector relating to archives when regulations are published in due course.

### ■ Broadband

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[160655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the average broadband requirement of a family all of whom are working and studying from home.

**Matt Warman:**

In order to ensure that households have the connectivity they need during Covid-19, the Government and Ofcom agreed a set of commitments with the telecoms industry in March 2020. In recognition of increased data needs, data limits were removed on all fixed broadband connections.

Government and Ofcom's view is that a minimum of 10Mbps download and 1Mbps upload fixed broadband speeds is sufficient for households to undertake regular online activity and view streaming services, whilst supporting multiple users in a household.

As such, any consumer who is unable to receive these speeds is entitled to request a connection as part of the broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO). The USO speeds are kept under review. The USO is intended as a digital "safety net" for premises that currently lack a decent broadband connection. According to Ofcom's Connection Nations Report 2020, broadband connections that deliver this minimum speed are available to 99.4% of UK premises.

There is also good coverage of higher broadband speeds available to most households. According to thinkbroadband.com, 97% can access speeds of 24Mbps and over, and 96% 30Mbps and over.

**Navendu Mishra:**[\[160845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of residential properties can access fibre-to-the-cabinet broadband in (a) Stockport, (b) Greater Manchester and (c) England.

**Matt Warman:**

The UK's independent regulator - Ofcom - does not routinely report data on the proportion of properties with access to Fibre to the Cabinet broadband technology and instead focuses on broadband performance by speed through their regular Connected Nations reports.

Fibre to the Cabinet broadband technology can normally deliver superfast download speeds of at least 30Mbps. According to Ofcom's Connected Nations 2020 report, Stockport currently has 99% superfast coverage, compared to 96% in England as a whole. Greater Manchester comprises a number of local authorities. Superfast coverage in these local authority areas varies from 96% to 99%.

Further information is available from the Connected Nations section of the Ofcom website including figures on access to ultrafast and gigabit broadband speeds.

**■ Events Industry: Coronavirus****Theresa Villiers:**[\[161696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to begin the pilot projects for re-opening large events as set out in the Government's roadmap for lifting covid-19 restrictions.

**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[161697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what pilot projects he plans to establish in relation to re-opening major events as set out in the Government's roadmap for lifting covid-19 lockdown rules.

**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[161698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether a negative covid-19 test result will be required for admitting spectators to the pilot projects for re-opening major events which are referred to in the Government's roadmap for lifting covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

As the Prime Minister set out in the roadmap, the Government will run a scientific Events Research Programme over the Spring. The pilots will run from April onwards across a range of settings.

The series of pilots will use enhanced testing approaches and other measures to run events with larger crowd sizes and reduced social distancing to evaluate the outcomes.

Further details regarding the Events Research Programme will be published in due course.

## ■ Imperial War Museum: Security

**Rachel Hopkins:**

[\[163340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with management at the Imperial War Museum on its (a) recently completed security review and (b) decision to appoint ZE Global as its security provider; and if he will make a statement.

**Rachel Hopkins:**

[\[163341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has made an assessment of the findings of the Imperial War Museum's security review report; and whether he plans to take steps to implement the recommendations of that report.

**Rachel Hopkins:**

[\[163342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with management at (a) the Imperial War Museum and (b) ZE Global on job security following the transfer of staff from Bidfest Noonan to ZE Global which is due to take place on 1 April 2021.

**Rachel Hopkins:**

[\[163343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if will take steps to ascertain what criteria were used by management at the Imperial War Museum when appointing ZE Global as the holders of its security contract; and if he will make an assessment of ZE Global's effectiveness in that role.

**Caroline Dineneage:**

DCMS-sponsored museums operate independently, at arm's length from government. The Imperial War Museum's review of its security operations is an operational matter. As such, Ministers and officials have not assessed or discussed it.

■ **Internet: Fraud****Debbie Abrahams:**[\[161765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the regulatory framework governing the responsibility of online platforms, including search engines and social media sites to protect their users against scam content on their sites.

**Caroline Dineneage:**

We are deeply concerned about the growth and scale of online scams. My officials work closely on this matter with other government departments, including the Home Office as the government department responsible for tackling fraud, as well as with industry, regulators and consumer groups. Through an ongoing programme of work, the government is considering additional legislative and non-legislative solutions to effectively address the harms posed by all elements of online fraud in a cohesive and robust way.

Within my department, the Online Advertising Programme will be considering further regulation of online advertising to tackle harms including fraud. The government will launch a public consultation on measures to enhance how online advertising is regulated in the UK this year.

■ **Nominet****Helen Hayes:**[\[163261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the management of Nominet since 2015; and what discussions his Department has had with (a) Nominet and (b) representatives of its members as a provider of critical digital infrastructure.

**Helen Hayes:**[\[163262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the (a) level of change in executive pay, (b) level of change in public benefit payments and (c) increase in domain name prices by Nominet on the UK's digital infrastructure.

**Matt Warman:**

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has regular discussions with Nominet to discuss a range of issues connected with the .uk top level domain name registry, their work to protect essential public services, cyber security, crime prevention and other functions. As the operator of the .uk registry, Nominet is providing an essential service that must satisfy security requirements under the Network and Information Systems Regulations 2018. Other functions are managed

as a private company with a public purpose objective and any changes to the way in which the registry is managed is done so through a multi-stakeholder approach, which have not been subject to a departmental assessment.

## ■ Ofcom: Public Appointments

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[161797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, for what reasons the Government is not required to seek the approval of the House of Commons on the appointment of a new chair of Ofcom.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

The Ofcom Chair is appointed by the Secretary of State in line with the provisions of the Office of Communications Act 2002. Pre-appointment scrutiny by the House of Commons Select Committee for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is an important part of the public appointment process, once a preferred appointable candidate has been identified by the Secretary of State.

The government does not believe it is appropriate for the Committee to have the right to veto the appointment of the Ofcom Chair, or other similar public appointments, as the direct line of accountability and responsibility between the appointee and the Minister must be preserved.

## ■ Television Licences: Older People

**Paul Maynard:**

[\[160612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what his policy is on exempting from the TV licence fee people over the age of 75 who are registered as partially sighted.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

The Government is deeply disappointed with the BBC's decision to restrict the over 75 licence fee concession to only those in receipt of pension credit. We recognise the value of free TV licences for over-75s and believe they should be funded by the BBC. The Government has said that the BBC must do more to support older people.

However, the Digital Economy Act 2017 provides that the future of the over-75s concession is the responsibility of the BBC, including whether it is extended to people aged over 75 and who are partially sighted.

TV Licence concessions are also available to people who are registered blind or severely sight impaired, and people living in qualifying residential care who are disabled or over 60 years old. There are no further concessions available for people with disabilities or other health conditions, and we are not considering changes to the current concessions regime at this time.

**■ Tourism: Coronavirus****Dr Luke Evans:**[\[160818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had relevant stakeholders on developing the Tourism Recovery Plan; and what the timeframe is for publishing that plan.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Global Travel Taskforce last year committed the Government to publish a Tourism Recovery Plan in support of the sector. We are continuing to hold discussions with stakeholders, including via the Tourism Industry Council, to assess how this plan can support the sector's short and long term recovery from the pandemic.

The Government intends to set out proposals in the Spring, including plans for a marketing campaign to welcome visitors back to the UK as soon as it is safe to do so.

**EDUCATION****■ Alternative Education: Coronavirus****Navendu Mishra:**[\[160843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the level of local authority referrals to (a) Pupil Referral Units and (b) alternative provision.

**Navendu Mishra:**[\[160844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to help ensure that (a) Pupil Referral Units and (b) alternative provision continues to be available to pupils who are (i) excluded from school, (ii) are at risk of exclusion and (iii) have medical needs and are unable to attend school during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

We are working closely with our alternative provision (AP) stakeholder group to monitor the impact that the COVID-19 outbreak has had on local authority referrals. AP settings and those local authorities and schools that use their services should continue to work closely together, to assess need and demand and to make sure local capacity is maintained where both places and expertise continue to be needed.

We have prioritised vulnerable children and children of critical workers throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. AP has remained open for these children and young people, which means many of these settings have continued to offer face-to-face provision for the majority of their pupils. Settings should provide robust remote education for those who are not attending, including those with medical needs and we have made laptops and tablets available for the most disadvantaged children who would otherwise not have access.

Over the course of the COVID-19 outbreak, we have taken a number of steps to support Pupil Referral Units and AP to remain open and support vulnerable children and young people, in addition to the extra support we have provided to all schools. This includes the £7.1 million AP transition fund announced in June 2020 to support year 11 pupils in AP to make a successful transition to post-16 education and training. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/alternative-provision-year-11-transition-funding>. This is in addition to support through the workforce fund, higher rates of funding for catch-up funding in financial year 2020-21 and most recently, increased levels of funding for mass-testing. It is crucial that AP operates as safely as possible with easy access to mass asymptomatic testing for staff and those attending for face-to-face education.

### ■ **Army Foundation College: Inspections**

**Jamie Stone:**

**[161835]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how the Ofsted inspection regime for the Army Foundation College differs from that used in civilian colleges of further education for the same age group.

**Nick Gibb:**

This is a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman. I have asked her to write to the hon. Member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

### ■ **Children: Coronavirus**

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

**[159329]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January 2021 to Question 96101 on Coronavirus: Children, what steps his Department is taking to monitor common covid-19 symptoms in children; and how the data on the most common covid-19 symptoms in children is taken into account when setting covid-19 testing criteria for children.

**Nick Gibb:**

Monitoring of COVID-19 symptoms and criteria for Test and Trace are clinical issues, and therefore fall within the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Care. As part of the return to face-to-face education from 8 March, all secondary school and further education college students will be offered regular asymptomatic testing for COVID-19, receiving four tests on their return with three of these on site. Thereafter, students will receive twice-weekly home tests.

### ■ **Children: Reading**

**Tracy Brabin:**

**[162670]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the importance of reading for pleasure in improving children's literacy levels.



**Nick Gibb:**

Reading for pleasure brings a range of benefits. As well as the strong links between reading for pleasure and attainment, there are a number of other positive effects including: improved text comprehension and grammar, positive reading attitudes, pleasure in reading in later life, increased general knowledge and character development.

The National Curriculum states that teachers are expected to encourage pupils to develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information. Within the National Curriculum, the programmes of study for English have been developed to make clear the importance of reading for pleasure. The National Curriculum also emphasises the importance of listening to, discussing and – as pupils' fluency increases – reading for themselves a wide range of stories, poems, plays, and information books.

**Department for Education: Consultants****Robert Halfon:****[161739]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish which (a) consultancies, (b) research organisations and (c) think tanks his Department has hired to conduct (i) evaluations and (ii) research for Departmental programmes; and how much his Department has spent with each of those bodies on each of those activities in (A) 2018-19, (B) 2019-20 and (C) 2020-21 to date.

**Robert Halfon:****[161740]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much his Department has spent on hiring external consultancies, research organisations and think tanks to conduct evaluations, research and/or analysis since March 2020; which organisations were so hired for that work; and what the nature of the work was that each of those organisations carried out.

**Nick Gibb:**

A detailed analysis of the Department spend is published at the links below. The reports can be filtered by Research and Development.

Spend reporting for Financial Year 2020 to 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-and-executive-agency-spend-over-25000-2020-to-2021>.

Spend reporting for Financial Year 2019 to 2020:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-and-executive-agency-spend-over-25000-2019-to-2020>.

Spend reporting for Financial Year 2018 to 2019:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-and-executive-agency-spend-over-25000-2018-to-2019>.

Additional Financial Years can be found following similar link formats.



In addition, the Department contributes to the annual Office for National Statistics Research and Development expenditure report. The latest publication can be found at the link below:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/governmentpublicsectorandtaxes/researchanddevelopmentexpenditure>.

The next report covering the 2019-2020 financial year is due to be published in June 2021 by the Office for National Statistics.

## ■ Ecology: Education

**Caroline Lucas:**

**[159272]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the proposals relating to education in Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity commissioned by HM Treasury, what plans his Department has to introduce nature studies in the education system at primary, secondary and tertiary level; if he will make an assessment of whether the teaching of economics adequately integrates nature and biodiversity; and if he will make a statement.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government will examine the Review's findings and respond formally in due course.

Topics related to the environment are included within the science and geography National Curriculum. At primary level (Key Stages 1 and 2), pupils are taught how environments can change, including positive and negative impacts of human action, weather, and climate zones.

In secondary science (Key Stage 3 and 4), pupils are taught about the production of carbon dioxide by human activity and the effect that this has on the climate. At GCSE, pupils consider the evidence, and uncertainties in evidence, for anthropogenic causes of climate change. They also study the impact of increased levels of carbon dioxide and methane and how this can be mitigated.

In secondary geography (Key Stage 3), pupils are taught about the climate through topics such as change in climate from the Ice Age to the present. Pupils are also taught about how human and physical processes interact to influence and change landscapes, environments, and the climate. At GCSE, teaching covers changing weather and climate, including the causes, consequences of, and responses to, extreme weather conditions and natural weather hazards.

In 2017, the Department introduced a new environmental science A level. This enables pupils to study topics that will support their understanding of climate change and how it can be tackled.

We are exploring the option of introducing a new GCSE in Natural History after receiving a proposal from exam board OCR, but have made no commitment at this stage. It will need to meet our robust criteria for new GCSEs.

Economics A level also requires the study of the allocation of scarce resources, which could include the effects of economic decisions and activity on the environment. The details of this are for schools and colleges to determine.

#### ■ Education: Coronavirus

**Jamie Stone:** [912709]

What steps he is taking to help make up for teaching time lost as a result of the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government is committed to helping children and young people make up learning lost as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. This is why we have invested £1.7 billion to give early years, schools and colleges support to help pupils get back on track, including additional funding for tutoring, early language support and summer schools.

We have appointed Sir Kevan Collins as an Education Recovery Commissioner to advise on our recovery plan and academic and non-academic factors in supporting attainment will form a part of this work.

#### ■ Educational Visits: Coronavirus

**Caroline Lucas:** [159274]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish a timetable for the resumption of (a) domestic and (b) overseas educational visits by schools during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

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

#### ■ Eleven Plus

**Ian Mearns:** [159288]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information his Department holds on the proportion of students who enter the 11-plus exam who are eligible for the pupil premium; and whether his Department has made a comparative assessment of such pupils' performance in that exam with the performance of pupils not eligible for the pupil premium.

**Ian Mearns:** [159289]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans to ensure that Grammar schools collect data on the performance of pupils eligible for the pupil premium who enter into the 11-plus exam.

**Ian Mearns:**

**[159290]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has published to support the (a) holding and (b) taking of the 11-plus exam in 2021.

**Nick Gibb:**

Guidance was published in July 2020 on selection testing for entry for September 2021. The Department updated it to offer amended advice on late and in-year testing on 23 February 2021. We will keep the need for further guidance for this year and for entry in September 2022 under review as we receive further scientific advice on the COVID-19 outbreak. The guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-assessment-processes-for-selective-school-admissions>.

Selection tests are part of the admission arrangements of individual grammar schools. They are administered locally, and the Department does not routinely collect information on individual test results or those entering tests. We do not intend to undertake such a data collection exercise at this time. Data is available, within the National Pupil Database, on the number of disadvantaged children on roll within grammar schools.

## ■ European Social Fund

**Jim Shannon:**

**[160660]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans the Government has to embed the importance of community education in the successor policy to the European Social Fund programme.

**Jim Shannon:**

**[160661]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government plans to take to ensure that any successor policy to the European Social Fund programme takes into account the interdependency between community education and further/higher education.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is the domestic successor to the EU's Structural Fund programme. It will maximise the benefits of leaving the EU through quicker delivery of funding, better targeting, better alignment with domestic priorities and by reducing EU bureaucracy.

The Department for Education is working closely with other government departments including the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Work and Pensions on the development of the UKSPF. As set out in the Heads of Terms published in the Spending Review 2020, a portion of the fund will be targeted to people most in need through bespoke employment and skills programmes that are tailored to local need. This will support improved employment outcomes for those in and out of work in specific cohorts of people who face labour market barriers.

The government will publish a UK wide investment framework later in 2021 and confirm the quantum funding amount at the next Spending Review.

■ **Google: Remote Education**

**Kate Green:** [162582]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with Google on offering G Suite Enterprise for Education free of charge to schools to assist with remote learning.

**Nick Gibb:**

In the first instance the Department's primary goal was to respond to the demand and to ensure that schools are set up with a robust remote learning platform, offering schools the basic functionality needed to continue delivering remote education. The Department is working with Google to offer their standard free licence. The Department continues to work with Google and schools regularly to monitor how we can make improvements to the programme and are keeping this under constant review.

■ **Migrants: Education and Free School Meals**

**Neil Coyle:** [163240]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Secretary of State for Education of 1 March 2021, Official report, col 19, what the terms of reference are for the joint review on how immigration status and No Recourse to Public Funds status interact with free school meals and other education entitlements.

**Vicky Ford:**

We are working with departments across government to evaluate access to free school meals for families with no recourse to public funds. In the meantime, the extension of eligibility will continue with the current income threshold until a decision on long-term eligibility is made.

Once the review is complete, we will update our guidance accordingly. Our current guidance regarding the extension can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/guidance-for-the-temporary-extension-of-free-school-meals-eligibility-to-nrpf-groups>.

■ **National Skills Fund**

**Chi Onwurah:** [160653]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many adults received training via the National Skills Fund in 2020; and how many are projected to receive training in 2021.

**Gillian Keegan:**

I refer the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central to the answer I gave on 24 February 2021 to Question [157105](#).

## ■ Oak National Academy: Finance

**Wes Streeting:**

**[161890]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on funding of the Oak National Academy after the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make statement.

**Nick Gibb:**

In order to provide rapid support to schools and families during the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government has funded the Oak National Academy to provide free video lessons and online resources in a broad range of subjects for Reception up to Year 11. Specialist content for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is also available. Oak National Academy has delivered more than 100 million lessons since April 2020.

The Government also recently announced an immediate support package to help children and young people recover from the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes funding for secondary schools to deliver face to face, two week summer schools for pupils most in need of support. A range of high quality online resources available for all teachers and pupils, starting from the summer term and throughout summer holidays, will also be provided by Oak National Academy, to help give pupils the confidence they are ready for the next academic year. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-education-recovery-package-for-children-and-young-people>.

The Department has recently published a prior information notice regarding a potential open procurement to create and host a range of free in-class and catch up curriculum resources to support teachers with their lesson delivery and education recovery. Further information will be available in due course.

As part of the Government's commitment to develop a longer-term education recovery plan, the Education Recovery Commissioner, Sir Kevan Collins, is engaging extensively with teachers, school and college leaders, educational charities and families to consider the effect the COVID-19 outbreak has had on education and wellbeing, and what further action is needed to address this.

## ■ Pupil Premium

**Janet Daby:**

**[912690]**

What funding he plans to allocate to schools to cover the costs of families who sign up for pupil premium later in the school year.

**Nick Gibb:**

Pupil premium funding for the financial year 2021-22 will be based on the October 2020 census data. Pupils who become eligible later in the year will be provided for in the following year.

The move to using the October census for pupil premium funding will provide both schools and the Department with greater certainty around future funding levels earlier

in the year. This will bring the pupil premium in line with the great majority of schools' funding, which is already calculated by using data from the October census.

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

In addition to the £2.5 billion in pupil premium funding for 2021-22, on 24 February 2021 the Government announced a further £300 million for a one-off Recovery Premium which will be allocated to schools based on the same methodology as the pupil premium. In this way, schools with more disadvantaged pupils will receive larger amounts.

Schools are best placed to decide how to use their pupil premium funding, and they can spend the funding on pupils who do not meet the eligibility criteria. As such, pupils that become eligible for free school meals after October 2020 can still benefit from the pupil premium.

Further information on this change can be found on gov.uk under "allocation changes from 2021 to 2022" at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>.

## ■ Pupils: Hearing Impairment

**Peter Aldous:**

**[159296]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his press release, dated Monday 22 February 2021 on the planned extended use of face coverings in class rooms in secondary schools in England, what guidance he (a) has issued and (b) plans to issue to (i) teachers and (ii) parents on (A) deaf and (B) other pupils who require lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate within such settings when face coverings are worn.

**Peter Aldous:**

**[159297]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what advice he plans to give to secondary schools on how they can apply exemptions from wearing face coverings from the 8 March 2021 as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

**Nick Gibb:**

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

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

The Department has recently published updated guidance for schools to support the return to full attendance from 8 March 2021, which includes updated advice on face coverings. The guidance can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/964351/Schools\\_coronavirus\\_operational\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964351/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf).

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

In addition, from 8 March 2021, we now also recommend that in those schools where pupils in Year 7 and above are taught, face coverings should be worn in classrooms unless social distancing can be maintained.

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

Transparent face coverings, which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate, can also be worn. There is currently very limited evidence regarding the effectiveness or safety of transparent face coverings, but they may be effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19.

We are recommending these additional precautionary measures for a for a time limited period until Easter. As with all measures, we will keep this under review and update guidance as necessary.

## ■ Pupils: Lipreading

**Ian Mearns:**

**[161745]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 25 January 2021 to Question 140051, what assessment he has made of the potential risk of covid-19 transmission in school classrooms where staff and pupils have had to use the face covering exemption to remove face coverings to assist the learning of a pupils who rely on lip reading, clear sound or facial impressions to communicate.

**Nick Gibb:**

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



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

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

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/964351/Schools\\_coronavirus\\_operational\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964351/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf).

The system of controls as outlined in our guidance have been developed with PHE to reduce risk in schools. Implementing the system of controls creates a safer environment for staff and pupils where the risk of transmission of the infection is substantially reduced. The use of face coverings in recommended circumstances is one element of the system of controls and should be implemented alongside other measures, including maintaining social distancing wherever possible and regular hand washing.

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

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

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

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

Transparent face coverings, which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate, can also be worn. There is currently very limited evidence regarding the effectiveness or safety of transparent face coverings, but they may be effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19.

The Department is recommending these additional precautionary measures for a for a time limited period until Easter. As with all measures, we will keep this under review and update guidance as necessary.



To safeguard the health of the teaching workforce and keep as many staff, pupils and students in school and college as possible, we have introduced rapid lateral flow COVID-19 tests available to schools and colleges to help catch asymptomatic cases and reduce transmission. Further information on this can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-asymptomatic-testing-in-schools-and-colleges/coronavirus-covid-19-asymptomatic-testing-in-schools-and-colleges>.

## ■ Schools: Coronavirus

**Ian Mearns:**

**[161742]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to help ensure that schools make reasonable adjustments to requirements for face coverings to be worn for people who (a) rely on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate and (b) provide support to such individuals when schools reopen in March 2021 as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

**Ian Mearns:**

**[161743]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of requirements for face coverings in class rooms on the learning of (a) all children and (b) deaf children since September 2020.

**Ian Mearns:**

**[161744]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to allow secondary schools to use (a) exemptions from and (b) reasonable adjustments to requirements to wear face coverings for people who rely on lip reading from 8 March 2020 when schools reopen as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

**Nick Gibb:**

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

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

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/963639/DfE\\_Evidence\\_summary\\_COVID-19 - children\\_young\\_people\\_and\\_education\\_settings.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963639/DfE_Evidence_summary_COVID-19_-_children_young_people_and_education_settings.pdf).

The Department has also recently published updated guidance for schools to support the return to full attendance from 8 March, which includes updated advice on face coverings. The guidance can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/964351/Schools\\_coronavirus\\_operational\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964351/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf).

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

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

The same legal exemptions that apply to the wearing of face coverings in shops and on public transport also apply in nurseries, schools, and colleges. This includes people who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness, impairment, or disability, or if you are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate. The Department expects teachers and other staff to be sensitive to those needs.

Transparent face coverings, which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate, can also be worn. There is currently very limited evidence regarding the effectiveness or safety of transparent face coverings, but they may be effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19.

The Department is recommending these additional precautionary measures for a for a time limited period until Easter. As with all measures, we will keep this under review and update guidance as necessary.

## ■ Schools: Mental Health Services

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

**[160694]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how he plans to allocate resources to the post of mental health lead in schools; and if he will take steps to ensure that those resources include (a) a ring-fenced sum for training and training materials and (b) the ability to implement a salary structure that incentivises the holder of that post.

**Vicky Ford:**

The Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care jointly published 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: A Green Paper' in 2017, and a subsequent consultation response in 2018, setting out the government's commitments to improve mental health support in and around schools and colleges. We remain committed to these proposals, including incentivising and supporting all schools and colleges to have an effective senior mental health lead by offering training free of charge to every school and college in England by 2025.

The senior lead role is not a mandatory role; rather, it is about helping schools and colleges to make the best use of existing resources to help improve the wellbeing and mental health of pupils and students. It is up to schools and colleges to decide on the precise nature of the role and salary arrangements the most of their setting's existing approaches. We know that most schools and colleges have an individual who leads on mental health as part of their role: 82% of schools, including those with a sixth form (81% of primary, 86% of secondary) (school snapshot survey: winter 2018), and 77% of post-16 education settings, including sixth forms (91% of further education colleges) (Post-16 institutions and providers omnibus, summer 2018).

The government has prioritised providing bespoke training and support to meet the immediate challenges that all schools and colleges face in supporting the wellbeing of children and young people during the COVID-19 outbreak through our £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme, delaying delivery of senior lead training.

We have recently assessed the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the training needs of senior mental health leads and examined the feasibility of a range of delivery options. We are now engaging the training provider market to understand how it may be able to support this commitment to help schools and colleges access quality training, with a view to providing schools and colleges with a grant to pay directly for quality training courses from appropriate providers. This training will equip senior mental health leads with the skills and knowledge to introduce or develop their whole-school/college approach to positive mental health and implement effective processes for ensuring pupils and students with mental health problems receive appropriate support.

We want local partners to have a key role in supporting delivery as good local partnerships make a huge difference in supporting schools and colleges with their role in children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. We remain keen to encourage and reinforce ongoing improvements to partnership working at the local level. We are also engaging representative groups to explore how best we can support partnership working on this, including the role of local authorities in the delivery of the training.

## ■ Sixth Form Education: Finance

**Helen Hayes:**

**[160748]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will increase the level of funding for sixth form students to at least £4,760 per year.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The government has already announced an additional £291 million in 16 to 19 education in 2021 to 2022. This is in addition to the £400 million awarded in the 2019 Spending Review which was the biggest injection of new money into 16 to 19 education in a single year since 2010. This has allowed us to raise the base rate of funding for all providers of 16 to 19 education, including school sixth forms and sixth-form colleges, for the first time since the current funding system was introduced in

2013, from £4,000 in each academic year up to 2019/20, to £4,188 in academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22. Over and above this base rate figure, the government has recently made further funding increases targeted on high value and high-cost programmes as well as providing additional funding to support those on level 3 programmes to continue to study English and maths where needed. As a result, the average total programme funding per 16-19 student has increased more significantly than the base rate, from £4,516 in 2019/20 published allocations to £4,958 in 2020/21 published allocations[1].

We are continuing to increase our investment in T Levels and will allocate up to an extra half a billion pounds a year to deliver these new programmes once they are fully rolled out. We are also investing in the further education workforce with a £20 million increase in funding in 2021-22 when compared to 2020-21, allowing us to deliver greater support – including opportunities to gain valuable industry experience through our Workforce Industry Exchange Programme. The government has also committed £83 million capital funding in the 2021-22 financial year to ensure that eligible post-16 providers can accommodate the expected demographic increase in 16 to 19-year-olds. More details about this funding and eligibility for the funding will be announced in due course and we will keep the policy under review.

We will of course continue to look at the needs of 16 to 19 education in future Spending Reviews.

[1] This calculation only includes institutions that have students receiving total programme funding. Some institutions receive only high needs funding – their students are not included in this calculation. In addition, the Condition of Funding adjustment for English and maths and the Advanced Maths Premium have been incorporated in total programme funding in 2019/20 to make this consistent with the definition in 2020/21.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

**[160699]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support he is providing to schools to plan their reopening and return to face to face learning for children and young people with SEND as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

**Vicky Ford:**

Vulnerable children and young people, including those with an education, health and care plan, have been allowed and encouraged to attend school and college throughout the current national lockdown. Special schools and specialist post-16 providers have continued to offer face-to-face provision for all their pupils and students who wished to attend during this time.

On 22 February, the government set out its plans for the wider return of all pupils and to schools and colleges from 8 March. This included updated guidance, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>.

Sir Kevan Collins has been appointed as the Education Recovery Commissioner and is considering how schools and the system can more effectively target resources and support at pupils in greatest need. This will be supported with a new £700 million recovery package, focusing on an expansion of one-to-one and small group tutoring programmes, as well as supporting summer provision for those pupils who need it the most. This includes pupils with special educational needs and disability (SEND).

Given the additional costs associated with offering provision to pupils in specialist settings, eligible pupils in special schools, special units in mainstream schools and alternative provision settings will attract a higher rate of recovery premium funding and funding for summer schools.

We have also announced a £42 million package of continued support for the 2021-22 academic year, which will help us ensure that children and young people with SEND and their families are supported throughout school and into adulthood during this challenging time.

**Olivia Blake:**

**[162719]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what provisions and guidance have been issued on support for SEND pupils' assessments in the 2020-21 academic year.

**Nick Gibb:**

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, the Government considers that exams cannot be held in a way which is fair. The Department has announced that GCSE, AS and A level exams will not go ahead this summer as planned and that students taking GCSE, AS and A levels regulated by Ofqual should be awarded grades based on an assessment by their teachers. This includes pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

Teachers will be able to draw evidence from across the duration of the pupil's course, to determine a pupil's GCSE, AS or A level grade. Examination boards have a duty, under the Equality Act 2010, to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities who, because of their disability, would otherwise be at a substantial disadvantage when demonstrating their skills, knowledge and understanding, and will provide guidance to teachers on reasonable adjustments. The guidance will confirm that teachers should make any reasonable adjustments they normally would.

Mitigating circumstances and pupils who are entitled to reasonable adjustments should be taken into account by teachers when deciding which evidence to use, with flexibility to substitute or discount evidence. Where a pupil's performance in assessments is impaired through sickness or any other reason, which would normally be taken into account in exams through the special consideration process, this should be taken into account by teachers. These adjustments are made to remove or reduce disadvantages that such pupils face compared with pupils who are not disabled.

For assessment at primary, the engagement model is the new assessment replacing Performance scales (P scales) 1 to 4 for pupils working below the standard of national curriculum assessments at Key Stages 1 and 2, and not engaged in subject-specific study.

In recognition of COVID-19 restrictions and impacts, the Standards and Testing Agency confirmed that academic year 2020/21 will be a transitional year. Schools that were ready to use the engagement model may do so, and schools who needed more time to implement this change may continue to assess against P scales 1 to 4 for one final year.

Following further disruptions, primary assessments were cancelled for the 2020/21 academic year, including statutory assessment of pupils working below the standard of national curriculum assessments at Key Stages 1 and 2, and not engaged in subject-specific study. As such, there will be no formal assessment and reporting requirements for these pupils. We know that schools will continue to use assessment, including the P scales or engagement model where appropriate, during the summer term to inform teaching, to enable them to give information to parents on their child's attainment in their statutory annual report and to support transition to secondary school.

### ■ Teachers: Training

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[159366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial support and assistance is available to people who plan to train as teachers in (a) religious studies and (b) other humanities subjects at (i) undergraduate and (ii) postgraduate level.

**Nick Gibb:**

All trainee teachers on both undergraduate and postgraduate initial teacher training (ITT) courses are able to apply for student finance, regardless of the subject they train to teach. The only ITT courses that are ineligible for student finance are employment based courses, where trainees earn a salary whilst they train.

Providing they are eligible, trainee teachers in subjects such as religious education and other humanities can access a tuition fee loan, so they do not have to pay the fee upfront. They can also receive a means tested maintenance loan of up to £12,382 to support their living costs. Additional means tested funding is available from Student Finance England for trainees in particular circumstances, including those with children, adult dependants, or a disability.

### ■ Uni Connect Programme

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[162677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the provision of (a) careers guidance, (b) mental health support and (c) preparation for transition to further and higher education in those schools supported by the UniConnects programme, and what assessment he has made of the effect of the change in the level of funding for that programme in 2021-22 on that provision.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The Uni Connect programme, operated by the Office for Students (OfS), is a 4-year investment programme. It was established to support the creation of a strong and



versatile network of local partnerships with cross-England coverage. It aims to provide sustained outreach to young people in schools and colleges in areas with low or unexplained gaps in higher education (HE) participation.

The programme is due to come to an end in July 2021, which presents the opportunity to consider its scope and objectives, including funding other areas of increasing importance for students and prospective students.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to the OfS on 19 January, providing guidance under section 2(3) of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA). This set out the funding allocation for the 2021/22 financial year and the government's priorities to ensure that more of taxpayers' money is spent on supporting HE provision which aligns with national priorities, including targeting funds to support students and prioritise the most disadvantaged learners.

On 8 February the Secretary of State set out the strategic priorities to higher education. In this the OfS were asked to allocate £15 million towards student mental health in 2021/22 through the proposed reforms to the Strategic Priorities Grant funding, to help address the challenges 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 were 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 pandemic 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.

The OfS plan to consult on the proposed changes to the Strategic Priorities Grant shortly, before final allocations for the 2021/22 academic year are confirmed, whilst carefully considering the impact of any changes on providers. Any decisions will be made in light of the allocations within the available Strategic Priorities Grant, whilst having due regard to general duties, the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance.

The OfS have consulted on the approach to the next phase of the Uni Connect programme from the 2021/22 academic year to the 2024/25 academic year, and will report on the outcomes shortly. That consultation outlined the proposal to continue to support efficient and joined-up collaborative HE outreach through the programme, intended to support activity that complements providers' access and participation plans, create pathways to FE and HE, help address the academic, financial and cultural barriers to progression and support under-represented learners to achieve their ambitions. Proposals set out a future approach to targeting high-priority schools and colleges and giving greater focus to progression from non-traditional routes into and through HE, including through FE and among mature learners.

We are investing over £100 million in financial year 2020/21 to help young people and adults to get high quality careers provision, including funding for the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) to roll out its Enterprise Adviser Network and expand its role supporting schools and colleges across the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks, and for the National Careers Service to deliver high quality, impartial information, advice and guidance service to young people and adults. We will continue to assess the impact of careers provision in schools and colleges through CEC's digital tool, Compass, which measures progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks.

The OfS will consider the impact of any changes on providers before publishing a response towards the end of March 2021. The government welcomes the consultation on the future of the programme, before final allocations are confirmed. Any funding beyond 2021/22 financial year will be determined at the next Spending Review.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[163160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to authorise the creation of a small number of new designations of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as part of the Government's 25 year Environment Plan; and if he will make a statement.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The statutory responsibility in England to appraise the designation of new or extended National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty is held with Natural England.

In his Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution the Prime Minister announced that this Government will start the process this year for designating more of England's beautiful and iconic landscapes as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, safeguarding these areas for future generations and bringing more people within closer reach of nature.

These new Protected Landscapes will play a key role in meeting the Government's commitment to protect and improve 30% of UK land by 2030.

### ■ Chemicals

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[160823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the timeframe is for the call for evidence in respect of the development of the Chemicals Strategy.



**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan commits to a new Chemicals Strategy to tackle chemicals of national concern. Following the end of the Transition Period and our departure from the EU, the Government is developing an ambitious Chemicals Framework which will set out our immediate priorities, alongside any actions we will need to take to achieve safer and more environmentally sustainable management of chemicals for present and future generations. We are continuing to gather evidence and engage with stakeholders as an important part of developing our Framework, including reviewing the timeframe for a Call for Evidence with the aim of publishing the Framework in 2022.

**■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Staff****Luke Pollard:**[\[158200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many additional full-time equivalent employees employed by his Department who were temporarily allocated to EU Exit preparation work in the areas of (a) fisheries, (b) farming and (c) chemicals have been redeployed in his Department to date; and how many of those staff will be redeployed in 2021-22.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra does not centrally record redeployments within the department or detail on the work areas where redeployment has occurred. We would have to contact the respective business areas for such information. This would incur disproportionate costs.

**■ Fishing Catches****Luke Pollard:**[\[160800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many landings by EU vessels into a UK port occurred in (a) January 2021 and (b) February 2021.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Based on data held by the Marine Management Organisation, the number of landings by EU vessels into a UK port was 40 for January 2021 and 32 for February 2021. There were no landings by EU vessels into an English port in January and three in February.

**■ Fishing Vessels: Inspections****Luke Pollard:**[\[160798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many at sea inspections his Department conducted on (a) British and (b) overseas fishing boats in February 2021.

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[160799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many on land inspections his Department conducted on (a) British and (b) EU fishing boats in (i) January 2021 and (ii) February 2021.

**Victoria Prentis:**

During January and February 2021, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) carried out no at sea inspections. The total number of shore-based inspections carried out during January and February 2021 by the MMO was 31. This can be broken down as follows:

	JANUARY	FEBRUARY
Shore based inspections carried out on British fishing boats by MMO	24	4
Shore based inspection carried out on EU fishing boats by MMO	0	3

COVID-19 safety measures introduced in response to high rates of infection impacted the ability to conduct physical inspections of vessels both at sea and on shore during January and February 2021. However, inspections were carried out on quaysides with social distancing measures in place and an increased at sea enforcement presence remained in place for January and February 2021 to deter illegal activity.

## ■ Minerals

**Steve Double:**

[\[160722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to develop a critical mineral circular economy industry in the UK.

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[162699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to use powers contained in the Environment Bill to set a recycling target for critical minerals.

**Rebecca Pow:**

In line with our Resources and Waste Strategy, published in December 2018, we are taking steps to move from a linear economy to a more circular economy. This includes by seeking new legislative powers under the landmark Environment Bill that will enable us to: drive design for durability, reparability and recyclability of products such as electronics; require provision of information on products such as material content, including Critical Raw Materials (CRMs); and put in place extended producer responsibility schemes. We are also working with BEIS to utilise our repatriated EU powers to introduce eco-design measures relating to energy-using products. Our

planned review of, and subsequent consultation on, the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations, and the Batteries Regulations, will also provide an opportunity for consideration of the management of critical minerals. At this stage there are no plans to use the powers in the Environment Bill, or other powers, to set specific recycling targets for critical minerals.

In addition, in November 2020 we announced 5 new UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Centres as part of £30 million of Government investment. Two of these relate to CRMs and metals – the UKRI Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Centre for Technology Metals, and the UKRI Interdisciplinary Centre for Circular Metal. These will explore how reusing waste materials could deliver environmental benefits and boost the UK economy.

## ■ **Plastics: Seas and Oceans**

**Dan Jarvis:**

**[161768]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce plastic waste in the ocean.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Marine litter is one of the greatest environmental challenges we are facing with 80% of marine plastic litter originating from land-based sources and science predicting a threefold increase in the amount of plastics in the ocean between 2015 and 2025. Domestically our 25 Year Environment Plan establishes our target of reducing all forms of marine plastic pollution where possible, and our Resources and Waste Strategy sets out how we will achieve this.

Internationally, the UK has supported the Global Plastic Action Partnership (GPAP) since 2018; a pioneering initiative to accelerate the international response to addressing plastic pollution through uniting public, private and civil society leaders. GPAP has launched successful partnerships in Indonesia, Ghana and Vietnam, working with the most influential players across the plastics value chain, including local decision-makers and private partners such as Coca Cola and Nestlé to deliver on national commitments to tackling plastic pollution. The UK has also committed to launch a £500m Blue Planet Fund, financed from official development assistance (ODA), to help eligible countries protect their marine resources from key human-generated threats including climate change, marine pollution such as marine litter, overfishing and biodiversity loss.

Due to the scale of the marine litter challenge the UK believes it is time to start negotiating a new global agreement on marine litter and microplastics at the United Nations Environment Assembly. A new global agreement would build upon the important work we are doing to tackle marine litter both domestically and internationally and support our commitments to eliminate plastic entering the ocean.

**■ Ports: Coronavirus****James Gray:****[160522]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Government plans to allow (a) boat owners to visit marinas and (b) marinas to re-open as the covid-19 restrictions are eased; what discussions he has had with representatives of the Royal Yachting Association on re-opening marinas for boat owners; for what reason marinas were not specifically mentioned in the Government's Covid-19 Response: Spring 2021 roadmap, published on 22 February 2021; and how boat owners can gain access to their boats for regular maintenance while marinas are closed during the covid-19 lockdown.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government's four-step roadmap has been informed by the latest scientific evidence and seeks a balance between our key social and economic priorities, while preserving the health and safety of the country. The approach focuses on scientific data, not hard and fast dates. The dates shown in the roadmap are the earliest that changes will be made, subject to the data confirming it is safe to do so.

Marinas have not been required to close during the lockdown and have been able to open for permitted activities. Boating activities, including access to marinas and their re-opening where they are closed, should be conducted in line with the roadmap. The Royal Yachting Association is represented at regular stakeholder meetings between Defra officials and other inland waterway representatives.

Boat owners wishing to access their boats during periods of national lockdown should consult the relevant coronavirus regulations and associated guidance on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website to determine what is and is not permitted. Navigation authorities, other industry representatives, and membership bodies in many instances also publish guidance for their waterways on their websites.

Non-essential travel is not permitted anywhere in England during the national lockdown, and while the regulations around essential travel do include some exemptions, attending to regular boat maintenance is not one of them. The regulations allow for an individual or company to employ someone in a professional capacity to visit their boat to undertake regular maintenance works, and they also allow people to leave home exceptionally to secure their second home, caravan or boat to avoid it posing a risk of harm or injury to themselves or others.

From 29 March, people will no longer be legally required to Stay at Home, but should continue to minimise travel wherever possible and should not be staying away from home overnight at this stage.

## ■ Redcliffe Bay Petroleum Storage Depot

**Dr Liam Fox:**

[\[160515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Environment Agency on the capacity of the emergency leak protection bund at the Redcliffe Bay Petroleum Storage Depot.

**Rebecca Pow:**

No such discussions have taken place.

Redcliffe Bay Petroleum Storage Depot is jointly regulated by the Health and Safety Executive and the Environment Agency under the Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations 2015 as an Upper Tier establishment. The Environment Agency has had discussions at an operational level with the site operator about containment in the event of an emergency. Based on the information obtained at the last inspection, the Environment Agency was satisfied with the containment and associated procedures at the site.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Armed Conflict: Civilians

**Tony Lloyd:**

[\[161678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the UK Government is taking to tackle the humanitarian harm caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

**James Cleverly:**

In August 2020 HMG published the UK's approach to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The paper summarises the UK's Protection of Civilians activity in seven UK commitment areas including: ensuring respect for International Humanitarian Law in UK military operations; political engagement; strengthening accountability; and humanitarian action.

### ■ Developing Countries: Education

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[163299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Government's goal of ensuring 12 years of quality education for every girl and boy, what steps he has taken to help remove barriers to education, including ending all forms of violence against children, ahead of the G7 Summit.

**Wendy Morton:**

We are using our G7 presidency to encourage the safe return of all children to school by rallying the international community to get behind two ambitious global targets on access and learning. Tackling the complex barriers to education will be key to achieving these.

We are committed to ending all forms of violence against children. The UK is a founding Board member of, and has been the largest donor to, the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. The partnership is driving the international movement to deliver Sustainable Development Goal 16.2. We are also in the process of developing a new flagship programme, *What Works to Prevent Violence: Impact at Scale*, to pioneer new solutions in tackling the high rates of violence against girls, which we know are a key barrier to girls accessing education.

## ■ Developing Countries: Malnutrition

**Dr Luke Evans:**

**[160820]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress he is making in tackling malnutrition through programmes in (a) Somalia, (b) Yemen and (c) Ethiopia.

**James Duddridge:**

Since 2013, the UK has responded to chronic levels of malnutrition in Somalia through a multi-year approach that incorporates both humanitarian and development funding and helps to build longer-term resilience. The Somalia programme is addressing malnutrition by focusing on both the prevention and curative treatment of malnutrition. Our resilience programmes have helped over 300,000 people, with interventions that address the underlying causes of humanitarian need, including malnutrition. This has been complemented by our work in providing healthcare and clean water. In 2020 the UK provided 2.5 million vulnerable Somalis with life-saving cash assistance (874,409), nutrition (303,938), health (453,639) and emergency WASH-Water and Sanitation (895,002).

The UK is playing a leading role in combating hunger in Yemen by contributing over £1 billion in UK aid since the conflict began in 2015. Over the course of our next financial year (2021/22), we will provide at least £87 million to the UN Humanitarian Appeal for Yemen, making us the 5th largest donor. Our funding will feed an additional 240,000 of the most vulnerable Yemenis every month, support 400 healthcare clinics and provide clean water for 1.6 million people. We will also provide one-off cash support to 1.5 million of Yemen's poorest households to help them buy food and basic supplies.

In Ethiopia, the UK is working closely with humanitarian and development agencies to make sure aid reaches civilians affected by the fighting. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are delivering support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. The Foreign Secretary visited Gondar, in the neighbouring Amhara region, on 22 January and saw first-hand how £11 million of UK Aid is supporting the World Food Programme and NGOs to ensure the delivery of aid to those affected by the Tigray conflict.

## ■ Ethiopia: Human Rights

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[160804\]](#)

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

**James Duddridge:**

We are deeply concerned at the mounting evidence of human rights abuses and violations in Ethiopia. All parties to the conflict must respect human rights and avoid civilian loss of life at all costs. We have raised our concerns with Ethiopian Ministers, making clear the overriding need to protect civilians and adhere to international law and international human rights law. In a joint statement on Ethiopia with 41 other countries at the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council, we condemned in the strongest terms the reported killings of civilians and acts of sexual violence. We continue to call for independent, international, investigations into allegations of human right abuses and violations, and unfettered access to Tigray - points the Foreign Secretary discussed with Prime Minister Abiy in Addis Ababa on 22 January. We also continue to call for the perpetrators of those incidents to be held to account, whoever they may be and we encourage the Government of Ethiopia to invite an independent UN fact finding mission to support their current accountability effort on international law compliance. I [Minister Duddridge] re-enforced the urgency of the need for humanitarian access when I [Minister Duddridge] spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador on 24 February.

## ■ Ethiopia: Political Prisoners

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[161798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions the HM Ambassador to Ethiopia has had with the Government of Ethiopia on the wellbeing of political prisoners on hunger-strike in Ethiopia.

**James Duddridge:**

The Foreign Secretary raised the importance of respect for human rights including political freedoms when he met with Prime Minister Abiy during his visit. We will continue to champion open and free political expression and respect of the fundamental human rights for all Ethiopians.

I [Minister Duddridge] note the recent announcement, by the prisoners' defence lawyer, that Bekele Gerba, Jawar Mohammed and Hamza Borana have agreed to end their hunger strikes. Officials at our Embassy in Addis Ababa are engaging with Ethiopian officials on this issue and we will continue to monitor developments closely.

## ■ Ethiopia: Violence

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[161799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in the (a) United Nations (b) African



Union and (c) Government of Ethiopia on political violence in the Oromo region of Ethiopia.

**James Duddridge:**

We are deeply concerned by the violent clashes in recent months in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. When I [Minister Duddridge] visited Ethiopia from 27-29 July 2020, I [Minister Duddridge] discussed growing ethnic tensions with the President and senior ministers, as well as the President of Oromia. Leaders on all sides must be clear ethnic-based violence and discrimination will not be tolerated, and must stress to all [those under their control] the importance of respecting human rights and avoiding civilian loss of life at all costs. The Foreign Secretary underlined the need for all Ethiopians to be respected and not be subject to violence and discrimination during his visit to Ethiopia on 22 January. The UK is committed to supporting a peaceful political transition in Ethiopia where all the rights of minorities are protected.

The UK has been consistent, alongside the UN and international partners, in calling for the protection of civilians in Ethiopia and respect for human rights. The Foreign Secretary raised the need for independent, international, investigations into allegations of human right abuses and violations when he met with Prime Minister Abiy during his visit to Ethiopia. We fully supported efforts by three African Union appointed envoys last November 2020 to push for peace. We welcome the visits of three UN Under-Secretaries General to Ethiopia in February, and their engagement with the Government of Ethiopia. We continue to monitor the human rights situation in Ethiopia closely.

■ **Hong Kong: Human Rights**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[161692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of taking (a) sanctions and (b) other measures against Chinese and Hong Kong officials who are responsible for committing human rights abuses and curtailing democracy in Hong Kong.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK Government remains deeply concerned about the situation in Hong Kong and has declared two breaches of the Joint Declaration in the last nine months.

The UK has taken a number of measures already in response to developments in Hong Kong. These include introducing a new immigration path for BN(O)s, suspending our extradition treaty with Hong Kong, and extending our arms embargo on mainland China to Hong Kong. We will not speculate on who may be designated under the UK sanctions regime in the future.

We will continue to engage and coordinate our actions with our international partners as befits our historic commitment to the people of Hong Kong, to call out the violation of their rights and freedoms, and to hold China to their international obligations freely assumed under international law.



## ■ Hong Kong: Politics and Government

**Ruth Jones:**

[160803]

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

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK Government remains deeply concerned about the situation in Hong Kong and has declared two breaches of the Joint Declaration in the last nine months. In response to the imposition of the National Security Law on 1 July 2020, the Government put in place a new bespoke immigration path for British Nationals Overseas passport holders (BN(O)s), suspended our extradition treaty with Hong Kong, and extended our arms embargo on mainland China to Hong Kong. On 13 November, the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress issued a decision that removed elected pro-democracy legislators arbitrarily from their positions in Hong Kong's Legislative Council. The FCDO Permanent Under-Secretary summoned the Chinese Ambassador to explain why this was a further breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration and to call on China to uphold its international obligations.

The recent decision by the authorities in Hong Kong to charge 47 Hong Kong politicians and activists for conspiracy to commit subversion under the National Security Law is another deeply disturbing step. It demonstrates in the starkest way the use of the law to stifle any political dissent, rather than restore security which was the claimed intention of the legislation. The National Security Law violates the Joint Declaration, and its use in this way contradicts the promises made by the Chinese government and can only further undermine confidence that it will keep its word on such sensitive issues. We continue to bring together our international partners to stand up for the people of Hong Kong, to call out the violation of their freedoms, and to hold China to its international obligations.

## ■ Israel: Palestinians

**Karen Bradley:**

[R] [163216]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy that resolutions disproportionately focusing on Israel at the UN are damaging to the prospects for peace; and if he will make a statement.

**Karen Bradley:**

[R] [163217]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of potential bias against Israel at the UN Human Rights Council.

**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.

#### ■ Myanmar: Diplomatic Service

**Stephen Kinnock:** [\[163237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to grant diplomatic accreditation to the recently appointed Chief of Staff and Second Secretary in Myanmar's embassy in London.

**Nigel Adams:**

Under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961, with the exception of heads of mission and military, naval and air attaches, states may freely appoint staff to their diplomatic missions.

#### ■ Myanmar: United Nations

**Stephen Kinnock:** [\[163238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government (a) publicly opposes the suspension of Myanmar's UN representative Kyaw Moe Tun and (b) plans to make a public statement opposing the appointment of any new ambassador to the UN made by the Military junta.

**Nigel Adams:**

We commend the courage of Myanmar's UN Ambassador in speaking out against the coup. He joins the people of Myanmar in resoundingly rejecting military rule. We oppose his suspension and stand with him - democracy must be restored. The Foreign Secretary tweeted his support to the Ambassador after his speech. The UK Ambassador to the UN met with him on 2 March. We do not have further plans to make a public statement against the suspension of Kyaw Moe Tun or on the appointment of any new Ambassador. We will however continue to engage with the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, who represent a body of MPs elected in November. They are an important voice for many in Myanmar. We coordinated with them to read out excerpts from their statements at the Special Session of the Human Rights Council on 12 February, and at the UN General Assembly meeting on 26 February.

#### ■ Overseas Aid

**Yasmin Qureshi:** [\[160597\]](#)

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 spend from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent on programmes to tackle poverty, disease, and conflict.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Strategic framework for aid announced in November by the Foreign Secretary, sharpens the focus of our aid on seven priorities where UK support can make the most difference including on Covid and global health security; and open societies and conflict, in our overarching pursuit of poverty reduction and achievement of the sustainable development goals. This, alongside the creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, uniting our world class diplomacy and development expertise will ensure we bring together the best of Britain's international effort bear on the world's global challenges.

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**

[\[161837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has recommitted to the Working Principles on Transition that were developed under the Department for International Development.

**James Duddridge:**

*[Holding answer 8 March 2021]:* The Foreign Secretary has set out new measures to ensure every penny we spend goes as far as possible and to make ODA more strategic and effective than ever, under a new strategic framework for ODA. This includes using instruments appropriate to the needs and state of development. HMG will focus on technical assistance to build governments' own capability to deliver growth and development as they exit poverty, and focus our cash where the poverty need is highest.

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**

[\[161838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Working Principles on Transition, developed by DFID in 2019 are being used to inform the (a) planning and (b) operationalisation of the Strategic Framework for Official Development Assistance.

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**

[\[161839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Working Principles on Transition are informing the planning for the proposed changes in the level of the UK's Official Development Assistance budget.

**James Duddridge:**

*[Holding answer 8 March 2021]:* The Foreign Secretary has set out new measures to ensure every penny we spend goes as far as possible and to make ODA more strategic and effective than ever, under a new strategic framework for ODA. This includes using instruments appropriate to the needs and state of development. HMG will focus on technical assistance to build governments' own capability to deliver growth and development as they exit poverty, and focus our cash where the poverty need is highest.

**Mrs Pauline Latham:**

[\[163210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what criteria his Department will use when deciding which elements of the aid budget to change.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Foreign Secretary has set out seven core priorities for the UK's aid budget in the overarching pursuit of poverty reduction: 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. Aid will be allocated against these priorities while taking into account considerations of need, including levels of poverty, ability of countries to self-finance poverty reduction and the UK's comparative advantage, to ensure that every penny we spend on ODA goes as far as possible and has the greatest impact and delivers value for money.

**Mrs Pauline Latham:**

[\[163212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that decisions on changes to the Official Development Assistance budget will secure the best possible value for money for the residual spend.

**Nigel Adams:**

On November 26 the Foreign Secretary announced new measures to ensure every penny of the UK aid budget goes as far as possible and makes a world leading difference.

As well as focusing our aid on strategic priorities in countries where the UK's development, security and economic interests align, these measures included three ways to improve the quality of aid across government. To increase coherence, FCDO decided the final allocation of ODA to other departments, a process which the Foreign Secretary concluded in January 2021. Programmes were judged against their fit with the UK's strategic priorities, evidence of impact achieved, and whether they represent value for money. Finally, the Spending Review agreed to establish a new administrative cost framework to give departments greater flexibility to design the best projects, rather than outsourcing work to expensive consultants.

## ■ Overseas Aid: Environment Protection

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[160700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department makes an assessment of the environmental protections in relation to overseas projects when allocating UK foreign aid to those projects.

**James Duddridge:**

In designing new development programmes, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office staff are expected to identify risks to the environment and climate change and take action to avoid doing harm.

Tackling climate change and addressing biodiversity loss is a high priority for the Government. The Prime Minister announced on 11 January that the UK will commit at least £3 billion of our International Climate Finance to climate change solutions that protect and restore nature and biodiversity over the next five years. We are also acting internationally to secure more urgent action on nature with the Leaders' Pledge for Nature.

**■ Qatar: Muslim Brotherhood****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[160547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February to Question 142819, on Qatar: Muslim Brotherhood, whether Qatari authorities agreed to end their support for the Muslim Brotherhood as part of the declaration signed on 5 January 2021 to end its blockade.

**James Cleverly:**

With reference to my response to PQ 142819 of 2 February - The UK strongly welcomed the announcement made on Tuesday 5 January at the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit in Al Ula, which is an important step towards Gulf unity. The agreement made no mention of Qatar's policy towards the Muslim Brotherhood.

**■ Tigray: Armed Conflict****Patrick Grady:**[\[160708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Ambassadors of (a) Ethiopia and (b) Eritrea to the UK on the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

**James Duddridge:**

We have, and will continue to advocate that a political process is essential to bring a full end to fighting and a sustainable settlement for Tigray. We have consistently urged all parties to end the conflict, prioritise the protection of civilians and allow unfettered humanitarian access. I [Minister Duddridge] pressed for political dialogue to end the conflict when I [Minister Duddridge] spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador on 24 February.

**Patrick Grady:**[\[160710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to (a) faith-based actors and (b) other civil society organisations to support a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

**James Duddridge:**

We are concerned about the continued violence in Tigray region and have consistently urged all parties to end the conflict, prioritise the protection of civilians and allow unfettered humanitarian access. The Foreign Secretary raised these points when he met with Prime Minister Abiy on 22 January and also pressed for a political dialogue to bring a lasting peace to Tigray. We also continue to engage with a range of other actors, including faith based actors and civil society organisations.

The UK is facilitating capacity building in Ethiopia to ensure that democratic institutions fulfil their constitutional mandate. Since 2016, the FCDO has provided over £30 million to support Ethiopia's electoral process, support engagement with citizens and support civil society organisations so that they can play an increasing role in monitoring human rights.

**■ Tigray: Gender Based Violence and Sexual Offences****Patrick Grady:**[\[160709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support people affected by sexual and gender-based violence in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

**James Duddridge:**

We condemned in the strongest terms the reported killings of civilians and acts of sexual violence via a joint statement on Ethiopia with 41 other countries at the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council. We also note the statement on 21 January by Pramila Patten, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We support the UN's call for a "zero tolerance" policy for such crimes and we continue to call for independent, international, investigations into allegations of human right abuses. The UK is particularly concerned about the increased risks that conflict presents for women and girls in relation to gender-based violence and to the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. We continue to lobby for the protection of women, girls and boys at official level. We encourage the Government of Ethiopia to invite an independent UN fact finding mission to support their current accountability effort on international law compliance.

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

## ■ Western Sahara: Politics and Government

**Ben Lake:**

**[160768]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 17 February 2021 to Question 151799, Western Sahara: Politics and Government, whether the UN commission announced in 2016 on the situation in Guerguerat, Western Sahara, conducted the investigation; and if he will ask the UN Secretary-General when he plans to publish the report of that investigation.

**James Cleverly:**

UN reports on Western Sahara, including on the situation in Guerguerat in 2016, can be found on the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) website: <https://minurso.unmissions.org/secretary-general-reports>

## ■ Western Sahara: Trade Agreements

**Ben Lake:**

**[160767]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 17 February 2021 to Question 151798, on Western Sahara: Trade Agreements, if he will ask the European Commission for what reason the (a) UN recognised representatives of the Saharawi people, the Polisario Front, were not formally consulted and (b) consent of those representatives was not sought.

**James Cleverly:**

The European Commission's report, which includes the list of stakeholders consulted, including the Polisario Front, can be found here: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=SWD:2018:346:FIN&from=FR\(opens%20in%20a%20new%20tab\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=SWD:2018:346:FIN&from=FR(opens%20in%20a%20new%20tab))

## ■ Yemen: Food Supply

**David Mundell:**

**[160573]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that sanctions are not placed on parties in Yemen that will (a) prevent aid reaching the Yemeni people and (b) prevent the private sector from assisting in that country's humanitarian response.

**David Mundell:**

**[160574]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has received from the Yemeni private sector on the food security situation in that country.

**David Mundell:**

**[160576]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that sanctions are not introduced on parties in Yemen that will inhibit the operation of the Yemeni private sector in importing food into the country.



**James Cleverly:**

UN Yemen sanctions carefully target specific individuals, and food and medicines are not subject to sanctions. Sanctions apply to prominent figures who have engaged in acts that threaten the peace, security or stability of Yemen, including obstructing the successful completion of the political transition, and, as outlined in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative and Implementation Mechanism Agreement, those who act directly or indirectly on their behalf and individuals who have committed human rights violations, including the use of sexual violence as a tool of war.

The UK and our partners have taken significant steps to mitigate against the wider impact of sanctions on Yemeni civilians, including working with the US on reversal of the US designation of the Houthis. We are deeply concerned at access restraints in Yemen, and we call on all parties to facilitate unhindered access for commercial and humanitarian actors. With 90% of Yemen's food imported, the UK recognises the important work of Yemen's food importers at a time of increasing food insecurity in country, and we engage with them often.

**■ Yemen: Humanitarian Aid****David Mundell:**[\[160575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to work with international actors ahead of the high-level pledging event on Yemen scheduled to take place 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. 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 Blinken on 18 February.

I discussed Yemen with the Omani Ambassador to the UK on 4 February, and spoke to the 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 Special Envoy Martin Griffiths on 1 March to discuss how the UK can best support the UN-led peace process.

**■ Yemen: Humanitarian Aid and Security****David Mundell:**[\[160572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) security and (b) humanitarian situation in Yemen; and what support the Government is providing to that country.

**James Cleverly:**

Yemen remains one of the world's largest humanitarian crises, with two thirds of the entire population, requiring some form of humanitarian assistance. Recent escalations in conflict has already displaced thousands of civilians, and many more are at risk.

The UK will provide at least £87 million to Yemen over the course of our next financial year (2021/22), with the UK contributing over £1 billion since the conflict began. Our funding will feed an additional 240,000 of the most vulnerable Yemenis every month, support 400 healthcare clinics and provide clean water for 1.6 million people. We will also provide one-off cash support to 1.5 million of Yemen's poorest households to help them buy food and basic supplies.

An inclusive political settlement is the only way to bring long-term stability to Yemen and to address the worsening humanitarian crisis. We fully support the efforts of the UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths to secure a lasting political settlement to the Yemen conflict.

I [Minister Cleverly] spoke with Special Envoy Griffiths on 1 March to discuss how the UK can best support the UN-led peace process.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties****Liz Twist:**[\[159009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report on Alcohol-specific deaths in the UK: registered in 2019, published by the ONS on 2 February 2021, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of increasing alcohol duty.

**Jo Churchill:**

Officials at the Department of Health and Social Care and HM Treasury have discussed alcohol duty and its impact on health in the context of the report and responses are currently being analysed.

**■ Betting Shops: Coronavirus****Scott Benton:**[\[102943\]](#)

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

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

While we have no specific evidence relating to betting shops, 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 bookmakers, remains high. The Scientific Advisory Group for

Emergencies provided advice to the Department and considered the risks of transmission through different routes and environments in a paper which is available at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/933225/S0824\\_SARS-CoV-2\\_Transmission\\_routes\\_and\\_environments.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/933225/S0824_SARS-CoV-2_Transmission_routes_and_environments.pdf)

■ **Bowel Cancer: Screening**

**Jim Shannon:**

[160657]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of NHS provision of home bowel testing kits to people who are over 50 during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

We have no plans to make such an assessment.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus**

**Stephen Farry:**

[156636]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government made an assessment of the effect of the introduction of covid-19 hotel quarantine rules on UK citizens with loved ones in red list countries prior to the introduction of those new rules.

**Jo Churchill:**

People should be staying at home unless they have a valid reason to travel. All of these measures will be kept under constant review, including the impact on individuals with family ties in other countries.

**Stephen Farry:**

[156637]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government has taken to ensure that covid-19 hotel quarantine rules are compatible with international health commitments outlawing the levying of charges for quarantine with regard to (a) UK citizens with loved ones overseas and (b) human rights legislation on the right to a family life.

**Jo Churchill:**

Countries around the world are charging for quarantine costs, including, Australia, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Canada and Singapore. People should stay at home unless they have a valid reason to travel. For those facing significant financial hardship as a result of the managed quarantine charge, there will be an opportunity to apply for a deferred repayment plan when booking. This is available for individuals who already receive income-related benefits and they will be required to pay back the charge in 12 monthly instalments.

**Stephen Farry:**

[\[156638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the Government's planned timescale is for allowing UK residents to reunite with loved ones in red list countries during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Jo Churchill:**

People should be staying at home unless they have a valid reason to travel. We keep all our measures under constant review and they will remain in place as long as is required in order to protect public health, reduce transmission of the virus and to reduce the risk posed by new variants. The managed quarantine and testing measures have been introduced in Regulations that have a sunset date of 8 June 2021.

## ■ Care Homes

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[160556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the spare care home capacity is in England.

**Helen Whately:**

The Department receives data on spare capacity on a voluntary basis from care homes. However, this data is not sufficiently accurate to provide a comprehensive assessment of national spare capacity.

## ■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

**Daniel Kawczynski:**

[\[131212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure all care homes across the country have access to thirty minute covid-19 testing to allow safe visits to take place.

**Helen Whately:**

All Care Quality Commission registered care homes in England are currently eligible for a combination of polymerase chain reaction tests (PCR) and rapid lateral flow devices (LFDs). As part of our updated guidance on regular testing, staff have provision for two rapid LFD and one PCR test per week and residents have provision for one PCR test per month. In addition, all staff and residents have access to 'rapid response' testing if a positive case is detected in the home.

**Ms Harriet Harman:**

[\[160504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of care home (a) residents and (b) staff have been offered each vaccine dose; and how many and what proportion of those who have been offered a vaccine have refused it, in (i) Southwark, (ii) London and (iii) the UK.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Information on the total number of care home staff and residents, the number eligible to receive the vaccine, the number eligible who have received a first vaccine dose,

and the percentage eligible in England is published weekly at national and National Health Service regional level and is available at the following links:

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

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

Information at local authority level and the number of care home residents or staff eligible to receive the vaccine who have declined it is not collected centrally.

**Helen Hayes:** [91103]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of workers in care homes received a weekly covid-19 test in each week of (a) July and (b) August 2020; and if he will publish that data by (i) region and (ii) care home.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 21 September 2020]:* This information is not held in the format requested.

**Helen Hayes:** [91105]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish weekly updates on the implementation of the programme of weekly covid-19 testing for care home workers with data on (a) the number of care homes included in that programme, (b) the number of tests completed where an analytical report of the test result is made to the care home provider and (c) the average time in hours taken to return test results to the care home provider.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 21 September 2020]:* The Department has no plans to publish data in the format requested.

## ■ Care Homes: Government Assistance

**Mrs Flick Drummond:** [129049]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support care homes in financial difficulty but not deemed by the CQC to be a risk or a priority which will not now receive an additional CQC inspection for more than a year.

**Helen Whately:**

Local authorities are best placed to understand and plan for the care needs of their populations. Under the Care Act 2014 they are required to shape their local markets, and ensure that people have a range of high-quality, sustainable and person-centred care and support options available to them, so that they can access the services that best meet their needs. We have made £4.6 billion available to local authorities so they can address pressures on local services.

The Care Act 2014 also provides for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to monitor the financial health of the largest and most difficult-to-replace adult social care providers. This allows the CQC to warn local authorities if a provider is likely to fail for financial reasons and gives local authorities time to stand up their contingency plans.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the CQC has adapted its way of working in order to continue to deliver its core regulatory role of keeping people safe during challenging circumstances. This has included developing a range of tools to identify providers that needed extra support and undertaking additional Infection Prevention and Control inspections in care homes.

## ■ Care Homes: Inspections

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[160649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 16 February 2021 to Question 150798 on Care Homes: Inspections, by what date the remaining 6,056 care homes will have received a full CQC inspection.

**Helen Whately:**

There is no fixed date by which the Care Quality Commission will conduct follow up inspections of services that have not been inspected for two years or more.

## ■ Care Homes: Visits

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[158868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that care homes allow residents to receive visits from one named individual from 8 March 2021.

**Helen Whately:**

From 8 March every care home resident will be able to nominate a single named visitor. These visitors will be able to make indoor visits, without the need for screens, following a negative rapid lateral flow test and the use of appropriate personal protective equipment. Those residents with more significant needs can also have visits from an 'essential care giver', to provide a greater degree of personal care where it is critical for their immediate health and wellbeing. We will shortly publish detailed guidance to help care homes to put these arrangements in place.

We understand that for some care homes, implementing processes to enable visiting will incur a financial cost. The Infection Control Fund is available for care homes to apply to for support in reducing the rate of COVID-19 transmission in care homes.

We also announced a £149 million grant in December to support rapid testing of staff and facilitate visits from family and friends where possible.

**Debbie Abrahams:**

[\[161762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number and proportion of care homes that are permitting a named family member to visit care home residents during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 8 March 2021]:* The Department does not hold data on the number of care homes currently allowing a named family member to visit residents. New visiting arrangements will come into effect on 8 March. From that date, every care

home should ensure that each resident can nominate one named person who can have regular, indoor visits.

We will work with the sector to support care homes to provide the visiting opportunities set out in our guidance. Each residents' circumstances will be different and decisions on visiting will need to be taken in agreement between the care home, the resident and family.

## ■ Carers: Coronavirus

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[158177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure that unpaid carers have access to support services during the period of covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

**Helen Whately:**

We have supported unpaid carers funding for a number of charities to support carers, COVID-19 guidance tailored to carers, help for carers to self-identify and ongoing to work to access to personal protective equipment (PPE) and prioritisation for vaccination.

We have supported day services in implementing good infection prevention and control by providing PPE and testing and working with the Social Care Institute for Excellence to provide guidance on the safe operation. We have also enabled some of the money provided to local authorities through the Infection Control Fund to be used to help services reconfigure and continue to offer COVID-19 secure services.

Unpaid carers can continue to provide essential care and are exempt from rules preventing mixing with other households where they are providing care. Under the current lockdown restrictions carers can also arrange for another family member or friend to provide respite care so that they can take a break and/or form caring 'bubbles' to share caring responsibilities and provide emotional support. We will continue to work closely with stakeholders, care organisations and the wider sector and will keep support for unpaid carers under review.

## ■ Chronic Illnesses: Genetic Engineering

**Bob Blackman:**

[\[160628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of future routes to market for gene therapies with regard to the potential transformative effect of those one-off therapeutics for the treatment of chronic disease.

**Bob Blackman:**

[\[160629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of new innovative payment models that would be required to support patient access to innovative and potentially curative gene and cell therapy.



**Jo Churchill:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement published the 'NHS commercial framework for new medicines' on 23 February 2021. The framework sets out the routes to commissioning for medicines and states that the main route for commissioning medicines, which includes gene and cell therapies, is expected to be through a National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) appraisal. The framework also sets out the commercial options that may be available to companies that NHS England and NHS Improvement and NICE may pursue in particular circumstances.

**Coronavirus: Disease Control****Justin Madders:**[\[118537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the covid-19 transmission rates caused by airborne viral load.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Environmental and Modelling Group and the Transmission Group have considered airborne transmission in a range of their papers as one of the three main routes of transmission for COVID-19 and provided advice to the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies.

Good ventilation of indoor spaces will dilute and remove virus in the air. People should not spend long periods of time in poorly ventilated spaces with other people. Cloth face coverings are likely to have some benefit in reducing the risk of aerosol transmission. Face coverings will reduce the dispersion of respiratory droplets and small aerosols that carry the virus into the air from an infected person.

**Jon Trickett:**[\[124120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on and (b) assessment he has made of the potential merits of a more localised approach to tiered restrictions within specific regions within England.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues relating to all aspects of the COVID-19 response.

In December 2020, restrictions were applied to broad geographical areas where there are significant interconnected economic and social networks. This approach enabled the same restrictions to apply where people are likely to work and socialise. The Government reviewed restrictions every two weeks against a range of indicators and every local authority was reviewed individually.

**Alison McGovern:**[\[98959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to assess the frequency of different modes of transmission of covid-19 using (a) NHS Test and Trace cases and (b) other available data on common methods of covid-19 transmission.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 8 October 2020]:* Public Health England works closely with the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) to look at different modes of transmission of COVID-19.

There are a range of approaches to understanding and assessing transmission including outbreak investigations, case control studies, surveillance studies, intervention studies, laboratory studies and modelling, which all have strengths and biases. Different approaches need to be applied and analysed together to identify factors that influence transmission. The majority of data shows correlations and associations, but rarely proves causation and no single data source provides complete evidence for how and where transmission takes place.

**■ Coronavirus: Greater London****Helen Hayes:**[\[131350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the length of time London will remain under tier 3 covid-19 restrictions.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

London was in tiers 3 and 4 in December 2020 until the current national restrictions came into force on 6 January 2021.

**■ Coronavirus: Higher Education****Emma Hardy:**[\[107727\]](#)

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

**Helen Whately:**

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

**■ Coronavirus: Nutrition****Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[160695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has consulted with clinicians, dieticians and relevant organisations on the nutritional needs of patients with covid-19.

**Jo Churchill:**

Public Health England, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence published a rapid guideline on vitamin D and COVID-19 in December 2020. The guideline development process included consultation with key stakeholder groups such as the Royal Colleges, the

Nutrition Society and the British Dietetic Association. The rapid guideline on vitamin D and COVID-19, which considers both prevention and treatment, is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng187>

In June 2020, the SACN published a scoping exercise on nutrition and immune function in relation to COVID-19. This scoping exercise may be updated or a more formal assessment undertaken, if robust evidence becomes available. The scoping paper is available at the following link:

<https://app.box.com/s/ivrivaemf7fgeo9a17xdmv167c4uvteu/file/683666967452>

## ■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

**Philip Davies:**

**[154886]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the full scientific basis for the compulsory wearing of face coverings in public places to control the spread of covid-19.

**Philip Davies:**

**[154887]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of reduction in transmission of covid-19 as a result of the public wearing face coverings.

**Jo Churchill:**

In making its recommendations to the Government, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies considered the evidence from a number of different studies and their conclusions are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sage-minutes-coronavirus-covid-19-response-21-april-2020>

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

**Rachel Reeves:**

**[160634]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a list of companies that have applied to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) via the PPE procurement tender portal since 1 March 2020.

**Rachel Reeves:**

**[160635]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether applications to the Government's personal protective equipment procurement portal established in March 2020 were managed by (a) Government officials or (b) external consultants.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 4 March 2021]:* Over 15,000 suppliers approached the National Sourcing team via the online portals. We do not intend to publish a list of these suppliers as the Department has to consider their position in terms of the recognition that disclosure of their names may damage the supplier's reputation, affecting their competitive position, their revenue and ability to obtain future contracts. The Department takes its transparency requirements very seriously and has now published the majority of the Contract Award Notices and contracts for the successful suppliers which were awarded contracts.

Experienced external consultants were involved in supporting the cross-Government team's procurement of personal protective equipment, working under the management and supervision of officials.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Quarantine**

**Apsana Begum:**

**[156610]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to introduce a managed isolation welfare fund similar to the scheme in Scotland for people unable to afford hotel quarantine.

**Jo Churchill:**

For those facing significant financial hardship as a result of the managed quarantine charge, there is an opportunity to apply for a deferred repayment plan when booking. This is available for individuals who receive income-related benefits and they will be required to pay back the charge in 12 monthly instalments.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Quarantine and Vaccination**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[158169]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 February 2021 to Question 147966, whether people with alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency will be (a) added to the Shielding Patient List and (b) prioritised for the covid-19 vaccine.

**Jo Churchill:**

Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency is not a specific condition included in the definition of clinically extremely vulnerable groups. Individuals with alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency are only added to the Shielded Patient List (SPL) automatically if they also have pulmonary emphysema, which meets the criteria of 'severe respiratory conditions' used in the definition. However, individuals with alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency may be added to the SPL if they have other medical conditions that are included in the definition of clinically extremely vulnerable groups, or if their general practitioner or

clinician, based on their clinical judgement, deems them to be at high risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

Anyone over the age of 16 years old who is considered clinically extremely vulnerable should have now been offered a COVID-19 vaccine as part of priority group four, as recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Otherwise, individuals with alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency will be offered a COVID-19 vaccine depending on their age and the severity of their condition.

## ■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

**Matt Rodda:**

[\[138031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the planned timescale is for providing regular covid-19 testing for asymptomatic NHS staff working in community hospitals 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. Lateral flow tests are also being issued across primary care including general practice, community pharmacy, dentistry and optometry.

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[138521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) physiotherapists and (b) other healthcare staff providing patient facing NHS services, but employed by independent providers, will have the same access to asymptomatic covid-19 testing as NHS employees.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 20 January 2021]:* All National Health Service patient facing staff in acute, mental health, ambulance and community trusts have been provided with lateral flow tests to enable them to test themselves at home twice a week. Lateral flow tests are also being issued across primary care including general practice, community pharmacy, dentistry and optometry. Tests have been provided to independent sector providers and organisations providing patient facing NHS services to enable them to conduct twice a week testing in line with NHS employees.

## ■ **Coronavirus: Universities**

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[102707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on limiting the spread of covid-19 on university campus grounds.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has regular conversations with the Secretary of State for Education around the COVID-19 response. The Department for

Education worked intensively with Public Health England to ensure that universities have drawn up plans for measures in the event of an outbreak on campus or in the local area.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

**Henry Smith:** [\[160622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which officials in his Department are responsible for deciding what support will be provided to people who are shielding during the remaining period of covid-19 restrictions.

**Jo Churchill:**

Decisions on the support provided to clinically extremely vulnerable people are made by Ministers in the Department, in conjunction with other Government departments as appropriate. In doing so, Ministers are advised by the Chief Medical Officer, the Deputy Chief Medical Officers, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and other experts.

**Henry Smith:** [\[160624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether data is being collected on covid-19 infections and admissions among clinically extremely vulnerable people who have been vaccinated.

**Jo Churchill:**

This data is not being collected in the format requested. Admissions and positive test data does not record those who are clinically extremely vulnerable or whether they have been vaccinated.

■ **Cutaneous T-cell Lymphoma: Health Services**

**Mrs Pauline Latham:** [\[159295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of treatment provisions for people diagnosed with advanced stage Cutaneous T-cell Lymphoma.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 3 March 2021]:* T-cell Lymphomas are recognised as a rare form of cancer that require pan regional arrangements for referral and treatment. Cancer Alliances have pathways in place to support diagnosis as part of their skin cancer pathways. NHS England and NHS Improvement are continuing to work with providers of specialised services to deliver best-quality evidence-based care and treatment for patients living with rare cancers.

## ■ Dementia: Coronavirus

**Ms Harriet Harman:**

[\[160502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on dementia patients of the covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced on 4 January 2021.

**Helen Whately:**

We have had regular discussions with our stakeholders on the impact of the pandemic restrictions on people living with dementia. Although the guidance on the national restrictions has stated that people are required to stay at home there are exemptions to support wellbeing. These allow people to form support bubbles and to provide care to vulnerable people, including those with dementia.

## ■ Dementia: Diagnosis

**Ms Harriet Harman:**

[\[160503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the reduction in face-to-face medical appointments does not affect the accurate and timely diagnosis of new dementia patients.

**Helen Whately:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement are continuing to encourage memory assessment services to provide safe and person-centred assessment and diagnosis, via remote methods or in face-to-face consultations as appropriate. Webinars and guidance have been provided to support evolving best practice and an inclusive, blended, person-centred, approach to diagnosis that supports patient choice.

## ■ Dementia: Drugs

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[160826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the results of the consultation on the increased prescription of anti-psychotics to people with dementia during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to monitor the monthly data published by NHS Digital on the prescribing of antipsychotic medication for people diagnosed with dementia. No formal consultation has been undertaken. However, NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to have regular conversations with regional clinical network leads and local services to understand the patterns in prescribing and potential reasons for trends.



**■ Dementia: Health Services****Kerry McCarthy:**[\[160557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure people affected by dementia are offered rehabilitation support after the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement have made guidance and resources available to address the rehabilitation needs of people living with dementia who are recovering from COVID-19 infection.

The NHS Long Term Plan also commits to the expansion of the Enhanced Health in Care Homes service model and to further expand the Comprehensive Model of Personalised Care, with a focus on enhancing access to social prescribing for people with dementia and their carers. These initiatives will support people living with dementia in care homes and in the community, whose condition may have deteriorated during this time.

**■ DNACPR Decisions: Learning Disability****Ruth Cadbury:**[\[160686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to tackle the increase in the number of Do Not Resuscitate orders given to people with learning disabilities in advance of the Care Quality Commission publishing its review on the use of those orders during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

We have been clear that learning disability should never be a reason for a Do Not Attempt Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decision and that blanket DNACPR decisions are completely inappropriate.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have issued a number of joint statements to health and care providers reiterating that DNACPR decisions must not be applied in a blanket fashion to any group. The 2020/21 General Medical Services Contract Quality and Outcomes Framework now includes a requirement for all DNACPR decisions for people with a learning disability to be reviewed. We continue to monitor the situation and have asked organisations representing people with learning disabilities to inform us where cases of inappropriate DNACPR practice are identified so that these can be investigated.

**Ruth Cadbury:**[\[160687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what date the Care Quality Commission plans to publish its report on the use of Do Not Resuscitate orders for people with learning disabilities during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

In October 2020 the Department asked the Care Quality Commission to review how Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decisions were used

throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and whether they had been inappropriately applied. Interim findings were published on 3 December 2020, with a final report due shortly.

The review will consider how these decisions were made across all health and care settings and will inform national learning and good practice development as the nation continues to respond to the pandemic.

**Nadia Whittome:**

**[160894]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take in response to a reported increase in Do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation orders being used on patients with learning difficulties during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

We have been clear that learning disability should never be a reason for a Do Not Attempt Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decision and that blanket DNACPR decisions are completely inappropriate. NHS England and NHS Improvement have issued a number of joint statements to health and care providers reiterating this.

We have asked the Care Quality Commission to undertake a review of DNACPR decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is underway and will report on later this year. The 2020/21 General Medical Services Contract Quality and Outcomes Framework now includes a requirement for all DNACPR decisions for people with a learning disability to be reviewed. We continue to monitor the situation and have asked representative organisations to inform us where cases of inappropriate DNACPR practice are identified.

## ■ Down's Syndrome: Death

**Zarah Sultana:**

**[161876]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce number of avoidable deaths of adults with Down's syndrome

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 8 March 2021]:* The Learning Disability Mortality Review programme was established to reduce premature mortality and health inequalities amongst people with a learning disability. The programme's annual reports make recommendations for the health and social care systems, which we publish a formal response to. Our response to the third report was published on 12 February 2020.

We are developing and trialling the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training in learning disability and autism for health and care staff to improve outcomes and experiences of people with a learning disability and autistic people. Adults with Down's syndrome are considered clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 and are prioritised to receive the COVID-19 vaccine within the fourth vaccine prioritisation group.

## ■ Down's Syndrome: Screening

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[160665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of non-invasive prenatal testing on levels of abortions of babies with Down's syndrome.

**Helen Whately:**

The national evaluative roll out for non-invasive prenatal testing (NIPT) as a contingent screening test as part of the NHS Fetal Anomaly Screening Programme is yet to be implemented. Therefore, no recent assessment has been made of the effect of NIPT on levels of abortions of babies with Down's syndrome.

## ■ Epilepsy

**Sir David Amess:**

[\[156988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to ensure that the SUDEP and Seizure Safety Checklist, EpSMon App and other evidence-based epilepsy risk solutions are fully utilised across the NHS to tackle the recent increase in epilepsy deaths.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 1 March 2021]:* NHS England and NHS Improvement published their epilepsy RightCare toolkit in February 2020. The toolkit provides expert practical advice and guidance on how to address epilepsy-related challenges and recommends that providers implement a standard risk template for people living with epilepsy. This risk template should cross organisational boundaries and include relevant resources, such as the SUDEP and Seizure Safety Checklist tool and the Epilepsy Self-Monitoring application.

Local commissioners are responsible for the implementation of this guidance, including the epilepsy RightCare toolkit, in their local areas.

## ■ Epilepsy: Pregnancy

**Cat Smith:**

[\[161803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to invest in epilepsy medicines research to ensure safer drugs for pregnant women with epilepsy.

**Edward Argar:**

The National Institute for Health Research has funded three studies on anti-epilepsy medication use during pregnancy.

## ■ Eyesight: Diseases

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[160793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to fund scientific research and development into inherited genetic retinal diseases.

**Edward Argar:**

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) supports research in response to proposals from the research community and welcomes high-quality applications for support into any aspect of human health, including inherited genetic retinal diseases. These proposals are subject to peer review and judged in open competition. The amount of the NIHR's funding depends on the volume and quality of scientific activity.

On 9 January 2021, the Government published the United Kingdom Rare Diseases Framework, outlining four key priorities for how the UK will improve the lives of those living with rare diseases. Pioneering research is included as one of the five underpinning themes. The Framework will be followed by nation-specific actions plans, detailing how each administration will meet the shared priorities of the Framework.

**■ General Practitioners: Foreign Companies****John Spellar:**[\[160525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's policy is on the takeover of General Practice surgeries by overseas companies.

**Jo Churchill:**

General practitioner practices in England are commissioned by clinical commissioning groups, through delegated responsibility from NHS England and NHS Improvement to provide primary medical services under either a General Medical Services contract, a Personal Medical Services agreement or an Alternative Provider Medical Services contract. Legislation sets out which individuals and companies are eligible to hold these contracts.

Eligibility varies slightly between contract type but there is no distinction in the eligibility criteria between companies registered in the United Kingdom and those registered overseas.

**■ Haemochromatosis: Screening****Sir John Hayes:**[\[157954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to incorporate blood tests for serum ferritin and transferrin saturation into the NHS Health Check, as a cost-effective means of identifying people at risk of iron overload from genetic haemochromatosis earlier in life.

**Jo Churchill:**

Public Health England has no current plans to do so.

**■ Health Services and Social Services: Hong Kong****Andrew Rosindell:****[161689]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure adequate health and social care provision for Hongkongers coming to the UK under the BN(O) visa and other routes.

**Edward Argar:**

Hongkongers coming to the United Kingdom under the BN(O) visa will be entitled to access NHS services where they chose to settle following payment of the Immigration Health Surcharge. Payers of the surcharge are entitled, whilst their visa is valid, to National Health Service care without charge on the same basis as a person ordinarily resident in the UK. They can also register with a general practitioner as an NHS patient free of charge.

**Andrew Rosindell:****[161690]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has issued to the (a) NHS and (b) local authorities in England and Wales on access to health and social care for Hongkongers coming to the UK under the BN(O) visa and other routes.

**Edward Argar:**

Information for the National Health Service and local authorities for Hongkongers coming to the United Kingdom under the BN(O) visa and other routes is available in 'Guidance on implementing the overseas visitor charging regulations' which was published in February 2021 and is available at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/964543/Main\\_Guidance\\_post\\_February\\_2021\\_v3.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964543/Main_Guidance_post_February_2021_v3.pdf)

**■ Health Visitors****Sarah Olney:****[158998]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the findings of the Institute of Health Visiting's December 2020 report, State of Health Visiting in England, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the projected 20 per cent shortfall in the health visiting workforce in England due to retirements and attrition.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 2 March 2021]:* We recognise the valuable role that Health Visitors play in providing advice and support to families. Local authorities received more than £3 billion to commission public health services in the financial year 2020/21. A specialist community and public health nurse apprenticeship is currently being developed to offer an alternative route directly into the health visiting profession and there are nursing apprenticeship pathways currently in place.

## ■ HIV Infection: Medical Treatments

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**

[\[163275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to advise British Nationals who are living in the EU that they are required to obtain UK Global Health Insurance Cards (GHICs) and European Health Insurance Card (EHICs) or private health care insurance to ensure that they can access their HIV medication while living in the EU.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 9 March 2021]:* The Department for Health and Social Care, in partnership with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, has been providing United Kingdom nationals with detailed information about how to access healthcare as a resident in the European Union via the ongoing UK nationals in the EU transition campaign. The Department is currently working with officials at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to assist several individuals with access to their HIV medication while living in the EU. We recommend, as per our ongoing campaign messaging, UK nationals register correctly for healthcare in the country where they live in order to access their HIV treatment.

## ■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[157957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he is having with Cabinet colleagues and healthcare professionals across NHS trusts to make an assessment of the potential merits of changing hospital visiting policies as a result of the covid-19 vaccine roll-out.

**Edward Argar:**

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues and National Health Service trusts on the impact of the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out on the health and care system. The current hospital visiting guidance was last updated on 13 October 2020. NHS England and NHS Improvement are in the process of updating this guidance and a revised version will be published in due course.

## ■ Kidney Diseases: Medical Treatments

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[161758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the frequency of dialysis treatment on patients who are receiving (a) dialysis in a clinical setting and (b) home-based dialysis.

**Jo Churchill:**

No specific assessment has been made.

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[161759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the risk of exposure to covid-19 for patients who receive (a) dialysis in a clinical setting and (b) home-based dialysis.

**Jo Churchill:**

No specific assessment has been made.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[162535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter of 28 August 2020 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire on sugar tax, reference ZA53545.

**Edward Argar:**

We replied to the hon. Member's letter on 4 March 2021.

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[162536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter of 18 September 2020 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire on the rule of 6, reference ZA53718.

**Edward Argar:**

We replied to the hon. Member's letter on 16 February 2021.

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[162537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 27 October 2020 on Nightingale hospitals, reference ZA54243.

**Edward Argar:**

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

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

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[162538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 27 October 2020 on lung disease, reference ZA54267.

**Edward Argar:**

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

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



**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[162539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 20 November 2020 on isolation payments, reference ZA54482.

**Edward Argar:**

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

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

#### ■ **Mental Health Services: Health Professions**

**Alex Norris:**

[\[161853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 147019, if he will publish the analysis of how many NHS staff have accessed the government-funded mental health and wellbeing package; how many staff have accessed that service through the (a) dedicated app, (b) website and (c) telephone and text helplines; and if he will publish the total number of staff who have accessed those services.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 8 March 2021]:* A comprehensive national offer of support has been in place since the pandemic began. This has been accessed on over 750,000 occasions.

There have been almost 185,000 downloads of self-help apps and over 570,000 views of the website which signposts further resources to support staff wellbeing. In addition to this, there have been over 9,000 contacts with the National Helpline that is provided in partnership with the Samaritans and over 4,000 conversations with the 24 hour text support line run in partnership with SHOUT.

#### ■ **Mental Illness: Drugs**

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[160559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to collect data on the number of people already on antipsychotics who have had their dosage increased during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Department has no plans to do so.

#### ■ **NHS: Dental Services**

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[155288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for NHS dental care to ensure that people who cannot

afford the cost of private dental treatment can access (a) routine and (b) emergency care when necessary.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 24 February 2021]:* Dental practices have been able to open for face to face care from 8 June 2020, with urgent provision supported by over 600 urgent dental care centres across the country. NHS England and NHS Improvement have set out guidance that dentists should focus on care that is urgent, care to vulnerable groups and then overdue routine appointments.

A steady increase in dental activity has been made possible following updated Infection Prevention and Control guidance issued by Public Health England. Contractual arrangements for quarter four have been introduced by NHS England and NHS Improvement requiring dental practices to deliver 45% of contracted units of dental activity from 1 January to 31 March 2021 to be deemed to have delivered the full contractual volume. This is expected to increase available National Health Service dental care for patients and reduce waiting times. The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Chief Dental Officer for England to increase levels of service, as fast as is safely possible.

#### ■ **NHS: Prescriptions**

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[160842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the (a) quality assurance and (b) cost effectiveness of organisations providing NHS repeat prescription delivery services.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Department does not monitor or quality assure organisations providing repeat prescription delivery services. While repeat dispensing is an essential service that all pharmacies must provide under National Health Service pharmaceutical services, repeat prescription delivery services are not. All pharmacies providing NHS pharmaceutical services are subject to the same terms of service and adherence and are monitored by NHS England and NHS Improvement.

#### ■ **Nurses: Pay**

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[159040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of creating a pay body to set pay and terms and conditions for nursing in general practice.

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[159041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of general practice nurses did not receive the 2 per cent pay uplift included in the 2018-19 GP contract.

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[159042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of implementing the NHS Agenda for Change Payscale on the average general practice nurse salary.

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[159043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of nurses employed in GP practices that do not have sick pay included in their contracts.

**Jo Churchill:**

Data on pay uplifts for general practice nurses is not collected or held centrally. As self-employed contractors to the National Health Service to provide primary medical services, it is a matter for general practitioner (GP) practices how they distribute pay and benefits to their staff. General practice contractual arrangements do not place any specific obligations on GP practices with regard to their employees' terms and conditions, including supplementary pay for sickness absence beyond statutory sick pay. Employers have the flexibility to set terms and conditions, for example to aid recruitment and retention and we anticipate good employers would set wage rates that reflect the skills and experience of their staff.

NHS England and NHS Improvement and the General Practitioners Committee England remain committed to reviewing and agreeing changes to the terms and conditions of practice staff within existing resources. To support this, NHS England and NHS Improvement will undertake a data collection survey in general practice to get an accurate picture of baseline terms and conditions of practice staff, in order to inform the development of good practice guidance on employment terms and conditions.

■ **Operose Health: Centene**

**John Spellar:**

[\[160524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department was consulted before the takeover of Operose by Centene corporation.

**Jo Churchill:**

The ownership of organisations independent of the National Health Service is not a matter for the Department.

■ **Pharmacy: Coronavirus**

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[160816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to allocate additional funding to community pharmacies to help them cover costs incurred as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 4 March 2021]:* Discussions are ongoing with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee about additional funding for costs incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. As well as the increased advance payments, general COVID-19 business support has been accessible to most community pharmacies, including the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant and business rate relief. Additional payments have been made to support opening hours on Bank Holidays, social distancing and the medicine delivery service to shielded patients. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided free of charge and pharmacies are reimbursed for PPE already purchased. Non-monetary support provided during the pandemic included the removal of some administrative tasks, flexibility in opening hours and the delayed introduction of new services.

**■ Protective Clothing: Shops****Philip Davies:**[\[157046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to review the mandatory use of face coverings in shops.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings in a Relevant Place) (England) Regulations 2020, on the wearing of face coverings in shops, came into force on 24 July 2020. They include a requirement for a review to be undertaken within six months of coming into force. This internal review took place in January and concluded that the Regulations remain necessary, proportionate to protect public health and minimise the spread of COVID-19 and therefore should remain in force. The Principal Regulations will expire after 12 months from the day on which they came into force.

We keep our face covering policy under constant review, guided by the advice of our scientific and medical experts.

**■ Public Health: Redbridge****Wes Streeting:**[\[158137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding he has allocated to the London Borough of Redbridge through the public health grant in each year since 2010.

**Jo Churchill:**

Unitary and upper tier local authorities have received a public health grant since April 2013, when they assumed responsibility for public health functions and services which had previously been undertaken by the NHS. Data prior to 2013 is therefore unavailable. A table showing the information requested from 2013 is attached. The value of the public health grant in 2013-14 and 2014-15 is not directly comparable to subsequent years, because responsibility and funding for 0-5 year olds' public health

services was transferred from the National Health Service to local government from 1 October 2015.

#### ■ **Rare Diseases: Health Services**

**Bob Blackman:**

[\[160627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on patients with rare diseases of NICE's proposed changes to eligibility criteria for the Highly Specialised Technology pathway.

**Jo Churchill:**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is reviewing the criteria used to decide whether a new technology should be evaluated through the highly specialised technologies (HST) programme as part of the review of its health technology evaluation methods and processes.

NICE is currently consulting on the guiding principles for the HST programme as part of the consultation on the case for change to its processes for health technology evaluation and expects to consult on the proposed HST criteria this summer. The purpose of reviewing the criteria is to make them clearer, more specific and the outcome easier to understand and more predictable for stakeholders.

#### ■ **Test and Trace Support Payment**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[128692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 9 December 2020 to Question 109428 on Test and Trace Support Payment scheme, for what reason information on (a) the number of applications, (b) the number of successful applications and (c) amounts paid out has not been published.

**Helen Whately:**

Further work is needed to assure the quality of information received by the Department on applications and payments before publishing the data.

#### ■ **Travel: Quarantine**

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[154950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people being transported by coach to stay in a quarantine hotel when they arrive in England are placed on a coach with people from other flights; and if he will make a statement.

**Jo Churchill:**

Arrivals who are required to enter managed quarantine are escorted through the airport with other arrivals who are subject to the same requirement and who may have arrived on a different flight. All those being transported to the managed quarantine facility are required to wear face coverings at all times unless they are exempt and social distancing rules must be observed. Guidance has been given to staff operating the transport to ensure the correct protocols are observed. This

includes a member of staff recording where everyone is sitting on the bus, so that if someone later tests positive for COVID-19 NHS Test and Trace will be able to identify who has been in close contact.

#### ■ Vaccination: Research

**Mr Laurence Robertson:**

[\[160518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to encourage cooperation in commercial clinical research on the development of vaccines; and if he will make a statement.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 4 March 2021]:* The Departmental funded National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) research infrastructure provides the expertise and facilities needed for first-class research to be undertaken within the health and care system that researchers can access as part of the clinical development process. All NIHR research infrastructure actively supports collaboration with the life sciences industry, charities and other funders, enabling the development of new treatments, technologies, diagnostics and interventions to prevent disease, including vaccines.

#### ■ World Obesity Day

**Dr James Davies:**

[\[160735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to mark World Obesity Day on 4 March 2021; and if he will make a statement.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 4 March 2021]:* The Department supports the aims of World Obesity Day. As part of delivering the commitments in 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives', the Government has announced £100 million extra funding for healthy weight programmes.

### HOME OFFICE

#### ■ Asylum

**Tim Farron:**

[\[161731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum decisions were made without substantive asylum interviews in 2020.

**Tim Farron:**

[\[161732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of substantive asylum interviews were conducted by video conference in 2020.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office is unable to state how many and what proportion of substantive asylum interviews were conducted by video conference or how many asylum

decisions were made without a substantive interview as the Home Office does not publish this information

However, the Home Office does publish data on the number asylum applications awaiting an initial decision by duration. This data can be found at This data can be found at Asy\_04 of the published Immigration Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-december-2020/list-of-tables#asylum-and-resettlement>

## ■ Asylum: Military Bases

**Ms Harriet Harman:**

**[160508]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to move people seeking asylum out of military barracks.

**Chris Philp:**

We have a statutory obligation to provide accommodation to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. Use of these sites for contingency initial asylum accommodation is temporary whilst pressures in the asylum system are addressed.

People are routinely moved between asylum accommodation venues for a variety of reasons.

## ■ Asylum: Penally Camp

**Jonathan Edwards:**

**[160616]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the (a) Chief Constable and (b) Police and Crime Commissioner on the additional policing costs relating to the Penally asylum seekers' centre in Pembrokeshire.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office has worked closely with Dyfed-Powys Police and we have provided £2.5m of funding in relation to the additional costs of policing the site.

## ■ Au Pairs: EU Nationals

**Marsha De Cordova:**

**[160791]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the ability of au pairs who are EU citizens to continue working in the UK.

**Kevin Foster:**

EEA and Swiss citizens who were resident in the UK by 31 December 2020 can apply for UK immigration status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), to enable them to continue living and working in the UK after 30 June 2021. Eligibility for the EUSS is not generally concerned with whether the applicant has been engaged in a qualifying activity, such as employment.

Since 1 January 2021, EEA and Swiss citizens newly arriving in the UK and non-EEA citizens are treated equally within the immigration system. As has been the case



since 2008, the UK's points-based immigration system will not offer a dedicated route for au pairs.

Those who have general rights to work in the UK, such as those who arrive under our Youth Mobility Schemes (YMS), would be eligible to undertake such work. We remain committed to operating and expanding our YMS. However, as each YMS is subject to a reciprocal arrangement, we will not add nations to the scheme unilaterally without such an agreement as they are not simply a route for recruiting overseas.

■ **Beijing Shuangxiong Foreign Service Company**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

**[160549]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2021 to Question 153150, whether the Government is reviewing the contract relating to Beijing Shuangxiong Foreign Service Company running the UK visa centre in Beijing.

**Kevin Foster:**

The contract with VFS for visa services is contract managed in accordance with Schedule 8 Governance and Contract Management Schedule of the contract and performance is reviewed regularly by officials in accordance with Schedule 8 of the agreement

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/2c8f6f38-6f15-46ec-9954-c8571b0f1c05?p=@FQxUIRRPT0=NjJNT08=U>

**Andrew Rosindell:**

**[160550]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2021 to Question 153150, when the UK's contract with Beijing Shuangxiong Foreign Service Company to run the UK visa centre in Beijing expires.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Department's contract for visa centres in Beijing is held with VFS global and expires 31st March 2023.

**Andrew Rosindell:**

**[160551]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2021 to Question 153150, when the UK Government was notified by VFS global that its UK visa centre in Beijing would be sub-contracted to Beijing Shuangxiong Foreign Service Company.

**Kevin Foster:**

The UK Government were notified by VFS global its UK visa centre in Beijing would be subcontracted to Beijing Shuangxiong Foreign Service Company as part of its tender in 2013.

## ■ Domestic Abuse: Coronavirus

**Ms Harriet Harman:**

**[160505]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment has been made of the effect of the covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced on 4 January 2021 on the rate of reported instances of domestic abuse during that period.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Throughout this pandemic we have worked closely with police forces and domestic abuse support services to understand the impact of national measures on victims of domestic abuse.

In the twelve month period to September 2020, we have seen a 10% increase in overall police recorded domestic abuse incidents compared to the previous year. However, sexual offences and domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police do not provide a reliable measure of trends in these types of crime. We know that improvements in police recording practices and increased reporting by victims have contributed to increases in recent years. The figures do, however, provide a good measure of the crime-related demand on the police.

We also know that, the rises in police recorded data on these crimes don't always match the increases in demand for help from victim support services. Sadly, victims do not always report domestic abuse to the police. What is critical is that victims are able to reach out for advice or support if they need to do so. That is why this government has invested unprecedented levels of funding in response to the increase in demand for help from victim support services.

Alongside this, our successful #YouAreNotAlone awareness raising campaign has reached almost 25 million UK adults and secured over £130 million followers on social media through paid advertising. Our campaign provides vital information about where victims can access support and we recognise that many concerned friends and family members of potential victims have also been able to access this support.

We also launched our Ask for ANI Codeword scheme this January to ensure that those seeking support could do so safely and discretely from participating Pharmacies.

We continue to further examine available data from police and partner organisations to better understand the impact of the pandemic on domestic abuse incidents and will continue to adapt our response in light of the evidence.

## ■ Fire and Rescue Services: Finance

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[160775]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what comparative assessment she has made of the effect of the Government's decision to introduce a percentage increase to fire authority precepts instead of an (a) absolute value increase or (b) a hybrid of the two models on fire authorities which deliver upper quartile level performance at a lower quartile precept.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government published the final Settlement for 2021/22 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February, including a 2% referendum principle for all fire and rescue authorities. This decision was made after careful consideration of all consultation responses received in response to the provisional settlement. These referendum proposals were approved by the House of Commons on the 10 February, confirming that standalone FRAs' core spending power will increase next year by 2.6%.

When setting the package of referendum principles for any given year, the Government aims to strike a balance between allowing local government the flexibility to address specific pressures and protecting council tax payers from excessive increases. In taking these decisions, the Government considers a range of factors, including the expenditure pressures for each authority type, other available revenue sources, the views of the sector, the broader economic position and the overall impact on taxpayers.

Referendum principles for future years will be determined at each annual Settlement, in the context of the broader economy at the time and the relevant Spending Review.

**■ Fire Stations: Berkshire****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[160774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she will take to ensure the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority is not required to reduce further the number of fire stations it operates.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The number of fire stations operated in Berkshire is a matter for local leaders. Fire and Rescue Services have the resources they need to do their work and Fire and Rescue Authorities have the freedom to determine and articulate their priorities for service delivery in accordance with their assessment of local risk.

**■ Funerals: Coronavirus****Mark Pawsey:**[\[160636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) guidance and (b) support his Department has provided to funeral directors and death care sector workers to help ensure compliance with covid-19 restrictions at funerals.

**Mark Pawsey:**[\[160638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department has issued to police forces in respect of mourners that breach covid-19 social distancing regulations at funerals.

**Mark Pawsey:**[\[160639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of issuing a protocol to be agreed between police forces and

funeral and death care sector businesses to ensure a consistent approach to compliance with covid-19 restrictions at funerals.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government's [guidance for those managing funerals](#) is available through the Deceased Management Advisory Group website. This guidance details the actions funeral directors and others managing funerals should take to ensure funerals take place in a COVID-19 safe and secure way. This includes ensuring a COVID-19 risk assessment is in place and that all reasonable steps are taken to limit the risk of transmission, taking into account the risk assessment and relevant legislation including around attendance.

The Home Office does not provide guidance to police forces as they are operationally independent. [Operational guidance](#) is provided by the National Police Chiefs' Council.

A funeral director should notify the police if they reasonably believe that despite their best efforts, the numbers attending are likely to breach the legal limits. The police can decide the most appropriate enforcement which may include issuing a fixed penalty notice.

**Mark Pawsey:**

**[160637]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to review the covid-19 regulations in respect of funerals to protect funeral directors and staff cemeteries and crematoriums in the event of breaches of those regulations at funerals.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021' provides a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. 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. The approach focuses on data, not dates. Each step has a "no earlier than" date, five weeks later than the previous step, to allow time to assess the impact of the previous step and provide a week's notice before changes occur.

Ahead of Step 4 (no earlier than 21 June), Government will launch the Events Research Programme, to consider how and when restrictions can be lifted from large events including funerals and wakes. Subject to the outcomes of the review, we hope to be able to lift restrictions.

It is the responsibility of the funeral director or venue owner to take all reasonable steps to ensure a funeral is Covid secure, and takes place in a way that complies with all relevant legislation, including around attendance.

A funeral director or venue owner can seek support from the police if they reasonably believe that the numbers attending are likely to breach the legal limits despite their best efforts to prevent this, or the numbers in attendance have unexpectedly exceeded the legal limits. The police can then decide the most appropriate action to take, which may include issuing a fixed penalty notice.

## ■ High Rise Flats: Fires

**Navendu Mishra:**

**[160839]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to tackle the concerns raised by disabled tenants and leaseholders on the adequacy of (a) evacuation plans and (b) suitable alternative accommodation in the case of a fire in high rise blocks.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 places requirements on Responsible Persons to implement practical arrangements and procedures to safeguard all residents and prevent serious and imminent danger. Most multi-occupied residential premises will have in place an evacuation plan to provide assurance to all residents.

The recent Fire Safety Consultation sought views on our proposals to the Inquiry's recommendations that require a change in the law, including on requiring the Responsible Person for all high-rise residential buildings to draw up and share with their local Fire and Rescue Service current evacuation plans. Following the Consultation, we are considering the proposals in light of the responses received, and plan to implement Regulations as soon as is practical in 2021.

It is important that we get this right and ensure the voice of residents and those with accessibility needs and disabilities are heard, and we will undertake a further consultation this spring on the complex issue of personal emergency evacuation plans.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which came into force in April 2018, placed duties on local housing authorities to take reasonable steps to try to prevent and relieve a person's homelessness. If a housing authority is unable to prevent an applicant from becoming homeless, they are required to reach a decision as to whether the applicant has a priority need for accommodation.

Any person who is made homeless by result of an emergency, such as a fire, has a priority need for homeless assistance and would be entitled to accommodation secured by the local authority.

## ■ Licensing Laws: Airports

**Paul Maynard:**

**[160607]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 April 2020 to Question 25059, on Licensing Laws: Aviation, when she plans to publish her Department's response to the consultation on airside alcohol licensing at international airports in England and Wales, which closed on 1 February 2019.

**Kit Malthouse:**

I plan to publish the response to the consultation on airside alcohol licensing in the near future.

## ■ Migrants: Rough Sleeping

**Ms Harriet Harman:**

**[160506]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of No Recourse to Public Funds rules on levels of rough sleeping in (a) Southwark, (b) London and (c) the UK.

**Ms Harriet Harman:**

**[160507]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the (a) Chancellor of the Exchequer and (b) Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the cost to (i) local authorities in the UK and (ii) Southwark of supporting households with no recourse to public funds.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office does not hold data on the total number of people rough sleeping in Southwark, London or across the UK who are subject to no recourse to public funds (NRPF). We are working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to reduce the incidence of rough sleeping among non-UK nationals. The Home Office's Rough Sleeping Support Service (RSSS) also offers an enhanced service for local authorities and registered charities to establish whether a rough sleeper has access to public funds. Part of this service includes the RSSS contacting Home Office casework teams (where there is an open application) to request that the case is prioritised.

The NRPF is a condition applied to most temporary migrants, who are required to demonstrate that they can maintain and accommodate themselves and their families in the UK when they make an immigration application. However, individuals whose basis of stay in the UK is based on their family life or human rights can apply to have the NRPF condition lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if there are exceptional circumstances related to financial circumstances, to avoid destitution and rough sleeping. Other groups, such as refugees, are exempt from the condition.

The Home Office has published its policy equality statement on the impact of the No Recourse to Public Fund (NRPF) policy on migrants on the 10-year human rights route. It can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-change-of-conditions-of-leave-to-allow-access-to-public-funds-if-your-circumstances-change>

To avoid destitution and sleeping rough, those without immigration status, who also have no recourse to public funds, should regularise their stay or leave the UK. There is support available to do this through the Voluntary Returns Service which offers practical support for people who are in the United Kingdom with no right to reside, as well as those who have, or are claiming, asylum and have decided they want to return home. This is with the exception of Foreign National Offenders, who are not eligible for the service.

With regard to the cost to local authorities of supporting households with no recourse to public funds, the Government has provided unprecedented support of over £8

billion of funding to local authorities in England to help councils manage the impacts of Covid-19 to respond to the spending pressures they are facing, including £4.6 billion which is not ringfenced. Funding provided to local authorities under the Covid-19 emergency response will be paid through a grant, recognising that local authorities are best placed to decide how this funding is spent. The Government has also provided additional funding for the devolved administrations under the Barnett formula as part of the wider government response.

More information on the support available to migrants during the pandemic, including those with NRPF, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-get-support-if-youre-a-migrant-living-in-the-uk>.

#### ■ Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre

**Alison Thewliss:** [163251]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many deaths of detainees occurred at Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre during the period 15 February to 22 February 2021.

**Alison Thewliss:** [163252]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps have been taken to inform relevant next of kin of detainees who have died at Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre.

**Alison Thewliss:** [163253]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to inform (a) the police and (b) the Prison and Probation Ombudsman of deaths at Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre to ensure a prompt and thorough investigation.

**Alison Thewliss:** [163254]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether detainees at Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre have been provided with written notice of any deaths of detainees; and if she will place a copy of any such notice in the Library.

**Alison Thewliss:** [163255]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps have been taken following deaths in detention at Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre to (a) provide detainees who remain at that centre with counselling and other forms of bereavement support and (b) complete ad-hoc assessments and formal reviews of Assessment Care in Detention and Teamwork files.

**Chris Philp:**

On 19 February 2021 a man who was detained at Morton Hall immigration removal centre sadly died; the first death in the immigration removal estate since 2019.



The published Home Office Detention Services Order 08/2014 “Death in immigration detention” provides guidance as to the actions that Home Office and contracted supplier staff must take in the event of a death in detention. These actions include notification of the death to appropriate bodies, identifying potential witnesses to the death and supporting the individuals who are in detention. Each death in immigration detention is subject to investigation by the police, the coroner (or Procurator Fiscal in Scotland) and the independent Prisons and Probation Ombudsman. All relevant bodies were informed on 19 February.

In accordance with the guidance, the individual’s family has been informed and a family liaison officer has been assigned. Our thoughts and condolences are with the individual’s family and friends. In parallel, a community notice was issued at Morton Hall to inform residents of the death, the independent investigation and where to access support. In addition to this, ad-hoc assessments were undertaken of all individuals with open, or recently closed, Assessment Care in Detention and Teamwork (ACDT) plans and formal assessments undertaken of those considered particularly vulnerable to the news.

## ■ Offences against Children

**Alicia Kearns:**

**[160832]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to investigate and prosecute people who abuse positions of trust by commencing relationships with people under the age of 18.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy affirms the Government’s commitment to ensuring there are no safe spaces for offenders to abuse and exploit vulnerable children.

The criminal law is clear: any sexual activity with a child under 16 is a criminal offence, regardless of whether consent is given. Any non-consensual sexual activity is also a crime, whatever the age of the victim and whatever the relationship between the victim and perpetrator.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 also contains a number of offences which criminalise sexual activity with a child under the age of 18 by people who hold a “position of trust” in respect of that young person even if such activity is consensual, effectively raising the age of consent from 16 to 18 in those circumstances.

We are committed to protecting children and young people from sexual abuse. That is why, following a review of the law in this area, we are including measures in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill introduced on 9 March, to widen the current offences which prevent adults in a position of trust from engaging in sexual relationships with young people under the age of 18, bringing sports coaches and religious leaders in line with other occupations such as teachers and doctors.

We have also strengthened law enforcement capacity and capability through funding for projects like the police Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme and

have given police a range of powers to respond to people who pose a risk to children. We have further committed within the Tackling Child Sexual Abuse strategy to strengthen civil orders used to manage the risk posed by sex offenders and those who pose a risk of sexual harm, once a suitable legislative opportunity arises.

## ■ **Passengers: Cyprus**

**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[163166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will remove the reference to the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus from the list of locations included in the Passenger Locator form on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and replace it with the north of Cyprus, consistent with the longstanding policy on Cyprus of successive UK Governments.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Passenger Locator Form has been amended to ensure it reflects Government policy in respect of the name applied to the north of Cyprus.

The 'Country of Issue' drop down list for travel documents was amended to 'Cyprus, northern' and made available for users on 6 March 2021.

## ■ **Protest**

**Dawn Butler:**

[\[163165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of existing police powers to manage protest; and what further powers she plans to give the police to manage protests under new legislation.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Home Office liaised with the police and others to understand the efficacy of existing public order legislation and to identify what more can be done to make a practical difference, and we will legislate shortly. This follows concerns raised by the police about current legislation in the context of non-violent protests that have a significant impact on the community.

As part of this, the Home Secretary asked the independent police inspectorate, HMICFRS, to carry out a thematic inspection of how police manage protests. My officials engaged with the inspectorate in the formulation of the new legislative proposals.

## ■ **Refugees: Resettlement**

**John Nicolson:**

[\[160702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many places she plans to offer to refugees, per annum, under the new UK Resettlement Scheme.

**Chris Philp:**

The UK is committed to resettling refugees to the UK and we continue to work closely with partners to assess capacity for resettlement activity, as we recover from the pandemic.

Resettlement will continue to play a primary role, alongside a reformed asylum system, which will see us continue to offer safe and legal routes to the UK for vulnerable people in need of protection in the months and years to come.

## ■ **Retail Trade: Crimes of Violence**

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

**[160693]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to (a) keep safe, (b) support and (c) protect frontline staff in light of the finding by Usdaw that abusive incidents toward shop workers have doubled since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government conducted a call for evidence on violence and abuse toward shop staff to understand the extent of the issue and how we can improve the response to these crimes. The formal response was published 7 July 2020 and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/violence-and-abuse-toward-shop-staff-call-for-evidence>

To address the actions raised in the call for evidence the Government is working closely with retailers and trade organisations, including Usdaw through the National Retail Crime Steering Group to deliver a programme of work which aims to provide better support to victims, improve reporting, increase data sharing between businesses and police, and raise awareness of this crime among employers and the public.

## ■ **Royal Berkshire Fire Authority: Finance**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[160773]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to financially support the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority during the 2020-21 financial year.

**Kit Malthouse:**

Fire and Rescue Services have the resources they need to do their important work. Berkshire Fire will receive a core spending power of £35.5m in 2021-22. This is an increase of 2.9% compared to 2020-21.

## ■ **Terrorism: British Nationals Abroad**

**Dr Julian Lewis:**

**[163141]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of (a) updating the law on treason and (b) bringing forward legislative proposals to ensure that British citizens who travel to conflict zones in order to support groups which promote terrorist attacks on the UK will thereby make themselves liable for substantial terms of imprisonment on return to the UK.

**Kevin Foster:**

Treason offences are being considered as part of the Home Office's ongoing wider review of legislation that also includes countering hostile activity by states. This work has not reached any conclusions yet.

Individuals can be convicted in UK courts of offences committed overseas (including preparation of terrorism, encouragement of terrorism and membership of a proscribed organisation). Where individuals do return to the UK after engaging in conflict overseas, they will be investigated and, where there is evidence crimes have been committed, they should expect to face prosecution.

**Vagrancy Act 1824: Arrests****Layla Moran:**[\[163293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many arrests were made under the Vagrancy Act 1824 in (a) England and Wales, (b) England, (c) Thames Valley and (d) Oxford West and Abingdon constituency in 2020.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Home Office does not centrally hold the information requested.

The Home Office collects and publishes data on arrests made by police forces in England and Wales. The most recent statistics cover the year ending 31 March 2020, and can be found in Section 4 here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-powers-and-procedures-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2020>

These data cover only arrests for notifiable offences and therefore will not include arrests made under the Vagrancy Act 1824.

**VFS Global****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[160552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2021 to Question 153147 when the UK's contract with VFS to run its visa centres expires.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Departments contract with VFS to run its visa centre expires on 31st March 2023.

**VFS Global: China****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[160548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2021 to Question 153149, how many of the 46 VFS run visa centres which are subcontracted to local companies are based in China.

**Kevin Foster:**

16 of the 46 VFS visa centres are subcontracted in China.

**HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION****■ House of Commons: Coronavirus****Theresa Villiers:****[163167]**

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will publish a plan for lifting covid-19 restrictions on working practices in the House.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

Following a full discussion at its meeting on Monday 8th March, the House of Commons Commission published on its website a roadmap on the plans for easing restrictions. The roadmap is available at the link below:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/348/house-of-commons-commission/news/150524/commons-roadmap-out-of-lockdown/>

**Theresa Villiers:****[163169]**

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will set a date to permit the return of hon. Members' staff to the House as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

In line with Government advice and regulations, it is expected that the majority of people should continue working from home.

Following a full discussion at its meeting on Monday 8th March, the House of Commons Commission published on its website a roadmap on the plans for easing restrictions: The roadmap is available at the link below:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/348/house-of-commons-commission/news/150524/commons-roadmap-out-of-lockdown/>

It was agreed by the Commission that, where a Member is satisfied that a relevant exemption exists in addition to a wellbeing need, a limited number of Members' staff may return from 9th March. This position will be reviewed at a later point based on the current public health advice at that time.

**■ Parliament: Visits****Theresa Villiers:****[163168]**

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will publish a plan for lifting covid-19 restrictions on admitting visitors to Parliament.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

Following a full discussion at its meeting on Monday 8th March, the House of Commons Commission published on its website a roadmap on the plans for easing restrictions: The roadmap is available at the link below:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/348/house-of-commons-commission/news/150524/commons-roadmap-out-of-lockdown/>

At this present time the priority of the Commission continues to be the safety of all Members and staff and the continuation of Parliamentary business. Any decisions relating to non-passholder access is a matter for the Commissions of both Houses and will be reviewed at a later point based on the current public health advice at that time.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Affordable Housing

**Navendu Mishra:**

**[160847]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress has been made on the Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes programme.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We are committed to delivering affordable homes of a variety of tenures so that we can support a range of people in different circumstances and stages in their lives. Our £9 billion Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme, running to 2023, will deliver approximately 250,000 new affordable homes

Since 2010, we have delivered over 517,100 new affordable homes, including over 365,800 affordable homes for rent, of which 148,000 were homes for social rent. This Government is committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing and is investing over £12 billion in affordable housing over the next 5 years, the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade. This includes the new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, which will provide up to 180,000 new homes across the country, should economic conditions allow. The new Affordable Homes Programme will deliver more than double the number of homes for social rent than the current programme, with around 32,000 social rent homes due to be delivered

### ■ Building Safety Fund

**Hilary Benn:**

**[160535]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the deadline would be for a revised application to the Building Safety Fund in cases where an application to that Fund had been rejected but new information on fire safety risk has since come to light.

**Christopher Pincher:**

An appeal process is open for responsible entities which have applied for the Building Safety Fund if they can demonstrate that the building meets the published definitions of eligibility. The deadline for bringing an appeal is four weeks, taken on a case-by-case basis.

## ■ Building Safety Fund: Appeals

**Hilary Benn:**

[\[163158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2021 to Question 160534 on Building Safety Fund, whether there is a deadline for submission of appeals against a refusal of applications to the Building Safety Fund.

**Christopher Pincher:**

An appeal process is open for responsible entities which have applied for the Building Safety Fund if they can demonstrate that the building meets the published definitions of eligibility. The deadline for bringing an appeal is four weeks, taken on a case-by-case basis.

## ■ Community Development: Finance

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[\[161784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the full criteria used to select the boroughs who received the £23 million of funding through the Community Champions scheme.

**Luke Hall:**

On 25 January we confirmed £23.75 million funding - allocated to 60 councils and further voluntary groups across England - to expand work to support those most at risk from COVID-19 and to boost vaccine take up through the Community Champions scheme. This is part of over £7.9 billion Government funding provided to councils to help them support their communities during the pandemic. The scheme is specifically targeted at areas where challenges may be greatest due to the local combination of disproportionately impacted groups.

The list of local authorities who were invited to take part in the scheme drew upon a wide range of data sources, including Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England long-term data on COVID-19 incidence; data on social integration; and evidence on the prevalence and specific support needs of disabled people in an area.

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[\[161786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he had with (a) Council Chief Executives, (b) Council leaders and (c) directly elected Mayors before releasing funding under the Community Champions scheme.

**Luke Hall:**

My officials undertook a series of stakeholder engagement events to test design and methodology and continue to work with the local authorities to ensure sharing of learning.

Conversations were held with a group of chief executives and senior level council leaders, including representatives from councils in London, and we have spoken to the sector including the Local Government Association. We also spoke with wider



representative across London and Manchester, including the Combined Authority, and a range of officers across England in local authorities.

**Ruth Cadbury:** [161787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the scope of the Community Champions scheme; and whether he plans to increase the number of boroughs receiving funding through that scheme.

**Luke Hall:**

On 25 January we announced £23.75 million funding through the Community Champions Scheme to 60 councils and voluntary groups across England - to expand work to support those most at risk from COVID-19.

Participating local authorities will be providing monitoring monthly reporting from March 2021, which will be used to assess the scope and reach of the Community Champions programme.

We will learn from the current scheme and assess the case for any further funding.

#### ■ **Community Development: Hounslow**

**Ruth Cadbury:** [161785]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reasons the London Borough of Hounslow did not receive funding under the Community Champions scheme.

**Luke Hall:**

London Borough of Hounslow Council were invited to apply for funding through the Community Champions scheme. No application was received.

#### ■ **Council Tax**

**Navendu Mishra:** [160850]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many households have received Council Tax Support in (a) England, (b) the North West and (c) Stockport in the last 12 months.

**Luke Hall:**

The Government publishes a snapshot of the number of Local Council Tax Support claimants in England on a quarterly basis. This data sets out the number of pensioner and working-age claimants at a local authority level, as well as for England as a whole. The Government most recently updated this data on 17 February to reflect the number of claimants as of 31 December 2020. The latest data release is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-local-government-finance#local-council-tax-support> .

## ■ Disabled Facilities Grants: Blackpool

**Paul Maynard:**

[\[160603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many Disabled Facilities Grant adaptations were delivered in the Blackpool local authority area in the financial year 2019-20.

**Eddie Hughes:**

Foundations, the national body for home improvement agencies, monitors and analyses the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grant adaptations nationally. Data from Foundations shows that 271 adaptations were delivered by Blackpool local authority in 2019-20.

## ■ European Social Fund

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[160662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government plans to take to ensure adequate continuity between the end of the European Social Fund programme and the commencement of its successor policy.

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[160663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government plans to end match-funding in the successor policy to the European Social Fund programme.

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[160664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government plans to take to help ensure gender equality of opportunity in a successor policy to the European Social Fund programme.

**Luke Hall:**

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will be the domestic successor to the EU Structural Fund programme.

The November 2020 Spending Review set out the main strategic elements of the UKSPF in the Heads of Terms. The UKSPF profile will be set out at the next Spending Review, and we will publish further details in a UK-wide Investment Framework later in 2021.

In addition, to help local areas prepare over 2021/22 for the introduction of the UKSPF, we will provide £220 million additional funding under the UK Community Renewal Fund to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches.

The Fund aims to support people and communities most in need, and will invest in skills, community and place, local business, and supporting people into employment.

**■ Evictions: South East****Layla Moran:****[163292]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of people who are at risk of eviction due to unmet rent payments that are currently protected by the eviction moratorium in (a) Thames Valley region, (b) Oxfordshire and (c) Oxford West and Abingdon constituency.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department does not currently hold information on the value of private housing rent arrears and the associated risk of eviction in Thames Valley region, Oxfordshire and Oxford West and Abingdon constituency.

This Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support to help renters throughout the COVID-19 pandemic afford their housing costs. Notably, to help prevent people getting into financial hardship, we have increased the local housing allowance (LHA) rate to the 30th percentile of local market rents in each area. The increased LHA rates will be maintained at the current levels in cash terms in 2021/22, even in areas where the 30th percentile of local rents has gone down. We are also extending the £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit for a further 6 months and providing a one-off payment of £500 to eligible Working Tax Credit claimants.

In addition, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has offered support for businesses to pay staff salaries, enabling people to continue to pay their rent and has been extended until September 2021. For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available. As announced at the spending round for 2020/21, there is already £180 million in DHPs for local authorities to distribute for supporting renters with housing costs in the private and social rented sectors. For 2021-22 the Government will make available £140 million in DHP funding, which takes account of the increased LHA rates.

Our package of support is preventing evictions. The English Housing Survey Household Resilience Study found that in June-July 2020 the majority of private renters, 93%, were up-to-date with rent payments. The Ministry of Justice recorded only 548 landlord repossessions between April and end December 2020 compared to 22,444 over the same period in 2019.

**■ Housing: Insulation****Florence Eshalomi:****[R] [163337]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what financial support is available towards the cost of (a) waking watches and (b) other interim fire safety measures for leaseholders living in blocks under 18 metres while they wait for remediation work to be completed.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Waking Watch Relief Fund is a £30 million fund to install alarms in high rise residential buildings. Common alarm systems will enable costly waking watch

measures to be replaced in buildings waiting to have unsafe cladding removed. The National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) have welcomed the Fund and guidance published by the NFCC is clear that alarms are preferable to waking watches.

The Fund is targeted at buildings which are at the greatest risk and where cost to leaseholders is highest. However, the Government is also providing a long-term, low interest financing scheme to help pay for remediation costs in buildings between 11-18 metres. This will speed up the pace of remediation and remove the need for costly interim measures.

However, the Government expects building owners, who are responsible for their buildings, to meet 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.

Interim measures such as waking watch should only be used as a short-term option to mitigate an immediate risk. They are not an alternative to remediation. Building owners are responsible for the safety of their buildings, which includes remediating their buildings as swiftly as possible.

## ■ Immigration: Hong Kong

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[161686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to meet potential demand for English language courses created by Hongkongers arriving in the UK under either the BN(O) or other schemes.

**Eddie Hughes:**

The British National (Overseas) visa route opened on 31 January 2021. Departments across Government are working together closely to ensure that necessary support and guidance is provided for BN(O) status holders who take advantage of the new visa route.

## ■ Levelling Up Fund

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[163174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what methodology he used to create his Levelling Up Fund index; and how that methodology was used to rank local authorities into one of three priority categories for funding from the Levelling Up Fund.

**Anne Marie Morris:**

[\[163232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the Index of Economic Need methodology.

**Anne Marie Morris:**

[\[163233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the evidence-based rationale for placing each local authority in their designated priority category for the Levelling Up Fund.

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[163259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the assessment metrics used to assess local authorities in relation to the Levelling Up Fund.

**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.

## ■ Local Government Finance

**Alicia Kearns:**

[\[161878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of developing incentive structures in central government funding allocations to local authorities to encourage efficiency in the provision of local services.

**Alicia Kearns:**

[\[161879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including factors relating to the efficiency of local Government spending in any funding review.

**Luke Hall:**

The Government is committed to directing resources to the highest priority areas and giving councils increased flexibility in balancing the contribution of national and local taxpayers in funding local services. Within the time horizons of a one-year Spending Review, our aim has also been to offer as much stability as we can through our approach to funding allocations for 2021-22.

Looking beyond 2021-22, we will revisit the priorities for financial reform ahead of the Spending Review later this year. When we re-examine the reform programme, we will consider the relative needs of local authorities, the resources local authorities are able to generate locally, and how we can encourage local authorities to run services efficiently.

**Alicia Kearns:**

[\[161880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what metrics his Department uses to assess the efficiency and value-for-money of local government spending.

**Luke Hall:**

The Department uses a wide range of qualitative and quantitative information to assist with policy making.

All local authorities are required by law to deliver a balanced budget and secure value for money in spending decisions. The “best value duty” (Local Government Act 1999) requires continuous improvement, combining economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Local authorities are also required to publish annual accounts which must be certified by independent auditors. The Redmond Review recommends a new, simple to understand Value for Money Statement to improve accessibility to taxpayers and to ensure local authority decisions can be properly scrutinised by the electorate.

**Local Government: Meetings****Sir Greg Knight:**[\[163159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will launch a formal consultation and a call for evidence to assess the level of public support for permanently enabling virtual participation to take place in all parish and town council meetings after 7 May 2021; and if he will make a statement.

**Luke Hall:**

The Government keeps all policy under review and will be carefully considering the experience of local authorities using the provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 and the case for enabling local authorities to meet remotely on a permanent basis.

**Members: Correspondence****Matthew Pennycook:**[\[160757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich of 15 January 2021 on expanded polystyrene (EPS).

**Christopher Pincher:**

My noble Friend, Lord Greenhalgh, responded to the hon Member's letter on 9 March.

**Planning Permission: Carbon Emissions****Dawn Butler:**[\[163164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that planning applications granted by local authorities are not having a detrimental effect on efforts to achieve net zero carbon by 2050.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's expectations for how planning can contribute to a low carbon future in England. We intend to go further, which is why the Planning for the Future White Paper proposed reform of the

Framework so that the planning system can most effectively play a role in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change at a local and national level. The reforms to the planning system will help local authorities to improve the delivery and quality of homes and neighbourhoods, set within the drive towards net zero carbon emissions by 2050. We are currently collating, reviewing and analysing the responses to the consultation.

From 2025, the Future Homes Standard will ensure that new homes produce at least 75% lower CO2 emissions compared to current standards. These homes will be zero-carbon ready with low carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency. We will also not amend the Planning and Energy Act, allowing local authorities to continue to set energy efficiency standards that go beyond the Building Regulations.

All levels of Government have a role to play in meeting our net zero goal. Local authorities are rising to the challenge and 98% of local authorities are already voluntarily taking action to reduce emissions from their areas, or from their own estate

## ■ Planning: Coronavirus

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

**[160615]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Planning Inspectorate's guidance on site visits, hearings, inquiries and events, published on 28 May 2020, relating to how interested parties and members of the public can participate in the planning process through (a) examination of local plans, (b) accessing documents online and (c) attending virtual hearings during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department has worked closely with the Planning Inspectorate during the COVID-19 outbreak, and the Inspectorate's guidance on site visits, hearings, inquiries and examinations has been kept under regular review. Since it was first published on 12 March 2020 the guidance has been updated when necessary to reflect changes in the public health situation and to ensure that it remains effective.

The Inspectorate responded to the Written Ministerial Statement of 13 May 2020 by designing and testing an online environment suitable for hosting events and to facilitating public engagement and identifying emerging best practice across similar bodies, such as HM Courts and Tribunals Service. The Inspectorate conducted the first virtual hearing on 11 May 2020, and since then around 600 virtual hearings and inquiries have taken place across planning appeals, local plan examinations and nationally significant infrastructure applications.

Virtual events have proven to be effective and offer greater opportunity for involvement in the planning system. The Inspectorate has requested feedback from all participants in virtual events and 90% of those who responded have rated their experience good or excellent, with 97% saying that they would be happy to take part in a virtual event again.



Information supporting nationally significant infrastructure applications is fully available on the Planning Inspectorate website. Supporting information for planning appeals and local plan examinations is published through the website of the relevant council.

The Department is working with the Inspectorate to identify how to best capture the benefits of these new ways of working as part of the vision for a digital future of the planning system that we set out in our Planning for the Future White Paper.

## ■ Regional Planning and Development: Finance

**Steve Reed:**

[\[158939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many bids for funding under existing housing and planning schemes have councils been asked to submit instead to the Levelling Up Fund.

**Steve Reed:**

[\[162624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 8.6 on page 21 of the Levelling Up Fund: Prospectus, published in March 2021, when he plans publish details of the assessment and scoring process for bids to that fund.

**Luke Hall:**

*[Holding answer 2 March 2021]:* The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets.

The Fund will be allocated competitively. The prospectus published at Budget provides guidance for local areas on how to submit bids for the first round of funding for projects starting in 2021-22. This includes information on the process for submitting bids, the types of projects eligible for funding, and how bids will be assessed. Further guidance and templates for bid submissions will be published shortly.

## ■ Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[161870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what financial support is available to (a) community support groups that meet in premises that form part of places of worship and (b) to support places of worship that have lost income due to having suspended rent payments for community groups that have continued to use their premises during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Luke Hall:**

The Government recognises the impact that the pandemic has had on a wide range of community and voluntary groups, including faith groups and places of worship.

Throughout the pandemic – even during the most severe periods of national restrictions – the Government has sought to ensure that key support groups, of up to 15 people, have been able to continue to meet in places of worship and other community venues, to provide mutual aid, therapy and other vital forms of support to those most in need.

As part of the response to the impact of COVID-19, the Government made available a package of support specifically for charities and businesses. Places of worship that are also registered charities have been able to apply to a number of these schemes on the basis of being impacted organisations themselves, to support their work delivering community services in response to the pandemic. This included the Government's £750 million package of support specifically for charities, social enterprises and the voluntary sector. Many places of worship who employ people have also benefitted from the Government's furlough scheme, which was recently extended to the end of September 2021 where needed.

The Government continues to engage regularly with a range of faith leaders and community groups – including through our Places of Worship Taskforce and regular roundtable meetings with major faith groups - to better understand how the Government can support them to respond to the pressures they face at this time.

I encourage places of worship and community groups to monitor the Government's web pages that offer information on the schemes currently available, and new schemes when they are launched, such as: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/financial-support-for-voluntary-community-and-social-enterprise-vcse-organisations-to-respond-to-coronavirus-covid-19>.

## ■ UK Community Renewal Fund

**Andrew Gwynne:**

**[163173]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what methodology was used to create the index of economic resilience in respect of the UK Community Renewal Fund; and how that methodology was used to identify the 100 priority places which will receive capacity funding via their lead authority from the UK Community Renewal Fund.

**Luke Hall:**

To ensure the UK Community Renewal Fund funding reaches the most in need, we have identified 100 priority places based on an index of economic resilience across Great Britain which measures productivity, household income, unemployment, skills, and population density. We are committed to transparency and a methodological note will be published explaining how the 100 priority places were selected.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

**[163178]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what methodology was used to select the 100 places that are on the UK Community Renewal Fund.

**Luke Hall:**

To ensure the UK Community Renewal Fund funding reaches the most in need, we have identified 100 priority places based on an index of economic resilience across Great Britain which measures productivity, household income, unemployment, skills, and population density. We are committed to transparency and a methodological note will be published explaining how the 100 priority places were selected.

**■ UK Community Renewal Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund****Kate Hollern:**[\[163239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what methodology his Department used to determine the priority areas listed in the (a) UK Community Renewal Fund and (b) UK Shared Prosperity Fund; and if he will publish that methodology.

**Luke Hall:**

To ensure the UK Community Renewal Fund funding reaches the most in need, we have identified 100 priority places based on an index of economic resilience across Great Britain which measures productivity, household income, unemployment, skills, and population density. We are committed to transparency and a methodological note will be published explaining how the 100 priority places were selected.

We will publish details on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in a UK-wide Investment Framework later in 2021. The UK Community Renewal Fund will help inform the design of the UK Shared Prosperity through funding of one-year pilots, but the Funds are distinct in regard to design, eligibility, and duration.

**■ Vagrancy Act 1824****Paul Maynard:**[\[160604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish his conclusions on the review of the Vagrancy Act 1824.

**Eddie Hughes:**

This is a complex issue which is why the Government reviewed the Act. We have been looking at the options and will update on our findings in due course.

**Navendu Mishra:**[\[160833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 11 February 2021 to Question 11550, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of repealing the Vagrancy Act 1824.

**Navendu Mishra:**[\[160834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to repeal the Vagrancy Act 1824.

**Eddie Hughes:**

This is a complex issue which is why the Government reviewed the Act. We have been looking at the options and will update on our findings in due course.

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE****■ Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia****Zarah Sultana:**[\[163319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether current licences for components for bombs issued on 4 August 2020 include contracts for Raytheon Systems UK to deliver Paveway IVs or components thereof to Saudi Arabia; and whether she has made an assessment of the effect of the the US and Italian Government's decisions to suspend or revoke certain sales and export licences to Saudi Arabia on the UK export of aerial ground-attack munitions and their components to Saudi Arabia.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

HM Government will continue to take its export responsibilities seriously and assess all export licences in accordance with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the 'Consolidated Criteria'). The decisions of other countries are matters for them.

Disclosure of information relating to private contracts between businesses would be inappropriate.

**■ Fairtrade Initiative: Trade Agreements****Virginia Crosbie:**[\[163332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that fair trade goods continue to have access to UK markets under new trading arrangements.

**Greg Hands:**

The UK's Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and Generalised Scheme of Preferences support developing countries to export agricultural products and other goods to the UK. We have secured EPAs with 30 African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries, covering over £18bn of trade. We plan to deepen our EPA agreements and expand them to new countries in the future.

Independent certification schemes, such as Fairtrade, which set standards on social, economic and environmental issues for companies, continue to operate within the context of UK trading arrangements.

**■ Overseas Trade: USA****Martin Docherty-Hughes:**[\[162626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to announce the launch of a consultation on the 232 rebalancing tariffs applied to US products.

**Greg Hands:**

The Department is planning to launch a consultation on the rebalancing measures the UK is taking in response to the US unjustified tariffs on steel, aluminium and derivatives later this year.

■ **Trade Agreements: Canada****Dr Luke Evans:**[\[160819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what progress she is making to secure a free trade agreement with Canada.

**Greg Hands:**

The UK-Canada Trade Continuity Agreement (TCA) was signed on 9 December 2020 and completed Constitutional Reform and Governance (CRaG) in Parliament on 3 February 2021. Once ratified in Canada, the TCA will lock in preferential trade in goods and services worth £23 billion in 2019. We also signed a *memorandum of understanding* (MOU) with Canada on 21 December 2020 ensuring continued preferential goods trade pending full ratification. The TCA sets out a clear path to begin negotiating a new, more ambitious trade deal, which will be tailored to the British economy and interests. The Department is currently preparing for these talks with a view to beginning negotiations later in the year.

**JUSTICE**■ **Asylum: Appeals****Afzal Khan:**[\[160787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average duration was of the appeal procedure against first instance decisions on asylum applications in the latest period for which figures are available.

**Chris Philp:**

The average clearance time for asylum appeals in the First-tier Tribunal Immigration and Asylum Chamber, measured from receipt to disposal, was 40 weeks in the period July – September 2020.

This includes Asylum, Protection and Revocation of Protection appeals.

Published statistics can be found at:

[www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2020](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2020)  
and

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmcts-management-information](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmcts-management-information)

Quarterly Tribunal Statistics for October – December 2020 will be published on 11 March 2021.

**Judges: Disciplinary Proceedings**

**Claudia Webbe:** [\[160867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the (a) ethnicity and (b) gender was of the judges referred (i) informally and (ii) formally for disciplinary action since 2015; and what the (A) ethnicity and (B) gender was of the complainant in each of those cases.

**Chris Philp:**

The Judicial Conduct Investigations Office does not record the diversity profile of complainants, or of judges who are subject to disciplinary action.

**Judges: Resignations**

**Claudia Webbe:** [\[160865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many complainant judges have left their judicial appointment prior to normal retirement age after issuing a grievance alleging race, sex, sexual orientation or disability discrimination in the last two years.

**Chris Philp:**

There are no central records of how many complainant judges have left their judicial appointment prior to normal retirement age after issuing a grievance alleging race, sex, sexual orientation or disability discrimination. Information about judicial office holders who leave prior to retirement is not compared with grievance records.

**Judiciary**

**Claudia Webbe:** [\[160864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, for what reason recruitment, retention and promotion targets are not used in the judiciary.

**Chris Philp:**

Judges are selected following a rigorous, independent and merit-based process which is key to maintaining the quality, integrity and independence of our judiciary.

The Judicial Appointments Commission is asked by the Lord Chancellor to deliver a specified programme of judicial recruitment each year and reports against this in its annual report. The Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committees are also asked to recruit a specified number of magistrates each year.

We do not consider that diversity targets on recruitment, retention or promotion are the right approach. The Lord Chancellor, Lord Chief Justice and the Judicial Appointments Commission have statutory duties to improve judicial diversity and through the Judicial Diversity Forum, are delivering a wide range of actions to improve judicial diversity.

## ■ Judiciary: Bullying

**Claudia Webbe:**

**[160868]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what bullying, harassment and anti-discrimination policies apply to members of the Judiciary; what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of training offered in respect of that policy; and whether such training is provided to all (a) full-time and (b) part-time office holders.

**Chris Philp:**

There are three related Judicial Grievance policies which cover complaints of bullying, harassment and/or discrimination, systemic complaints and complaints of broader wrongdoing. The grievance policies provide a framework for raising complaints formally or informally. These apply to all judicial office holders; salaried and fee-paid including the magistracy. In addition, the Judicial Guide to Conduct offers assistance to judges, coroners and magistrates about their conduct through the provision of a set of core principles.

The Lord Chief Justice (LCJ), the Senior President of the Tribunals, and the Chief Coroner have statutory responsibility for judicial training, under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007, and Coroners and Justice Act 2009 respectively. As judicial training is a matter for the independent judiciary, no assessment of training is undertaken by the Ministry of Justice.

All new Judicial Office Holders attend courses which include sessions on Conduct and Ethics which make specific reference to the 2012 Equality and Diversity Policy for the Judiciary and the Dignity at Work statement it contains, and further training is provided for judges when they are new to leadership roles.

## ■ Judiciary: Public Appointments

**Claudia Webbe:**

**[160871]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether secret soundings are taken from leadership judges or other automatic consultees on the suitability of an individual for judicial appointment.

**Chris Philp:**

Consultation with the judiciary in relation to judicial recruitment is provided for in statute.

The independent Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) has the responsibility to run selection exercises and make recommendations to judicial posts up to and including the High Court. The JAC has a statutory duty to only select people for judicial appointment only on merit and who are of good character, in line with section 63 of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005.

As part of the selection process, a range of shortlisting and selection day tools are used to assess candidates. The Lord Chief Justice and another person who held the office for which the candidate is applying or has relevant experience are also consulted on the applicant, in line with section 30(1) of the Judicial Appointments



Regulations 2013 to ensure that candidates are of good character and have relevant capabilities for the role. Further information on the JAC's selection process regarding the suitability of candidates for appointments is available at –

<https://judicialappointments.gov.uk/guidance-on-the-application-process-2/>

For judges above the High Court an independent selection panel is convened as set out in the Constitutional Reform Act 2005. In line with those provisions, the commission, consisting of non-legally qualified members, judicial members and members of the JAC, will determine and apply the selection process required and will consult key officials and senior members of the judiciary on the candidates.

For appointments to the UK Supreme Court, a selection panel is convened. The panel consists of the UKSC President, a member from the JAC, the Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland, the Northern Ireland JAC and a Senior UK Judge in line with Part 3 (11) of the UK Supreme Court Regulations 2013. The panel will determine and apply the selection process required and consult with the senior judiciary and senior officials on candidates, in line with Section 27 (1) of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005.

**Claudia Webbe:**

**[160872]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department has taken to implement the findings of the Lammy Review in the judicial appointments' system.

**Chris Philp:**

The Ministry of Justice has published regular updates on the actions the department has taken in response to the Lammy Review recommendations.

The Lord Chancellor, alongside other members of the Judicial Diversity Forum (JDF), including the Lord Chief Justice, Chair of the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) and the Chairs and Chief Executives of the legal professional bodies are leading a wide range of actions to improve diversity, which were set out in the JDF's action plan published in September 2020.

This includes an expanded Pre-Application Judicial Education (PAJE) programme, which supports lawyers from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background in pursuing a judicial career; the work of the JAC's Targeted Outreach and Research Team, who are actively engaging with and providing guidance and advice to potential candidates from under-represented groups including those from a BAME background for specific court and tribunal roles; the application of an equal merit policy in JAC selection exercises; and a range of judicial outreach programmes. Coupled with this, end to end data on diversity across the legal professions and the judiciary has been brought together and published, and a range of research commissioned to inform actions to improve judicial diversity.

For the magistracy, the department is investing c.£1m to improve the magistrates' recruitment process and the diversity of magistrates' recruitment through targeted marketing and attraction activities.

**Claudia Webbe:**

**[160873]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many substantive complaints of unfairness in the making of judicial appointments have been upheld by the Judicial Appointments Commission under its own internal procedures; and what remedy has been offered and provided in each such case.

**Chris Philp:**

JAC complaints are not categorised by reference to claims of unfairness. All internal complaints upheld since 2014-15 are set out below.

YEAR	COMPLAINTS UPHELD	REMEDY
2020-21	3 Partially Upheld	3 Apologies Issues
2019-20	0	N/A
2018-19	3 Upheld	3 re-admitted to next stage of exercise (all Selection Day)
2017-18	4 Upheld	2 re-admitted to next stage of exercise, 1 retrospective adjustment applied, 1 apology
2016-17	1 Upheld	Invited to Selection Day (Complainant Holiday originally clashed)
2015-16	1 Upheld	1 re-admitted to next stage of process
2014-15	0	N/A

YEAR	COMPLAINTS UPHELD	REMEDY
Totals	9 Upheld 3 Partially Upheld	

**Claudia Webbe:**

**[160874]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many substantive complaints of unfairness in the making of appointments from the Judicial Appointments Commission have been upheld by the Judicial Appointments and Conduct Ombudsman in the latest period for which figures are available; and what remedy was offered and provided in each such case.

**Chris Philp:**

The Constitutional Reform Act 2005 enables the Judicial Appointments & Conduct Ombudsman to consider complaints from applicants for judicial office who claim to have been adversely affected, as a candidate for selection or as someone selected for judicial office, by maladministration on the part of the Judicial Appointments Commission.

A finding that a candidate was adversely affected by maladministration does not necessarily mean that their application was treated unfairly. The Ombudsman partially upheld one complaint during 2019/20, the latest period for which figures are available. This was on account of inadequacies in communications with the complainant. The Ombudsman's 2019/20 Annual Report makes it clear that the Ombudsman had not found maladministration in the handling of the application in question. The Ombudsman did not make any substantive findings of unfairness by the Judicial Appointments Commission.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/902198/jaco-annual-report-2019-20.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/902198/jaco-annual-report-2019-20.pdf)

## ■ Judiciary: Training

**Claudia Webbe:**

**[160869]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of unconscious bias training made available to the judiciary.

**Chris Philp:**

The Lord Chief Justice (LCJ), the Senior President of the Tribunals, and the Chief Coroner have statutory responsibility for judicial training, under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007, and Coroners and Justice Act 2009 respectively. Training responsibilities are exercised through the Judicial College. As training is a matter for the independent judiciary, no assessment is undertaken by the Ministry of Justice.

The Judicial College is committed to ensuring that matters of diversity and inclusion, fairness and tackling bias are embedded in all its training and competence

frameworks for judges and magistrates. It is a golden thread that runs through every aspect of training design, development and delivery. The Judicial College's goal is to include the topic of bias in all induction training and to have a suite of e-learning and resources on the topic of bias which judicial trainers can integrate into their continuation training as appropriate.

#### ■ Legal Aid Scheme: Asylum

**Afzal Khan:** [\[160788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many requests for legal assistance were made by asylum applicants during the first instance procedure in 2019.

**Afzal Khan:** [\[160789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many requests were made for legal assistance by asylum applicants during the first instance procedure in the UK by type (a) regular procedure, (b) accelerated procedure, (c) border procedure and (d) Dublin procedure in 2019.

**Afzal Khan:** [\[160790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many requests for legal assistance by asylum applicants during first instance procedure resulted in a grant of legal assistance in 2019.

**Alex Chalk:**

Information on the total number requests for this type of legal assistance is not held. Such assistance when provided by legal aid is funded under the 'Legal Help' scheme, where the decision on whether or not to grant funding is taken by the legal aid provider, and hence refusals are not reported to the Legal Aid Agency.

The data on the number of grants in a particular time period for this type of legal aid not available, as this is not broken down to the level of detail required until a claim for payment is submitted.

#### ■ Ministry of Justice: Employment Tribunals Service

**Claudia Webbe:** [\[160866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) Employment Tribunal and (b) other proceedings have been brought against the (i) judiciary, (ii) his Department, (iii) HM Courts and Tribunals Service and (iv) Judicial Conduct Investigations Office by (A) other judges and (B) his Department since 2015; and if he will publish the (1) outcome and (2) status of each of those proceedings.

**Chris Philp:**

This information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

**■ Prisoners: Gender****Sir John Hayes:****[160531]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to protect single-sex spaces in prisons.

**Alex Chalk:**

Our prisons are either men's prisons or women's prisons. It is our priority to ensure that all prisoners are kept safe and treated fairly, lawfully and decently, with their rights properly respected. This includes respecting transgender individuals and addressing their needs in accordance with the gender with which they identify, regardless of where they are held.

In some cases, transgender individuals can be held in the opposite side of the estate to their legal gender. This approach must be agreed at a Complex Case Board, chaired by a senior prison manager. Such decisions can only be taken following a full assessment of all known risks posed both to, and from, the individual.

Guidance for staff in relation to the care and management of transgender individuals is provided in the following policy framework:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-care-and-management-of-individuals-who-are-transgender>

**■ Prisons: Body Searches****Sir John Hayes:****[160532]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to ensure prison inmates are only searched by officers of the same sex.

**Alex Chalk:**

The national policy on the searching of prisoners, staff and visitors (PSI 07/2016 – Searching of the Person) is currently under review and a revised version is intended to be published later this year.

The national policy that allows for male officers to conduct rub down searches on the same sex only and female officers to conduct rub down searches on both sexes has been in place since 1992. Full searches must only be conducted by a person of the same sex.

The updated policy will also include direction on transgender staff conducting searches. This will account for staff with or without a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC).

In reviewing the policy, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has consulted with the Government's Legal Department and HMPPS Equalities Team. The new policy will be compliant with the Equality Act 2010, Gender Recognition Act 2004 and the European Convention of Human Rights.

## ■ Probation: Coronavirus

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

**[159258]**

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 resolve the backlogs of (a) unpaid work and (b) accredited programmes.

**Alex Chalk:**

We welcome the HMIP thematic review, which provides a useful opportunity to reflect on the successes from the Exceptional Delivery Models in place due to the pandemic. As we continue to recover, our plan must continue to be agile, responding to wider trends in infection rates and other indicators.

The probation service has been maximising the delivery of Unpaid Work as far as possible in line with social distancing restrictions. Offenders have been working on projects in the outdoors and which support the UK's recovery from Covid-19. Despite this, national restrictions and the need to maintain the safety of staff and offenders limited Unpaid Work delivery capacity for much of the last year. This has resulted in an increase in the number of outstanding cases. We have established an Unpaid Work Scrutiny panel, chaired by the Chief Probation Officer, with representatives from MoJ, HMPPS, HMCTS and the judiciary, focussed on this issue. The Panel is responsible for breaking down the backlog and making proposals about how the different types of cases can most effectively be dealt with, including which should return to court and how that process can be managed without placing undue pressure on the courts.

The delivery of Accredited Programmes has also been affected by the pandemic, with group work necessarily suspended between March and September 2020. Responding to this challenge, we developed alternative delivery formats, endorsed by the Correctional Services Accreditation and Advice Panel (CSAAP), to enable continued delivery of Accredited Programmes remotely. In September, we reinstated in person group work but, due to the prevalence of the virus, it was again paused in January 2021. We are reviewing this weekly as conditions continue to improve. However they are delivered, offenders who pose the highest risk of harm are being prioritised for Accredited Programmes. Where it is not possible to provide an Accredited Programme as we normally would, offenders receive alternative rehabilitative interventions from their Offender Manager. Additional recording guidance has been issued to probation providers to ensure that risk management and rehabilitative work is clearly recorded. Work is underway to increase capacity of programme provision as we recover from the pandemic, including recruiting and training more staff, and restarting socially distanced group delivery as soon as it is safe to do so.

## ■ Treatment of, and Outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Individuals in the Criminal Justice System Independent Review

**Claudia Webbe:**

[\[160870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to communicate the findings and recommendations of the Lammy Review to the full and part-time judiciary; and what steps his Department is taking to protect whistleblowers from discrimination and victimisation.

**Chris Philp:**

Since the publication of the Lammy Review in September 2017, the Ministry of Justice has worked with Judicial Office to respond to its recommendations, which have been disseminated and widely read amongst the Judiciary. The issues raised are of continued interest and concern and remain high on the agenda.

Any Ministry of Justice employees who raise a concern using the Raising a Concern (including whistleblowing) policy will be supported and will not suffer any unfair or negative treatment as a result. Where a protected disclosure is made, the individual also has a legal entitlement to protection. Any disclosures made under this policy will be treated in a sensitive manner. Details of individuals will only be shared with those who need to know in order to investigate and progress the matter.

For the Judiciary, there are three related Judicial Grievance policies which cover complaints of bullying, harassment and/or discrimination, systemic complaints and complaints of broader wrongdoing. The grievance policies provide a framework for raising complaints formally or informally. These apply to all judicial office holders; salaried and fee-paid including the magistracy.

## SCOTLAND

### ■ Devolution: Scotland

**Dr Liam Fox:**

[\[161670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on the workings of the Scottish devolved institutions.

**Mr Alister Jack:**

As the Secretary of State for Scotland, I have responsibility for the Scotland Act and I am the custodian of the Scottish devolution settlement. In that role, I hold regular meetings with a range of external stakeholders on a variety of subjects and listen to their views. I regularly feed these views back to my ministerial colleagues where appropriate.

### ■ Sovereignty: Scotland

**Mhairi Black:**

[\[161792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much the (a) Union Unit and (b) Union Taskforce spent on communications, including staffing costs, in each financial year since



2010-11; and how much is budgeted for that purpose for each of those groups for 2021-22.

**Mr Alister Jack:**

The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland is not responsible for the funding of either a 'Union Unit' or 'Union Taskforce'.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Aviation: Allergies

**Paul Maynard:**

[\[160608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2020 to Question 25061, on Aviation: Allergies, what steps has the Government taken over the past 12 months to provide improved clarity and consistency on how airlines operating in the UK assist nut allergy sufferers.

**Robert Courts:**

The Government continues to work with industry on this important consumer issue to ensure that passengers with nut allergies are safe and confident to fly.

The Government is continuing to develop a strategic framework for the recovery of the aviation sector, which will consider consumer issues.

### ■ Aviation: Antisocial Behaviour

**Paul Maynard:**

[\[160606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Disruptive Passengers Working Group last met; and what steps his Department has taken to reduce disruptive behaviour on planes.

**Robert Courts:**

The Disruptive Passengers Working Group last met on the 8 May 2019. The Civil Aviation Authority utilised an industry-led forum from summer 2019 to March 2020 to engage with the sector on disruptive passenger issues.

The industry-led forum will meet again after the immediate challenges resulting from Covid-19 have been resolved.

### ■ Bus Services

**Nadia Whittome:**

[\[160886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the National Bus Strategy will give powers to local authorities powers to establish a municipal bus company.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The National Bus Strategy, which will be launched in the coming weeks, will focus on how national and local government, and the private sector will come together to deliver better bus services and meet the needs of local communities. The Strategy is

the first step in longer process; there will be much detail to develop in collaboration with stakeholders after publication.

■ **Bus Services: Coronavirus**

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[160887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that bus operators do not reduce the number of bus (a) services and (b) routes as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government is currently providing up to £27.3m per week of emergency funding to the bus sector through the COVID-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) scheme. This is allowing bus operators to maintain services for essential travel.

During the current national lockdown, the Department has asked operators and local authorities to work together to prioritise services and routes based on local need, while reducing overall service levels to reflect reduced demand. The Government will work with operators and local authorities to help them prepare for an increase in demand as national restrictions begin to lift and ensure that service levels and route provision can meet this increase.

The Government remains committed to supporting the bus sector's long-term recovery from COVID-19. Further details on how we plan to support bus services will be included in the National Bus Strategy, which we expect to publish in the coming weeks.

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[160888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when funding for bus operators through the covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant will cease.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The COVID-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) has no pre-agreed end date. The Department will work with operators and authorities to ensure the transition away from CBSSG emergency funding is timed appropriately.

Recipients of CBSSG funding will be given eight weeks' notice before funding ceases.

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[160889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to allocate recovery funding to bus services in response to the covid-19 lockdown.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government is currently providing up to £27.3m per week of emergency funding to the bus sector through the COVID-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) scheme, ensuring that essential services continue to be provided. We will provide CBSSG until the funding is no longer needed.

## ■ Holyhead Port

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[163329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of direct ferry links for haulage from the EU to the Republic of Ireland on (a) Holyhead Port and (b) the Welsh economy.

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[163330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with (a) ferry operators and (b) haulage companies on the reduced use of the UK land bridge affecting Holyhead Port since 1 January 2021.

**Robert Courts:**

My officials or I have had a number of discussions with ferry, port and haulage operators in relation to Irish Sea traffic since 1 January, encompassing reductions in traffic at Holyhead, Fishguard and Pembroke compared with equivalent weeks in previous years. A significant proportion of these reductions is likely to be attributable to the expansion and take-up of direct services recently introduced and strongly promoted between the Republic of Ireland and other EU ports. It is, however, too early to identify any longer term trends or say what the longer term impacts will be. The Government is, however, confident that Welsh ports, and Holyhead in particular, will continue to provide critical routes to and from the Republic of Ireland and continental Europe, irrespective of direct links for haulage between Ireland and France. The land bridge route has significant advantages for hauliers over maritime routes and the Government is confident that Welsh ports will continue to thrive as we build on the opportunities provided by being an independent trading nation.

## ■ Road Traffic Control: Schools

**Mark Pritchard:**

[\[160589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will introduce compulsory traffic calming measures and hazard signs outside all (a) early years education settings and (b) schools to reduce the risk of injury and death to children.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Local authorities are responsible for roads in their area and are free to make their own decisions about the design of the streets they manage.

## ■ Taxis: Exhaust Emissions

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[160778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of support in place for the taxi and private hire sector to transition to lower emission vehicles.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Government is directly supporting the taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) sector to transition to zero emissions through the Plug in Taxi Grant (PiTG) and the Plug in Car

Grant which provides a grant of up to £7,500 taxis and £3,000 respectively. The PiTG has supported the purchasing of over 4,400 vehicles across the UK.

Support has also been provided to increase the availability of a charging infrastructure to meet driver needs. Government has awarded over £20 million to 27 local authorities to deploy almost 800 rapid and fast chargepoints dedicated to electric taxis and PHVs.

## ■ Transport: Greater London

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[160752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with Transport for London on financial support for London's transport network.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government is committed to keeping London moving. In October 2020, the Government agreed an extraordinary funding and financing package for TfL worth up to £1.7 billion, in addition to the earlier May 2020 deal worth up to £1.6 billion.

The Department for Transport regularly engages with Transport for London, including in relation to understanding the impacts of Covid-19 on TfL's finances and what further support may be required.

## TREASURY

## ■ Aviation: Coronavirus

**Chris Elmore:**

[\[160760\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has met with representatives from the aviation industry to assess what financial support they need to survive the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Chancellor speaks to industry representatives on a regular basis about a range of matters, including support for the aviation industry.

The Government recognises the challenging circumstances facing the aviation industry as a result of Covid-19 and firms experiencing difficulties can draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor, including schemes to raise capital and flexibilities with tax bills. In addition to economy-wide measures such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the aerospace sector and its aviation customers are being supported with almost £11 billion made available through loan guarantees, support for exporters, the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility and grants for research and development. This includes £8bn of guarantees provided by UK Export Finance.

In addition, the renewed Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme that the Chancellor announced in his Budget will provide support for eligible businesses with their fixed costs for a further six months, up to the equivalent of their business rates

liabilities for the first half of the 2021-22 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £4m.

#### ■ **Bradford and Bingley: Investment**

**Philip Davies:** [\[160588\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much money was invested in Bradford and Bingley from the public purse (a) in the run up and (b) subsequent to the financial crash; and how much money has since been recovered from Bradford and Bingley.

**John Glen:**

Bradford & Bingley plc (B&B) fully repaid its loans from the Treasury in 2019.

The OBR's Economic and Fiscal Outlook notes that B&B and NRAM Limited received £44.1bn of taxpayer support. As of 31 January 2021, B&B and NRAM had returned £51.4bn to taxpayers in the form of principal repayments and fees.

We are continuing to protect consumers while recovering significant amounts of money loaned to institutions as a result of the financial crisis by taxpayers, who have borne the risk of these institutions since their nationalisation.

#### ■ **Budget March 2021: Publicity**

**Layla Moran:** [\[163295\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of his Department's (a) advertising and (b) video production previewing Budget 2021 in each of the last two months.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

All content created for Budget 2021 was produced by the department's in house communications team at no additional cost.

#### ■ **Cash Dispensing**

**Bob Blackman:** [\[162572\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the planned timescale is for bringing forward legislative proposals on protecting access to cash.

**Bob Blackman:** [\[162573\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on access to cash; and what steps he is taking to protect access to cash.

**Bob Blackman:** [\[162574\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the planned timescale is for bringing forward a draft Bill on protecting access to cash; and if he will publish details of the scope of that legislation.

**John Glen:**

The Government has committed to legislate to protect access to cash and ensure that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable for the long term. To progress this work, the Government published a Call for Evidence on Access to Cash in October 2020. The Call for Evidence sought views on the key considerations associated with cash access, including deposit and withdrawal facilities, cash acceptance, and regulatory oversight of the cash system. The Government is considering responses to the Call for Evidence and will set out next steps in due course.

The Government created the Joint Authorities Cash Strategy Group in 2019, which has provided a forum for the public bodies to formally co-ordinate respective approaches to access to cash. This is chaired by HM Treasury and attended by the Bank of England, Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) and Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The Group published an update on the actions of the Group's members in July 2020. This included work led by the PSR and FCA to develop a comprehensive picture of cash access infrastructure across the UK.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted cash usage in the short-term and is likely to have accelerated the longer-term trends of declining cash use. However, it is too early to determine the lasting effect.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Treasury has been working closely with regulators and industry to ensure customers continue to have access to essential banking services, including cash, while also protecting the safety of staff and customers. This has meant the vast majority of people have been able to access cash through the pandemic.

**■ Coronavirus: Greater London****Helen Hayes:****[160750]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the importance of London's economy to the UK's recovery from the covid-19 outbreak.

**John Glen:**

The Government recognises the significant impact of Covid-19 on every region and nation of the UK, including in London. That is why the government has delivered support to businesses across London, including through extensions to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, with more than 710,000 jobs across the capital being supported and to over 510,000 self-employed workers with over £3.8 billion through the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme. The Government is working closely with stakeholders, including through London Transition Board and London Recovery Board to help develop a longer-term recovery strategy for the future prosperity of all Londoners.

## ■ Customs Grant Scheme

**Angus Brendan MacNeil:**

**[163183]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 4 February 2021 to Question 144640 on Customs Grant Scheme, if he will allocate additional funding to the Customs Grant Scheme to allow businesses on the waiting list for that scheme to receive support.

**Jesse Norman:**

In total, the Government has made over £80 million available to support businesses to deal with EU trade after 2020. The fund has now been fully allocated, no further applications are being accepted and a waiting list is being maintained by the grant scheme administrator.

The end of the transition period offers new opportunities to the intermediaries sector and means there are increased demands for the services of an intermediary, meaning intermediaries will be receiving significant income. Further Government support with cash flow remains available through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and related schemes.

In addition, the Government recently announced a £20 million SME Brexit Support Fund to support small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) to adjust to new customs, rules of origin, and VAT rules when trading with the EU. More information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/grants-to-help-small-and-medium-sized-businesses-new-to-importing-or-exporting>.

## ■ Employment: Coronavirus

**Mr Gagan Mohindra:**

**[913180]**

What fiscal steps he is taking to help provide new employment opportunities to people affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

**John Glen:**

We have protected jobs by extending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employment Income Support Schemes out to September 2021. For those people who unfortunately lose their jobs, we are helping them to find new jobs by doubling work coaches, and with additional tailored support such as our flagship Kickstart and Restart programmes.

To further support employment and retraining, at Budget we announced an additional £126 million for traineeships in England to enable more than 40,000 places over the next academic year, and we are increasing payments (to £3,000) for employers who hire new apprentices.

## ■ Events Industry: Insurance

**Jamie Stone:**

**[913199]**

If he will introduce a Government-backed insurance scheme for the live events industry.



**John Glen:**

On 22 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.

**Financial Services: UK Trade with EU****Jim Shannon:**[\[160658\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his policy is on future regulatory cooperation with the EU on financial services.

**John Glen:**

Alongside the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the UK and EU have agreed, in the Joint Declaration on Regulatory Cooperation, to establish structured regulatory cooperation for financial services.

To that end, a Memorandum of Understanding will be agreed in discussions between the EU and UK, to establish a framework for this cooperation. We have had initial conversations with the EU, but we will not be providing a running commentary on those discussions.

**Free Zones: Finance****Jonathan Edwards:**[\[163199\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much seed funding will be allocated to each of the eight new free ports in England.

**Jonathan Edwards:**[\[163200\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much funding the Welsh Government will receive to establish a new free port in Wales.

**Jonathan Edwards:**[\[163201\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much funding has been allocated to establishing free ports in the UK; and how much of that funding will be allocated to (a) Wales, (b) England, (c) Scotland and (d) Northern Ireland.

**Steve Barclay:**

We want to ensure that the whole of the UK can benefit from Freeports and we remain in ongoing discussions with the Welsh government to establish a Freeport in Wales as soon as possible.

Successful bidders in England will be able to access a share of £175m. This is capital spending to support the development of Freeport sites and should be matched by a mix of private sector investment, council borrowing and co-funding. The expectation is that all Freeports who have their business case accepted will get similar shares of

the available £175 million fund. The amount accessed will depend on the submission of an outline business case (OBC).

It is for the Welsh Government to decide how much seed funding to provide to a Freeport in Wales. Through the application of the Barnett formula at the 2020 Spending Review, the Welsh Government is receiving around £123 per head in 2021-22 for every £100 per head spent by the UK Government on devolved matters in England. It is similarly for the Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Executive to determine how much seed funding to allocate to Freeports in Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively.

There are also a variety of benefits from Freeports, including on tax, customs, planning and innovation, and the seed funding is only one part of the offer available to ports and businesses.

## ■ Gift Aid

**John Nicolson:**

[160703]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much tax is reclaimed annually through gift aid.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

In 2019-20, the latest year for which estimates are available, £1.4 billion in Gift Aid was paid to charities, and £0.5 billion was paid to individuals who were higher and additional rate Income Tax payers. Information about the cost of Gift Aid and other tax reliefs on charitable donations is published in "UK charity tax relief statistics" on GOV.UK at the link below:

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/charitable-donations-and-tax-reliefs-statistics](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/charitable-donations-and-tax-reliefs-statistics)

## ■ Hospitality Industry and Tourism: VAT

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**

[913203]

If his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of making permanent the five per cent reduced rate of VAT for the tourism and hospitality sector.

**Jesse Norman:**

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July to support the cash flow and viability of about 150,000 businesses and to protect over 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors. As announced at Budget, this relief will now run until 31 March 2022, with a staggered return to the standard rate. Applying this relief permanently would come at a significant cost to the Exchequer, and that cost would have to be balanced by increased taxes elsewhere, or reductions in Government spending.

## ■ Housing: Energy

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[163198\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Budget 2021 statement on 3 March 2021, what fiscal measures he plans to bring forward to incentivise (a) home retrofits and (b) improved energy efficiency of homes in line with the Climate Change Committee's Balanced Net Zero Pathway.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises the importance of energy efficiency in our homes for achieving our climate change objectives.

In the summer, the Chancellor announced up to £3 billion across four schemes to make our buildings greener and more energy efficient. The Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan extended these schemes, with a further £1 billion available next financial year to decarbonise buildings in England, encourage the deployment of low carbon heating in homes and businesses, and support the creation of clean heat networks.

The Government also recently announced plans to extend the Energy Company Obligation to 2026 with an increased value of £1 billion per year so suppliers can help improve the coldest homes and reduce fuel poverty.

The upcoming Heat and Buildings Strategy will set out further detail on the Government's plans to reduce emissions from homes.

## ■ Infrastructure: Finance

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[913181\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to increase funding for UK infrastructure.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that businesses and infrastructure projects continue to have access to the finance they need.

Government investment in economic infrastructure will be £27 billion in 2021-22. The Spring Budget set out further details on the new UK Infrastructure Bank.

## ■ International Monetary System

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[161681\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what international initiatives he plans to implement to ensure an international reallocation of the IMF'S stock of Special Drawing Rights, ahead of the G7 meeting in June 2021.

**John Glen:**

The UK supports work on a new Special Drawing Rights (SDR) allocation to provide additional financing to low-income countries. On Friday 12 February the Chancellor chaired the first G7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting and set out his priorities for the year including working to provide necessary support for the world's most vulnerable countries, including through ensuring that the International

Financial Institutions have the right tools to equip and enable vulnerable countries to respond to the pandemic. At the G20 Finance Ministers meeting on Friday 26 February the Chancellor also expressed his desire for work on a new IMF Special Drawing Rights allocation which gives additional financing to low income countries to help their response and recovery.

## ■ International Transport: Republic of Ireland

**John Spellar:**

**[160526]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of TIR procedures for vehicles crossing the UK from Ireland to travel onward to the EU since the end of the transition period.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC have not carried out any assessments of effectiveness of TIR procedures for vehicles crossing the UK.

The UK is a member of both the Common Transit Convention (CTC) and Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR) conventions. Depending on preferences and suitability, a trader can choose to use the TIR or CTC process to move goods across borders using transit.

## ■ Landfill Tax

**Luke Pollard:**

**[163301]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to change the landfill tax of flat glass from the lower rate to the standard rate.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Materials liable for the lower rate of landfill tax, including glass, are listed in the 2011 Qualifying Materials Order. When assessing which materials are liable for the lower rate, the Government considers whether they are non-hazardous, have low potential for greenhouse gas emissions and have low polluting potential in the landfill environment. Further information can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/excise-notice-lft1-a-general-guide-to-landfill-tax/excise-notice-lft1-a-general-guide-to-landfill-tax#lower-rate-qualifying-material>

The Government has no plans to change the landfill tax rate for flat glass, though continues to keep tax policy under review.

Defra has funded Environment Agency/WRAP guidance on the proper collection and reprocessing of flat glass with the aim of increasing recycling rates. The Environment Agency is set to review this in May 2021.

The Environmental (England and Wales) Permitting Regulation 2016 includes a statutory permit condition for landfill and incineration permit holders, placing a restriction on plastic, metal, paper or glass separately collected for reuse or recycling from being accepted for landfill or incineration unless it is the result of treatment

operations and delivers the best environmental outcome in accordance with the waste hierarchy.

Flat glass is a common waste product from construction and demolition. In the Resources & Waste Strategy 2018, we committed to increasing resource efficiency and minimising waste in the construction sector, through working with the Green Construction Board.

#### ■ **Motor Vehicles: VAT**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[160546\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a VAT exemption on sales of low-emission vehicles.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government encourages the uptake of vehicles with low carbon dioxide emissions. This is why zero emission cars and electric vans are liable to pay no Vehicle Excise Duty (VED), either at first registration, or subsequently.

The sale of all cars and vehicles is subject to the standard rate of VAT. Any loss in tax revenue would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, increased borrowing or increased taxation elsewhere. Therefore, the Government has no plans to extend tax reliefs on low-emission vehicles further.

#### ■ **Night-time Economy: Coronavirus**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[160545\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of making a financial support package available to the nightlife industry before it can reopen from 21 June 2021.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government understands that the nightlife industry has been acutely impacted by the pandemic. It has delivered support to this sector over the past year through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), VAT and business rates relief, a moratorium on evictions to protect commercial tenants, cash grants to protect businesses, extensions to the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs), and 'Pay as You Grow' options for businesses which have taken out loans through BBLs, giving a longer repayment period and allowing further flexibility on repayments.

As restrictions ease and the economy is gradually and safely reopened, the Government will carefully tailor the level of support to individuals and businesses to reflect the changing circumstances. The Budget on 3 March outlined the next stage in the Government's Plan for Jobs including on economic support to protect jobs and livelihoods across the UK. Measures businesses in the nightlife industry will benefit from include:

- The CJRS, which has supported over 1.6 million jobs in the hospitality sector, has been extended until the end of September 2021.
- New Restart Grants – a one off cash grant of up to £18,000 for hospitality and leisure businesses in England.
- Local Authorities (in England) have been given an additional £425 million of discretionary funding to support local businesses. This builds on the £1.6 billion discretionary funding which Local Authorities in England have already received.
- Eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors in England will benefit from business rates relief worth over £6 billion in 21-22.
- A new UK-wide Recovery Loan Scheme to make available loans between £25,001 and £10 million, and asset and invoice finance between £1,000 and £10 million, to help businesses of all sizes through the next stage of recovery.
- Extension to the VAT cut to 5% for hospitality, accommodation and tourism until the end of September across the UK. To help businesses manage the transition back to the standard 20% rate, a 12.5% rate will apply for the subsequent six months until 31 March 2022.

The Government is continuing to collect evidence on the impact of the pandemic on the nightlife industry and is committed to working with businesses and representative groups to inform our efforts to support it.

#### ■ **Public Sector Debt: Gifts and Endowments**

**Paul Maynard:**

**[160601]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many payments were made to the Government's Donations and Bequests Account in respect of the National Debt in financial year 2019-20; and what the value of those payments was.

**John Glen:**

The United Kingdom Debt Management Office (DMO), on behalf of the Commissioners of the Reduction of the National Debt (CRND), can confirm that nine payments were made to the Government's Donations and Bequests Account in respect of the National Debt in financial year 2019-20. The total value of the payments received was £49,000, which is reflected in the CRND Annual Report and Accounts available via the following link:

<https://dmo.gov.uk/publications/?offset=0&itemsPerPage=20&parentFilter=1437&childFilter=1437|1465&startMonth=1&startYear=1998>

#### ■ **Public Works Loan Board: Housing Revenue Accounts**

**Navendu Mishra:**

**[161881]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of local councils using the Public Works Loan Board for housing revenue accounts.

**John Glen:**

In the financial year 2019-20, 65 local authorities in England borrowed £657 million to finance Housing Revenue Accounts (HRAs). As local authorities borrow from the PWLB to fund their capital programmes as a whole, it is difficult to know for certain how much of this borrowing was from the PWLB.

Between 12 March and 25 November 2020, the PWLB offered a separate HRA rate, which was 100 basis points lower than the Certainty rate at which local authorities could borrow for all other capital expenditure. During this time 50 local authorities borrowed £1.146 billion from the PWLB at the HRA rate.

The HRA rate was discontinued after the Certainty rate was reduced by 100 basis points, which equalised the costs of borrowing for all types of capital expenditure.

**Railways: North of England****Imran Hussain:**[\[913183\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on the potential economic benefits of including a Bradford city centre stop on the proposed Northern Powerhouse Rail line.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The government will provide better rail connectivity between northern cities, and between London, the Midlands and the north. The Treasury is working closely with the Department for Transport and across government on the Integrated Rail Plan.

This will set out how best to scope, sequence and deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail and other major Network Rail programmes.

The government is committed to transport improvements in West Yorkshire, which has received over £300m in local transport funding. This includes funding to improve transport in Bradford.

**Regional Planning and Development: Scotland****Owen Thompson:**[\[163260\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what consultation will be undertaken with (a) the Scottish Government and (b) local Members of the Scottish Parliament when considering applications to the Levelling Up Fund.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

We look forward to engaging the Devolved Administrations on the Levelling Up Fund. MHCLG and DfT will seek advice, where appropriate, from the relevant Devolved Administrations at the shortlisting stage on projects that will be delivered in their geographical areas – including on deliverability and alignment with existing provision. Further details on the Levelling Up Fund application process are set out in the prospectus.



## ■ Regional Planning and Development: Tees Valley

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

**[913177]**

What assessment he has made of his Department's progress in levelling up the economy of the Tees Valley.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government remains committed to levelling up opportunity across the UK, including in the Tees Valley.

At the Budget I confirmed a series of measures to level up Tees Valley's economy:

- New investment in offshore wind ports infrastructure;
- the Teesside Freeport, which I visited with the Prime Minister on Thursday;
- and the new Treasury economic campus in Darlington.

The Tees Valley will also benefit from two new Towns Fund Deals, in Middlesbrough and Thornaby.

## ■ Revenue and Customs: Equal Pay

**John McDonnell:**

**[160514]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2019 to Question 284253 on Revenue and Customs: Equal Pay, when his Department plans to complete its 2019 Equal Pay Audit.

**Jesse Norman:**

Publication of HMRC's next Equal Pay Audit was delayed from its originally scheduled publication date of 2019 while the department was working with trade unions last year to negotiate a set of reforms to its pay and working arrangements. The department took the decision to delay publication as this programme of work and the changes proposed to its pay system were likely to have a significant impact on the report's results. Following agreement by HMRC union members of a final pay and contract offer put forward at a members' ballot in January 2021, HMRC are now in the process of implementing these workforce reforms and HMRC expect to publish their next Equal Pay Audit before the end of 2021.

HMRC have continued to meet their statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and in January 2021 also published equality objectives until 2024 that describe HMRC's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-equality-objectives-2020-to-2024>.

HMRC have embedded pay gap reduction actions into the work already being undertaken to review and improve policies and processes, and HMRC's analyses show that they reduced their gender pay gap (ordinary and bonus) from 2019 to 2020. HMRC continue to take an evidence-based approach, using quantitative and qualitative insight to inform action taken.

## ■ Revenue and Customs: Public Appointments

**Neil Coyle:** [160682]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason he has nominated the Chief Executive of HM Revenue and Customs as the expert adviser to the Independent Inquiry on the Loan Charge.

**Jesse Norman:**

In September 2019, the Chancellor at the time commissioned Sir Amyas Morse to lead an independent review of the loan charge policy. Sir Amyas Morse had full control over the management of the review and maintained complete discretion over the advisers appointed and the stakeholders with whom he engaged. The Chief Executive of HM Revenue & Customs was not nominated or appointed as an adviser to the Review, in any capacity.

## ■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

**Debbie Abrahams:** [163231]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much has been paid under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme by local authority to date.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC publish statistics on the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/self-employment-income-support-scheme-statistics-february-2021>.

Table 5a provides a breakdown of claims by local authority.

## ■ Sick Pay

**Janet Daby:** [913179]

What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on increasing the level of statutory sick pay.

**Steve Barclay:**

In response to the pandemic, the Government has extended Statutory Sick Pay so that self-isolators are eligible and it is payable from day one rather than day four. Statutory Sick Pay is a statutory minimum and more than half of employees receive more when they are off sick. Changes to Statutory Sick Pay are one part of the Government's wider support package for those sick or self-isolating, which includes the Test and Trace Support Payments, the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and the temporary £20 per week increase in Universal Credit.

## ■ Taxation: Self-assessment

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[160513\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of taxpayers who do not hold a UK passport who have contacted his Department as a result of being unable to provide proof of identity in line with the new identity verification requirements for submitting self-assessment tax returns online; and what assessment he has made of the effect of those new identity verification requirements on people without a UK passport who submit their self-assessment tax returns online; and if he will make a statement.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC do not hold estimates for the number of Self-Assessment taxpayers who contact HMRC due to being unable to pass the online identity verification challenge and who also do not hold a UK passport.

Where taxpayers are unable to prove their identity online it is as a consequence of being unable to pass successfully through the end-to-end identity challenge. Success or failure to pass the online identity checks is not dependent on holding a passport.

## ■ Treasury: Social Media

**Justin Madders:**

[\[163250\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the video with HM Treasury branding that was first posted on social media on 1 March 2021, what the total cost was of work carried out by (a) internal suppliers and (b) external suppliers; and whether external suppliers were invited by open tender for that work.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Treasury's video published on 1 March 2021 on HM Treasury social media channels was produced by the department's in house communications team at no additional cost.

## WALES

## ■ Large Goods Vehicles: Wales

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[163331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how traffic flows through (a) Holyhead Port and (b) the land bridge route for hauliers have developed since 1 January 2021; and what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the effect of direct ferry links from the Republic of Ireland to Europe on the Welsh economy.

**Simon Hart:**

There has been a steady, continual increase in the roll-on roll-off freight flow through the port of Holyhead since the start of the year. Freight flows have increased each week since the start of the year and data for the last week in February showed there

was almost double the number of HGVs travelling via Holyhead compared to the first week of January. However, freight volumes at Holyhead remain below 2020 levels.

I am having regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues about traffic levels at the Welsh ports and the effects of increased direct ferry links between Ireland and continental Europe on the land bridge route. The Government is confident in the prospects for Welsh ports over the medium to long-term. We are clear that the land bridge continues to be the most advantageous route for hauliers travelling between Ireland and much of mainland Europe in terms of costs and time. We are continuing to work with hauliers in the UK and the EU to ensure they fully understand the new systems and processes following the end of the Transition Period.

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

### ■ Equal Pay

**Kirsten Oswald:**

[\[163249\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to ensure that employers with a headcount of 250 or more continue to report gender pay gap data ahead of the usual annual deadlines.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

On 23 February, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) announced that employers will have until 5 October 2021 to report their gender pay gap information. The EHRC enforces the regulations, contacting any late reporters and follows up on potentially inaccurate data. For the 2020/21 reporting year, enforcement activity will commence after the additional time period ends on 5 October 2021.

The government is fully committed to women's economic empowerment but, given the impact of the pandemic on businesses, extending the deadline by six months is the correct decision.

Lots of positive work has been done by employers to encourage equality in the workplace, and although ONS figures show that the gender pay gap stands at a record low, we need to continue making progress, including making sure that we are tackling the causes of the gender pay gap.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Access to Work Programme

**Debbie Abrahams:**

[\[163229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people received Access to Work funding in (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The number of people who have received an Access to Work payment broken down by financial year up to 2019/20 is available in Table 6 of the Access to Work statistics publications.

The information requested for 2020/21 is intended for future release in the 2020/21 Official Statistics publication.

The latest Access to Work official statistics can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/access-to-work-statistics>

**■ Access to Work Programme: Coronavirus****Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[160701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of suspending the cap on Access to Work funding for disabled entrepreneurs in response to the disruption to business caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

Access to Work has not made an assessment of the merits of suspending the cap for disabled entrepreneurs as there are alternative options of support they can explore with their Access to Work adviser whilst retaining the cap. If the honourable member has any examples she could share where this has not worked, we will explore what more can be done.

**■ Child Maintenance Service: ICT****Peter Grant:**[\[163257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to resolve the problems with the CMS IT system which suspends the collection of Child Maintenance Service debt.

**Guy Opperman:**

We are not aware of any issues regarding Child Maintenance System and the suspension of debt.

**■ Department for Work and Pensions: Complaints****Paul Maynard:**[\[160605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department has made on implementing the decisions made at the Serious Case Panel meeting of 2 July 2020 on the Customer Dissatisfaction workstream.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The Department will be reporting on the implementation of the recommendations agreed by the Serious Case Panel in this year's Annual Report and Accounts. The Panel continues to consider the serious issues arising from cases and other insight that affect the DWP customer experience. The Serious Case Panel has now met four times and is due to meet again this month. The Panel has made great progress over

the last year, already making changes to the way in which we support our most vulnerable customers. We will continue to publish the minutes following each meeting of the Panel on gov.uk.

■ **Disability: Coronavirus**

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[160836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Office for National Statistics report, Coronavirus and the Social Impacts on Disabled People in Great Britain: September 2020, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies that as many disabled people reported being worried about the covid-19 outbreak as reported in April 2020.

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[160837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Office for National Statistics report, Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain: September 2020, what steps her Department has taken to support disabled people during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The Government is committed to supporting disabled people affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. We continue to monitor the impact of Covid-19 on disabled people using existing and new data sources. The Department has had discussions with charities, disabled people's organizations' and individuals to understand the range of experiences disabled people have had during the pandemic and to identify the support needed.

DWP offers financial support for people who are affected by the pandemic, or who need employment-related support in general through Universal Credit, New Style ESA or Pension Credit, all of which can be applied for online. Employer led support is available through Statutory Sick Pay. In addition, people with a condition arising from exposure to the Covid-19 virus are able to access PIP in the same way as other people with long-term health conditions or disabilities.

A range of DWP initiatives are supporting disabled people to stay in and enter work. These include the Work and Health Programme, one-to-one support and training through the Intensive Personalised Employment Support programme, Access to Work, Disability Confident and support in partnership with the health system, including Employment Advice in NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapy services. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, we have provided specialist employment support remotely and made programmes easier to access.

■ **Employment: Learning Disability**

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[160746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what employment support her Department is providing to people with learning disabilities during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

DWP is providing a range of support to help people with learning disabilities secure and keep employment during the Covid period.

The increased number of work coaches will enable us to continue supporting those with complex needs, and to work with partners to ensure they get the help they need.

People in particular disadvantaged groups will continue to benefit from local support via the increased Flexible Support Fund and priority early access to the Work and Health Programme.

The Intensive Personalised Employment Support Programme (IPES) provides highly personalised packages of employment support for disabled people who want to work but have complex needs or barriers and require specialist support to achieve sustained employment.

Access to Work funds tailored support to disabled people who are in work, including apprenticeships, or participating in DfE Traineeships or Supported Internships. AtW has recently introduced a new flexible offer to support disabled people to return to, move into and retain employment. This enables disabled people to receive in-work support to work in the workplace, at home or a combination of both.

**■ Jobcentres: Leicestershire****Dr Luke Evans:**[\[160821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress she is making on increasing the number of work coaches in (a) Leicestershire and (b) Bosworth.

**Mims Davies:**

Bosworth constituency is home to Hinckley Jobcentre Plus, one of our smaller sites and has already had an additional Work Coach join the team since March 2020

Across the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire District, we have recruited an additional 302 Work Coaches so far with a further 52 joining us by the end of March 2021.

**■ Local Housing Allowance****Giles Watling:**[\[160794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the local housing allowance for under 35 year olds to access available accommodation options.

**Will Quince:**

For those under 35, the shared accommodation rate (SAR) of Local Housing Allowance applies to those living on their own and renting privately. However, there are certain exemptions which allow claimants to receive the higher one-bedroom rate instead of the SAR. These include those in receipt of the severe disability premium, care leavers up to the age of 22 and those over 25 who have spent at least three months in a homeless hostel.



As announced on 3 March, we will be extending the exemption for care leavers and former residents of homeless hostels to all qualifying under 25 year olds from June 2021. This will bring forward the planned implementation of these previously announced changes by over 2 years.

More broadly, in April 2020 LHA rates were raised, including all SARs, to the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile of local rents and are being maintained in cash terms for 2021/22.

#### ■ Local Housing Allowance: Blackpool

**Paul Maynard:** [160600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much was paid in local housing allowance in the Blackpool local authority area in financial year 2019-20.

**Will Quince:**

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit expenditure by local authority can be accessed here:

The figure is available in tab 2019-20, column U, row 49.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/921385/hb-and-ctb-by-la-2019-20.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/921385/hb-and-ctb-by-la-2019-20.ods)

#### ■ Pension Credit

**Patrick Grady:** [162649]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the level of uptake of pension credit.

**Patrick Grady:** [162650]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the need for additional measures to increase pension credit uptake.

**Guy Opperman:**

[Holding answer 8 March 2021]: The Department assesses levels of take-up of Pension Credit on an annual basis. Latest official statistics on the take-up of income-related benefits at Great Britain level, including Pension Credit, can be found in the publication 'Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up in 2018 to 2019', available at.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-2018-to-2019>

The Department continues to use available channels to promote Pension Credit and reach potential recipients, and their family and friends. This includes using proactive press activity and planned social media posts to encourage older people to check if they are eligible. As part of an internal review of communication products, we have identified improvements in our Pension Credit messaging at key customer "touchpoints" and are updating the products used to claim Attendance Allowance and Carer's Allowance accordingly. We have also improved the information about

Pension Credit in the leaflet accompanying the letters to over 11 million pensioners informing them about the increase in their State Pension from April. No assessment has been made of the need for additional measures to increase Pension Credit take-up.

## ■ Personal Independence Payment

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[161811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the reasons for the disparity between the equality impact assessment estimated 16 per cent of claimants due a backdated personal independence payment following the MH and RJ decisions and the number of people who have received those payments to date.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

Our published estimates were for the MH legal judgment only. They were produced before knowing the full detail of which claimants would be eligible for additional payments. We were clear that these estimates were very likely to change once the guidance implementing the judgment was produced and data was gathered from the administrative exercise to implement it.

## ■ Personal Independence Payment: Death

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[161812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether it is her Department's policy that a deceased claimant's next of kin are entitled to their backdated personal independence payments following the MH and RJ decisions.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

At the beginning of the administrative exercise the department had a dedicated resource for cases where the claimant was deceased to ensure their next of kin received payments as quickly as possible. Since then, regular checks are carried out for deceased claimants and these cases are prioritised for review.

## ■ Social Security Benefits

**Debbie Abrahams:**

[\[163228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants for (a) universal credit, (b) employment and support allowance and (c) personal independence payments have ceased their claims between March 2020 to present.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The information requested for Universal Credit and Employment and Support Allowance is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost. However, the latest [Universal Credit statistics: user engagement survey report](#) does include a statement, in section 4, regarding the development of Universal Credit flows data, as part of the Universal Credit statistics release strategy.

The Department publishes ESA quarterly caseload figures and UC monthly caseload figures and these can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance for users is available at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

Table 1 below shows the number of claimants receiving PIP who ceased their PIP claim each month from March 2020 to October 2020, the latest data available, who were receiving PIP at the end of the previous month.

**Table 1: Number of PIP claimants who ceased their PIP claim, March 2020 – October 2020**

MONTH	NUMBER OF PIP CLAIMS THAT ARE CEASED
Mar-20	14,270
Apr-20	16,460
May-20	8,660
Jun-20	9,120
Jul-20	7,720
Aug-20	11,610
Sep-20	11,290
Oct-20	14,930

**Source: PIP Atomic Data Store**

**Notes:**

- This is unpublished data. It should be used with caution and it may be subject to future revision. In particular, it may take some time for a death to be notified to the Department, so the figure for October 2020 is likely to increase with the inclusion of future data.
- Volumes of off-flows have fluctuated due to the Operational measures implemented in response to Covid-19. In particular, due to the suspension of Department instigated Reassessment and Review activity from March 2020 to July 2020. Planned Award Reviews restarted in July 2020.
- These data include claimants whose claim ceased as the result of an Award Review, Change of Circumstances or the claimant's death as well as for other reasons. Claimants may see their PIP claim resume as a result of a mandatory reconsideration or appeal.

- PIP data includes claimants awarded both under normal rules and special rules for terminally ill claimants.
- Claimants receiving PIP include those whose claims are in payment and those whose payment is suspended or part-suspended.
- Data covers Great Britain only.

#### ■ **Social Security Benefits: Apprentices**

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[163236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of households in which parents have had their benefit awards reduced as a result of a child starting an apprenticeship in each of the last five years.

**Will Quince:**

No such estimates have been made.

#### ■ **Social Security Benefits: Canada**

**Sir Paul Beresford:**

[\[160500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to respond to the Canadian Government's request for a reciprocal social security agreement.

**Sir Paul Beresford:**

[\[160501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with which Commonwealth countries the UK has reciprocal social security arrangements.

**Guy Opperman:**

The UK has reciprocal social security agreements, covering pensions and some other benefits, with the following Commonwealth countries: Barbados, Jamaica, Mauritius, Malta, Cyprus, Canada and New Zealand. All the agreements except for Canada and New Zealand provide for state pension up-rating.

The Department plans to respond to the request from Canada in due course.

#### ■ **Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus**

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[160745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of providing a £20 per week uplift to legacy benefits.

**Will Quince:**

The £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit was announced by the Chancellor as a temporary measure in March 2020 to support those facing the most financial disruption as a result of the public health emergency. This measure remains in place until September 2021.

The temporary Universal Credit Standard Allowance uplift was introduced to support those facing the most financial disruption due to the pandemic. There are no plans to

extend the uplift to legacy benefits. Claimants on legacy benefits can make a claim for Universal Credit (UC) if they believe that they will be better off. Claimants should check carefully their eligibility and entitlements under UC before applying as legacy benefits will end when claimants submit their claim and they will not be able to return to them in the future.

Support is also available for legacy claimants migrating across to UC. Since 22 July, a two-week run-on of Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance is paid to eligible claimants to provide additional support to move to Universal Credit.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Death

**Debbie Abrahams:**

**[162611]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants of (a) universal credit, (b) employment and support allowance and (c) personal independence payments have died between March 2020 and March 2021.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

(a) Universal Credit can be claimed by a range of working age people, some of whom have health conditions or disabilities, which may be degenerative or life limiting. The decision to claim Universal Credit can be prompted by a range of factors, including when someone is terminally ill, so mortality figures should not be viewed in isolation.

Between 1st March 2020 and 30th November 2020, 12,600 or 0.2 per cent of Universal Credit claimants died. The number of people who received Universal Credit at any point during this period was 6.2million.

(b) The information requested for Employment and Support Allowance is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

(c) Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is claimed by people with a range of health conditions and disabilities, many of which are degenerative or life limiting and the Department treats the death of any claimant sympathetically. The cause of death of claimants on PIP is not collated centrally by the Department. The decision to claim PIP can be prompted by a range of factors, including when someone is terminally ill, so mortality figures should not be viewed in isolation.

Table 1 below shows the number of claimants receiving PIP who died each month from March 2020 to October 2020, the latest data available, who were receiving PIP at the end of the previous month. Note that the numbers of PIP claimant deaths in March and April 2020 here differ to those presented previously in [PQ 59467](#), due to a methodological update.

**Table 1: Number of PIP claimants with entitlement who died each month from March 2020 – October 2020**

MONTH	NUMBER OF PIP CLAIMANT DEATHS
Mar-20	6,120
Apr-20	7,540
May-20	5,650
Jun-20	4,960
Jul-20	4,820
Aug-20	5,050
Sep-20	5,010
Oct-20	5,700

**Source: PIP ADS and Customer Information System**

**Notes:**

- This is unpublished data. It should be used with caution and it may be subject to future revision.
- PIP data includes claimants awarded both under normal rules and special rules for terminally ill claimants.
- Claimants receiving PIP include those whose claims are in payment and those whose payment is suspended or part-suspended.
- Claimants' dates of death are as recorded on the system at 5 th February 2021 and may be subject to change retrospectively.
- Data covers Great Britain only.

Under the Social Security (Notification of Deaths) Regulations 2012 and s125 of Social Security Administration Act 1992 date of death is provided to the Department for all registered deaths. Additionally, next of kin also provide information on the date of death of an individual and this information is used appropriately in the administration of Departmental benefits.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Mental Health**

**Ruth Jones:**

**[161866]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of the benefits payments process on claimants' mental health.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

We continually review our processes to ensure that benefits payments are accessible and supportive to all customers, including those with mental health conditions. We introduced mental health training in 2017 to better equip staff to signpost vulnerable customers to experts who are qualified to support them, especially when people are making new claims or being re-assessed for existing claims.

**■ State Retirement Pensions: Australia and Canada****Navendu Mishra:**[\[160835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reasons she has not had discussions with the Governments of (a) Canada and (b) Australia on up-rating UK state pensions overseas.

**Guy Opperman:**

The policy on up-rating UK State Pensions overseas is longstanding and has been supported by successive Governments for over 70 years. Annual index-linked increases are paid to UK State Pension recipients where there is a legal requirement to do so, for example where recipients are living in countries where there is a reciprocal agreement that provides for up-rating.

**■ State Retirement Pensions: EU Countries****Jack Dromey:**[\[162545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and its integrated social security protocol, provides for UK nationals who worked and accrued state pension entitlements in another EU Member State before 1 January 2021, but have not reached state pension age, to maintain their state pension rights accrued in the EU Member State, including with any indexation increases.

**Jack Dromey:**[\[162546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the reciprocal pension rights of UK and EU nationals who have yet to reach state retirement age, which were accrued in an EU Member State or in the UK before the end of the transition period, are now subject to bilateral agreements between the UK and each EU member state.

**Jack Dromey:**[\[162547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government concluded bilateral agreements with all EU Member States to ensure the continued state pension rights of UK nationals who have paid into EU Member States' pension systems.

**Jack Dromey:**[\[162548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, who will be responsible for ensuring that UK nationals do not lose state pension entitlements in the event that no reciprocal bilateral agreements on state pension entitlements are agreed with EU Member States.



**Guy Opperman:**

State pension arrangements are unchanged following the UK's Exit from the EU.

All individuals can aggregate relevant social security contributions made in EU member states towards meeting the minimum qualifying period for the UK state pension, and all UK state pension recipients in the EU will have their state pension paid (including annual increases) in line with rates in the UK. These arrangements have been agreed with the EU and all its member states on a reciprocal basis in the Withdrawal Agreement for those who moved across borders before 1 January 2021, and in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement for those who move across borders from 1 January 2021.

**■ Universal Credit****Helen Hayes:**[\[160747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent progress her Department has made on the managed migration pilot for universal credit.

**Will Quince:**

The Pilot remains suspended as the Department continues to focus on delivering its part of the Government's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Universal Credit (Managed Migration Pilot and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2019 allow the Department to pilot moving claimants to Universal Credit from legacy benefits. Prior to its suspension, the emphasis of the pilot was not to focus on the number of people moved, but to assist with developing the design of the Move to UC service and its processes, to provide the best possible support for claimants who are moved to Universal Credit.

**■ Universal Credit: Deductions****Chris Stephens:**[\[160729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claims in each parliamentary constituency had deductions taken from them by her Department in the most recent month for which that data is available; what the average size of the sums so deducted was in each of those constituencies; what the total sum so deducted from those claims was in each of those constituencies; and what proportion of each of those sums so deducted was used to repay advance payments.

**Will Quince:**

From 3rd April 2020, deductions from Universal Credit for some government debt, such as Tax Credits, benefit overpayments and Social Fund Loans were suspended for 3 months. This was done to ease the financial pressure of debt recovery on benefit claimants and to also allow Debt Management staff to be re-deployed to focus on the unprecedented volume of new claims received during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Universal Credit advance repayments are made gradually over 12 months, and deductions are capped at 30% of a claimant's standard allowance. This is further to

the reduction of the overall maximum level of deductions from 40% to 30% of the standard allowance since October 2019.

From April 2021, the repayment period will be extended from 12 months to 24 months and the deductions cap will be reduced from 30% to 25%.

For those who find themselves in unexpected hardship, advance repayments can be deferred for up to three months in certain cases.

The requested information surrounding deductions to Universal Credit payments by parliamentary constituency is shown in the attached table.

**Attachments:**

1. Attachment PQ 160729 [Universal Credit Claims with deductions.xlsx]

■ **Universal Credit: Poverty**

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[163269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect on relative poverty levels of the decision not to uprate legacy benefits in line with universal credit.

**Will Quince:**

No such assessment has been made. Poverty projections are inherently speculative as they require projecting how income will change for every individual in society which are affected by a huge range of unknown factors.

The £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit was announced by the Chancellor as a temporary measure in March 2020 to support those facing the most financial disruption as a result of the public health emergency. This measure remains in place until September 2021.

Claimants on legacy benefits can make a claim for Universal Credit (UC) if they think they will be better off and should check carefully their eligibility and entitlements for UC before applying, as legacy benefits will end when claimants submit their UC claim and they will not be able to return to them in the future. For this reason, prospective claimants are signposted to independent benefits calculators on GOV.UK. Neither DWP nor HMRC can advise individual claimants whether they would be better off moving to UC or remaining on legacy benefits.

■ **Universal Credit: Self-employed**

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[161877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has plans to renew the suspension of the minimum income floor.

**Mims Davies:**

The Chancellor announced on 3 March that the easement to the minimum income floor will be extended by a further 3 months.

## ■ Work Capability Assessment

**Kate Osamor:**

[\[160754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason it is her policy to provide virtual telephone Work Capability Assessments to people on personal independence payment who (a) require interpreters (including BSL), (b) have hearing difficulties, (c) have speech difficulties, (d) have learning disabilities and (e) have experienced suicidal ideation or behaviour and a history of self harm, and not to provide those assessments to those categories of people on universal credit and employment and support allowance.

**Bambos Charalambous:**

[\[161834\]](#)

If she will make it her policy to allow virtual or telephone Work Capability Assessments for (a) universal credit and (b) employment support allowance claimants including those who (i) need an interpreter (including BSL), (ii) have hearing difficulties, (iii) have speech difficulties, (iv) have learning disabilities and (v) suicidal ideation or behaviour and a history of self harm to make the process equivalent to that for personal independence payments.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The assessment criteria for Personal Independence Payment are very different to those for the Work Capability Assessment (WCA), which assesses whether claimants to Employment and Support Allowance, and Universal Credit have limited capability for work.

We are aware that there are some claimants who are unable to undertake a WCA telephone assessment because of their health condition and we are currently developing ways in which we can support these individuals. We are continuing to assess as many people as we are able to on paper evidence, using this route as often as possible. We are also undertaking some video assessments, where appropriate.

Individuals invited for a telephone assessment are encouraged to inform their assessment provider of any additional requirements they may have, and the provider will endeavour to meet any reasonable requests. This is explained to the individual in the initial invitation letter for all telephone assessments. For example, companions are able to join a telephone assessment, as they could for a face to face assessment.

Claimants who we are unable to assess by telephone or video because of their health condition will be prioritised when we are able to safely resume face-to-face assessments.

**Kate Osamor:**

[\[160755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for people on universal credit and employment and support allowance who have been told that they have to wait for face-to-face Work Capability Assessments to resume before they can be assessed, due to being identified as a claimant who is not suitable for a telephone consultation according to the specifications outlined in the CHDA COVID-19 Filework process document of 15 May

2020, what extra support is available to help those people manage their health condition or disability while they are without that support from their benefits income.

**Bambos Charalambous:**

[\[160762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to people on universal credit and employment and support allowance who have been told that they have to wait for face-to-face work capability assessments to resume before they can be assessed, what additional support is available to help claimants identified as not suitable for a telephone consultation, according to the specifications outlined in the CHDA COVID-19 Filework process document of 15 May 2020, to manage their health condition or disability while they are without additional support from their benefits income.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The health and safety of our claimants and staff is our key priority. We suspended all face-to-face assessments for sickness and disability benefits in March 2020. This temporary suspension, brought in to protect people from unnecessary risk of coronavirus at the outset of the pandemic, remains in place, and is being kept under review in line with the latest public health guidance.

Throughout the pandemic we have continued to assess people on paper evidence, using this route whenever possible. We are aware there are some claimants who are unable to undertake a telephone assessment because of their health condition and we are currently developing ways in which we can support these individuals. We also continue to undertake some video assessments where appropriate.

Individuals invited for a telephone assessment are encouraged to inform their assessment provider of any additional requirements they may have, and the provider will endeavour to meet any reasonable requests. This is explained to the individual in the initial invitation letter for all telephone assessments. For example, companions are able to join a telephone assessment, as they could for a face to face assessment.

Where a claimant is unable to undertake a telephone assessment because of their health condition, they remain on their current award until we are able to gather the evidence needed for a recommendation to be made or, in contributory ESA, until their benefit is due to end.

As ever, claimants should get in touch if their health condition has worsened or they are experiencing financial hardship.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

#### ■ Public Health: Redbridge

##### Wes Streeting:

[\[158137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding he has allocated to the London Borough of Redbridge through the public health grant in each year since 2010.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 9 March 2021. The correct answer should have been:**

##### Jo Churchill:

Unitary and upper tier local authorities have received a public health grant since April 2013, when they assumed responsibility for public health functions and services which had previously been undertaken by the NHS. Data prior to 2013 is therefore unavailable. A table showing the information requested from 2013 is attached. The value of the public health grant in 2013-14 and 2014-15 is not directly comparable to subsequent years, because responsibility and funding for 0-5 year olds' public health services was transferred from the National Health Service to local government from 1 October 2015.

##### Attachments:

1. [158137 Public health grant Redbridge.docx](#)

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

#### ■ Fairtrade Initiative: Trade Agreements

##### Virginia Crosbie:

[\[163332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that fair trade goods continue to have access to UK markets under new trading arrangements.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 9 March 2021. The correct answer should have been:**

##### Greg Hands:

The UK's Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and Generalised Scheme of Preferences support developing countries to export agricultural products and other goods to the UK. We have secured EPAs with 30 African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries, covering over £18bn of trade. We plan to deepen our EPA agreements and expand them to new countries in the future.

Independent certification schemes, such as Fairtrade, which set standards on social, economic and environmental issues for companies, continue to operate within the context of UK trading arrangements.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ Use of the Industrial Development Act 1982 for Coronavirus related assistance

**Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully):** [\[HCWS832\]](#)

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Hon. Members to bring to their attention spend under the Industrial Development Act 1982. In addition to the obligation to report on spend under the Industrial Development Act annually, the Coronavirus Act 2020 created a new quarterly reporting requirement for spend which has been designated as coronavirus-related under the Coronavirus Act. This statement fulfils that purpose.

The statement also includes a report of the movement in contingent liability during the quarter. Hon. Members will wish to note that measures such as Local Authority grants, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, and tax measures such as the suspension of Business Rates are not provided under the Industrial Development Act 1982 and hence are not included below.

This report covers the third quarter of 2020, from 1 July to 30 September 2020, in accordance with the Coronavirus Act. The Written Ministerial Statement covering the second quarter of 2020 was published on 18 January 2021.

#### ***Spend under the Coronavirus Act 2020***

Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, there is a requirement to lay before Parliament details of the amount of assistance designated as Coronavirus related provided in each relevant quarter. In the period from 1 July to 30 September 2020, the following expenditures were incurred:

ACTUAL EXPENDITURE OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT FROM 1 JULY – 30 SEPTEMBER 2020	
	£647,308,581

All expenditure of assistance provided by Her Majesty's Government from 25 March 2020	£694,945,581
---	--------------

#### ***Expenditure by Department***

ACTUAL EXPENDITURE OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY:	
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	£694,908,581
Competition Appeal Tribunal	£37,000



***Contingent liability under the Coronavirus Act 2020***

CONTINGENT LIABILITY OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FROM 1 JULY – 30 SEPTEMBER 2020	
	£18,985,945,140

All contingent liability of assistance provided £49,442,128,910  
by the Secretary of State from 25 March 2020

**CABINET OFFICE**■ **Update on tackling intimidation in public life**

**Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith):**

[\[HCWS833\]](#)

I wish to update hon. Members on the steps that the Government is taking to tackle intimidation in public life.

In July 2017, the then Prime Minister commissioned the Committee on Standards in Public Life to undertake a review into abuse and intimidation in elections. This followed concerning evidence from many Parliamentary candidates across the political spectrum on their experiences during the 2017 general election. The Government's response to that report in March 2018 outlined the Government's planned programme of work in the area, and the Committee has published its own follow up to its report in December 2020.

Tackling intimidation in public life also forms an important part of the Defending Democracy programme, a cross-government initiative led by the Cabinet Office.

**Protecting free speech within the law**

It is important to distinguish between strongly felt political debate on the one hand, and unacceptable acts of abuse, intimidation and violence on the other. British democracy has always been robust and oppositional.

Free speech within the law can sometimes involve the expression of political views that some may find offensive: a point that the Government has recognised in the Department for Education's policy paper, *Higher education: free speech and academic freedom* published last month. But a line is crossed when disagreement mutates into intimidation, which refuses to tolerate other opinions and seeks to deprive others from exercising their free speech and freedom of association.

**Tackling threats to MPs**

The Home Office is responding today, on behalf of Government, to the Joint Committee on Human Rights report on Democracy, Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Association: Threats to MPs.

This outlines how the Government is addressing the concerns raised in the report on:

1. The need for collaboration to tackle the issue of threats to MPs;
2. The national approach to prosecuting offences against MPs;
3. The online abuse and harassment faced by MPs; and
4. Policing around Parliament and beyond.

### **Ensuring safety of journalists**

Also today, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is publishing the first *National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists*.

The Government's aim is to ensure that journalists operating in the UK are as safe as possible; reduce the number of attacks on and threats issued to journalists; and ensure those that are responsible for such are brought to justice. In order to support this goal, it outlines how the Government is taking steps to:

1. Increase our understanding of the problem;
2. Enhance the criminal justice system response in tackling crimes against journalists;
3. Support journalists and their employers to build the resources they need to protect personal safety;
4. Help online platforms to tackle the wider issue of abuse online; and
5. Improve public recognition of the value of journalists.

### **Preventing intimidation in elections**

In due course, the Government will legislate to introduce a new electoral sanction of intimidation against those who participate in elections and contribute to the political debate, including candidates and campaigners. This new sanction complements the existing offence of undue influence against electors.

Under this new electoral sanction, someone convicted of intimidating a candidate, future candidate, campaigner or elected representative will face a ban on standing for and holding elective office for five years. This five-year disqualification is in addition to the substantive punishment for the underlying existing criminal offences of an intimidatory nature. It is simply not right that those who seek to damage free, fair and vibrant political participation should then be allowed to participate in the very same process they sought to undermine.

We have already updated electoral law to ensure local candidates can choose for their home address to not be made public; the local authority area in which they live can appear on the ballot paper instead.

The Government will also be legislating to require imprints on digital campaigning material. Whilst this will increase transparency in modern campaigning, it will also ensure greater scrutiny and accountability of those who promote material, including third party campaigners. The Cabinet Office has undertaken two separate consultations on this area, as it is complex. We need to be mindful not to impose excessive regulation of free

speech by individuals, nor force campaigners to publish their home addresses as part of the imprint requirement.

The Government will also legislate to clarify and improve the offence of undue influence of a voter. We want to ensure that the offence offers adequate protection for electors to be free from undue influence and that the offence is effective for enforcement agencies. This reflects recommendations made by the (then Sir) Lord Pickles review into electoral fraud, following the 2015 election court relating to elections in Tower Hamlets.

### **Parties leading on codes of conduct and support**

The Government response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life report asserted that all political parties should put in place their own individual, tailored code of conduct which sets out the standards of behaviour expected of their party members and representatives. All of the political parties represented in the House of Commons now have in place their own code of conduct.

The Government did not, and does not, support a joint code. This is impractical given there are over 300 registered political parties, and since joint codes may fuel and encourage the issuing of politically vexatious and unfounded complaints.

Many parties have significantly increased their support for elected representatives who face abuse.

### **Providing guidance for MPs**

The Government has worked with the Law Officers to publish new guidance from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) on the laws on intimidation, and the wide range of areas in which intimidation can be prosecuted under existing laws. This has been complemented by police guidance from the National Police Chiefs' Council.

For hon. Members who have not previously read the CPS guidance, it can be found at:

*Responding to intimidating behaviour: Information for Parliamentarians* : ( <https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/Responding-to-intimidating-behaviour-04-2019.pdf> ).

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), CPS, College of Policing and Electoral Commission have also issued *Joint Guidance for Candidates in Elections*, which is distributed by the Electoral Commission:

[https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf\\_file/Joint-Guidance-for-Candidates-in-Elections.pdf](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf_file/Joint-Guidance-for-Candidates-in-Elections.pdf)

### **Action on online communications**

The Government has published its full response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation. The response confirms that Ofcom will be named as the independent regulator, who will oversee the regulatory framework, setting clear safety standards, backed up by mandatory reporting requirements and strong enforcement powers to deal with non-compliance. Legislation will follow in due course.

We expect companies to take action now, ahead of the regulatory framework coming into force. We have set out steps that we expect companies to take across a range of harms

on a voluntary basis ahead of legislation being finalised. These include ensuring products and services are safe by design and that users who have experienced harm are directed to, and are able to receive, adequate support. While it is not for the Government to dictate how companies allocate resources internally, we have been clear that platforms need to do significantly more to address online abuse.

We are also ensuring that the criminal law is fit for purpose to deal with online abuse. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Ministry of Justice engaged the Law Commission on a second phase of their review of abusive and offensive online communications. This included considering whether co-ordinated harassment by groups of people online could be more effectively dealt with by the criminal law. The Law Commission has now consulted on proposed recommendations for reform. They will provide final recommendations in 2021, which we will carefully consider.

The Government is engaging with international partners to promote international consensus on what constitutes hate crime and intimidation online. The Government is currently working with international partners on this issue in the Council of Europe.

I hope this outlines how the Government is continuing to work to deliver its commitments to tackle intimidation in public life. The Government is open and receptive to ideas from hon. Members and other elected representatives on what further steps can be taken to protect the exercise of free speech and democratic representation across the United Kingdom.

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists

**Minister of State for Media and Data (Mr John Whittingdale):**

**[\[HCWS830\]](#)**

Today, the government will publish the UK's first National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists. This ambitious document is intended to ensure that journalists operating in the UK can do so free from abuse, violence and threats of harm. This government is committed to a free and open media. In order to protect this, journalists must be free to carry out their vital roles free from threats and violence. Threats to journalists' safety are not just threats to individuals - such threats lead to journalists leaving the profession, and to self-censorship of those that remain. Without action in this area, there will be less challenge to those in power, and weaker democracy. This work is critical in its own right, and it will also serve to support the ongoing work by the Government to tackle intimidation in public life. An update on this is also being published today.

The Plan has been produced by members of the National Committee for Safety of Journalists, established in 2020, chaired by relevant Home Office and DCMS ministers, and comprising representatives of police and prosecutors from across the UK, as well as publishers, broadcasters, groups representing journalists and non governmental organisations.

It focuses on five key areas: increasing our understanding of the problem; enhancing the criminal justice system response in tackling crimes against journalists; supporting

journalists and their employers to build the resources they need to protect personal safety; and helping online platforms to tackle the wider issue of online abuse, and improving public recognition of the value of journalists. It makes a range of commitments from government, law enforcement agencies and industry. These include a plan to launch a call for evidence into the scale of the threats facing journalists, the police working with the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) to provide training on police operations for journalists and the provision of guidance to help journalists understand the law in this area by the Media Lawyers Association.

The Committee will hold its members to account for the delivery of these commitments while the Action Plan and its impact will be reviewed regularly and updated if and when appropriate.

A copy of the Action Plan will be placed in the House Libraries.

**Attachments:**

1. Action Plan [National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists.pdf]

**Minister of State for Media and Data (Mr John Whittingdale):**

**[HCWS831]**

Today, the government will publish the UK's first National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists. This ambitious document is intended to ensure that journalists operating in the UK can do so free from abuse, violence and threats of harm. This government is committed to a free and open media. In order to protect this, journalists must be free to carry out their vital roles free from threats and violence. Threats to journalists' safety are not just threats to individuals - such threats lead to journalists leaving the profession, and to self-censorship of those that remain. Without action in this area, there will be less challenge to those in power, and weaker democracy. This work is critical in its own right, and it will also serve to support the ongoing work by the Government to tackle intimidation in public life. An update on this is also being published today.

The Plan has been produced by members of the National Committee for Safety of Journalists, established in 2020, chaired by relevant Home Office and DCMS ministers, and comprising representatives of police and prosecutors from across the UK, as well as publishers, broadcasters, groups representing journalists and non governmental organisations.

It focuses on five key areas: increasing our understanding of the problem; enhancing the criminal justice system response in tackling crimes against journalists; supporting journalists and their employers to build the resources they need to protect personal safety; and helping online platforms to tackle the wider issue of online abuse, and improving public recognition of the value of journalists. It makes a range of commitments from government, law enforcement agencies and industry. These include a plan to launch a call for evidence into the scale of the threats facing journalists, the police working with the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) to provide training on police operations for journalists and the provision of guidance to help journalists understand the law in this area by the Media Lawyers Association.

The Committee will hold its members to account for the delivery of these commitments while the Action Plan and its impact will be reviewed regularly and updated if and when appropriate.

A copy of the Action Plan will be placed in the House Libraries.

**Attachments:**

1. Action Plan [National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists.pdf]

## EDUCATION

### ■ Children's Social Care Update

**The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families (Vicky Ford):**  
[\[HCWS835\]](#)

Extension of temporary regulations to support children's social care during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Government has consistently put protecting the most vulnerable at the forefront of our actions. The duties to our most vulnerable children, which are set out in primary legislation, all remain in place. This statutory framework enables the most effective support and protection to children and their families, by local authorities, local safeguarding partners and other services. However, the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, has required the Government to introduce a number of amendments to secondary legislation to ensure that children and families can be supported in the best way possible despite the restrictions in place across society.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the Government introduced a series of temporary changes to the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations to support children's social care services. These changes provided flexibilities to local authorities and other children's social care settings, in the event that services suffered from high levels of staff absence or an increased need for services supporting vulnerable children. We made no amendments to primary legislation, and the vast majority of statutory duties in secondary legislation remained unchanged.

Over the summer we reviewed these flexibilities and decided that only a small number continued to be needed. Following a consultation, a second set of regulations with fewer flexibilities – the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations – came into force in September 2020. These are due to lapse on 31 March 2021.

The extraordinary measures the Government has taken over the last year means that we are now in a much better position to ease the restrictions that everyone has faced in the coming months. However, the challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic remain significant and Government believes that there may be circumstances in which some services continue to face specific and exceptional challenges into Spring/Summer. As more children are seen by schools, and national restrictions ease further and hitherto

hidden harms may come to light, we must be prepared for the potential additional demands that may still be placed on services.

We therefore went out to public consultation on 9 February to seek views on whether to extend all the existing flexibilities for a further six months, up to September 2021, and whether to amend arrangements for healthcare assessments in adoption. This statement updates the House on the outcome of that consultation.

The consultation closed on 28 February and a total of 212 responses were received. Officials engaged with stakeholders, including local authorities, charities, children's rights organisations and other government departments and captured the views of children and young people directly.

The majority of respondents agreed with our proposals to extend the existing flexibilities in relation to virtual visits, medical reports (for fostering and adoption) and the minimum frequency of Ofsted inspections of children's social care provision. I am therefore today laying regulations before the House to that effect. This means that:

- General Practitioners and other health professionals will continue to be given more time to provide information to support the process of approving much needed potential adopters and foster carers. This does not remove the requirement for medical reports to be provided before the child is placed with the foster parent or adoptive parent, but allows some flexibility as to when in the process the report is required.
- Social workers will continue to be able to carry out virtual, rather than face-to face visits in some limited circumstances. The regulations and guidance are clear that virtual visits should only happen when face to face visits would be contrary to public health advice, or where face to face visits would otherwise not be reasonably practicable as a result of coronavirus.
- The requirement for a minimum frequency of Ofsted inspections for all children's social care providers will continue to be suspended for six months, until 30 September 2021. Extending the flexibility will enable Ofsted to use their resources under existing inspection powers to carry out inspections to as many providers as possible, prioritised on a risk-assessed basis. It is important to note that extending this flexibility does not prevent Ofsted from inspecting services or change their inspection powers, it only affects the frequency with which they must inspect.

Alongside the regulations, I am today publishing the Government's response to the consultation, setting out more detail on each flexibility, the rationale for our approach and the views received.

As part of the consultation, we also asked for views on two new proposals in relation to adoption: to allow medical reports to be completed by other qualified medical professionals and to remove the requirement for a full medical examination. While a majority agreed with the first proposal, there were a greater number who disagreed with the second proposal, and concerns were raised in relation to safeguarding. This is an area on which the Government places paramount importance and we therefore want to



give this further reflection. We are therefore not proceeding with these additional flexibilities at this time.

Protecting vulnerable children has been at the heart of the Government's response to the virus. These regulations formed part of that response, alongside keeping schools and other settings open for vulnerable children, substantial additional investment in local authority services and additional support direct to children, young people, and their families. The Government is clear that these flexibilities will only remain in place for as long as they are needed and there currently are no plans to extend them beyond 30 September 2021. Their use will continue to be monitored and they will be reviewed in line with the Government roadmap to recovery. Our [guidance](#) sets out clear safeguards about how and when they should be used.

Since the introduction of the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2020 we have kept the flexibilities under constant review. Data for the period from 25 September to 24 November 2020 suggested that over half of local authorities were using both the existing temporary flexibilities (to enable virtual visits and to allow greater time to provide a medical report for a prospective foster carer or adopter). Out of 113 LAs that we had spoken to over 90 LAs had made use of the regulations. The most used related to virtual engagement with children and families – this had often been used alongside face-to-face visits and, in some cases, this has resulted in greater levels of contact between children, young people, parents, and carers – and improved engagement from some young people. We will continue to monitor the usage of the flexibilities through monitoring information collected from the Regional Educational and Care Teams and delivery partners.

### **Medical Reports**

In order to become a foster carer or adoptive parent, one needs to provide a medical report from a General Practitioner. As restrictions are eased and schools return, we expect that there may be more children needing care than is usual, and therefore there will be a higher need for potential adopters and foster carers. Our National Health Service (NHS) continues to face unprecedented challenges during the ongoing pressure from the pandemic. This is unlikely to ease for some time, even when the country enters a period of recovery. Therefore, I am minded to extend the amendments that allow more time for General Practitioners and other health professionals to provide information to support the process of approving much needed potential adopters and foster carers. This does not remove the requirement for medical reports to be provided but moves the time during the process that the report must be provided before the child is placed with the foster parent or adoptive parent.

### **Virtual Visits**

We must be able to keep essential services, such as social worker visits, operating during any local lockdowns, and in cases where households are being required to self-isolate due to a case, or suspected case, of COVID-19, or contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, in line with medical advice from the NHS test and trace service. The Government recognises that visits by social workers to looked after children provide

important opportunities to consider children and young people's safety and wellbeing and that virtual visits may not always provide the best conditions. We have been clear in the consultation and in our guidance that visits should happen, whenever possible, face to face. The regulations and guidance explicitly provide that virtual visits should only happen when face to face visits would be contrary to public health advice, or where face to face visits would otherwise not be reasonably practicable as a result of coronavirus.

The Government also recognises the importance of ensuring that social workers are well equipped to use virtual visits effectively. Therefore, I am suggesting that it is appropriate to continue to enable visits in these situations to happen virtually. However, in all other situations I would expect face to face visits to take place.

### **Ofsted inspections of children's social care providers**

The Government and Ofsted are keen that routine inspections of children's social care providers are resumed as soon as it is safe to do so. At present, Ofsted inspection frequency cycles are suspended due to COVID-19, although it is continuing to register social care providers and managers, and to monitor children's homes where there are safeguarding concerns. Therefore, I am minded to extend the suspension of the requirement for a minimum frequency of Ofsted inspections for all children's social care providers to be extended for six months, until 30 September 2021. Extending the flexibility will enable Ofsted to use their resources under existing inspection powers to carry out inspections to as many providers as possible, prioritised on a risk-assessed basis.

It is important to note that extending this flexibility does not prevent Ofsted from inspecting services or change their inspection powers, it only affects the frequency with which they must inspect. During the COVID-19 pandemic Ofsted is aiming to restart graded inspections from April although they will balance this with the nature and extent of any COVID-19 restrictions that might be in place moving into the 2021-22 inspection year.

Throughout this pandemic, social workers, charities, and others working to support our most vulnerable children and families have worked tirelessly to ensure that they continue to receive the support they need. I would like to place on record my personal gratitude, and that of the whole Government, for everything they have done and continue to do. I would also like to acknowledge the extremely difficult circumstances many children and families have faced during this pandemic.

Protecting vulnerable children remains our top priority, as it does for local authorities and children's social care providers across the country. As the country begins to return to a more normal way of life, it is absolutely right that this also applies to children's social care.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill: Home Office Measures**

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):** [\[HCWS834\]](#)

This Government was elected on a clear manifesto commitment to make our country safer. This means backing our police and preventing and cutting crime.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, introduced today, will do this by: equipping police officers with the powers and tools they need to keep themselves and all of us safe; putting the Police Covenant into law; tackling unauthorised traveller encampments; requiring schools, police, councils and health authorities to work together through Violence Reduction Units to prevent serious crime; and empowering the police by a new court order to target known knife carriers, making it easier for officers to stop and search those convicted of knife crime.

This joint Bill also contains a number of Ministry of Justice-led measures, set out in a written ministerial statement by the Lord Chancellor.

The Home Office-led measures in the Bill will:

- a) Establish a duty on the Home Secretary to publish an annual report on the work undertaken against delivery of the Police Covenant (the response to our consultation was published on 8 September 2020 ( [HCWS438](#) ));
- b) Enable special constables to join the Police Federation of England and Wales;
- c) Amend the definitions of dangerous and careless driving in road traffic legislation so that the skills and training of police officers can be taken into account should there be any subsequent investigations into their actions (the response to our consultation was published on 2 May 2019 ( [HCWS1536](#) ));
- d) Introduce a new duty on specified authorities and bodies delivering public services to collaborate with each other to prevent and reduce serious violence (the response to our consultation was published on 15 July 2019 ( [HCWS1721](#) ));
- e) Place a duty on the relevant chief officer of police, local authority and clinical commissioning group or local health board to undertake a homicide review of the circumstances of the death of a person aged 18 or over which involved an offensive weapon;
- f) Reform pre-charge bail to better protect vulnerable victims and witnesses (the response to our consultation was published on 14 January 2021 ( [HCWS708](#) ));
- g) Establish a statutory framework for the extraction of information from digital devices for the purposes of the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of crime, safeguarding purposes and the purposes of investigating deaths;
- h) Extend the offence of arranging or facilitating the commission of a child sex offence to cover a wider range of preparatory conduct in respect of sex offences committed against children under 13;

- i) Amend the Crime (Overseas Production Orders) Act 2019 to ensure that it operates effectively to give the police and prosecutors the power to obtain faster access to electronic data held overseas;
- j) Streamline the police powers to require a convicted person to attend a police station for the purposes of taking their fingerprints, non-intimate samples and photographs;
- k) Confer powers on the police to obtain information about the location of human remains where there is no on-going criminal investigation;
- l) Strengthen police powers to tackle non-violent protests that have a significant disruptive effect on the public or on access to Parliament;
- m) Strengthen police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments, where trespassers cause distress and misery to local communities and businesses (the response to our consultation was being published on 8 March 2021 ( [HCWS826](#) ));
- n) Place on a statutory footing the police's powers to charge for the provision of retraining courses for those admitting to low-level driving offences and clarify their powers to charge for the removal of abandoned vehicles or those causing an obstruction;
- o) Introduce Serious Violence Reduction Orders to confer on the police new targeted stop and search powers to tackle knife crime offenders (the response to the consultation is being published today – see below);
- p) Strengthen the management of sex offenders, including by enabling positive obligations and electronic monitoring requirements to be imposed on those who pose a risk through Sexual Harm Prevention Orders and Sexual Risk Orders;
- q) Strengthen the management of terrorism risk offenders on licence in the community by introducing new police powers of premises and personal search and an urgent power of arrest, implementing recommendations made by Jonathan Hall QC, following his independent review of multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) ( [HCWS686](#) ).

To support the parliamentary scrutiny of the Bill, we are publishing on gov.uk the following documents:

- Overarching Impact Assessment covering the Home Office and two Department for Transport measures;
- Impact Assessment on the reforms to pre-charge bail;
- Impact Assessment on the new serious violence duty;
- Delegated Powers memorandum;
- ECHR memorandum; and
- Fact sheets.

### **Serious Violence Reduction Orders**

Today we are also publishing the Government's response to the consultation on Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs) which ran from 14 September to 8 November 2020.

We have received responses from the public, police, charities and other organisations and I am grateful to all those who provided responses.

SVROs are being introduced through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. SVROs will help the police to tackle knife crime by giving them additional powers to stop and search adults convicted of knife and offensive weapons offences. The orders, one of the tools that the police will be able to use as part of a wider approach to reducing serious violence and saving young lives, are intended to be a powerful deterrent. They will send a clear signal to offenders that if they persist in carrying knives, that they will be caught. Every offender issued with a SVRO will face an increased likelihood of being stopped by the police and if they continue to carry weapons, they will be sent back to prison or brought before the court, where they can expect to receive an immediate custodial sentence under the existing “two strikes” legislation brought by the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015. Targeted use of stop and search, as part of a wider approach to intervene and support offenders, aims to help to safeguard those communities and individuals most at risk. To ensure that SVROs operate as effectively as possible, we will pilot SVROs in one or more police forces before a decision is made on national roll out.

The response to the consultation will be available at gov.uk. A copy will also be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

## JUSTICE

### ■ **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill: Ministry of Justice measures**

**The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland):**  
[\[HCWS836\]](#)

This government was elected on a clear manifesto commitment to make our country safer. This means toughening sentences for the worst crimes and bringing offenders to justice swiftly through an efficient court system.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, introduced today, will do this by: introducing tougher sentencing for the worst offenders and ending automatic halfway release from prison for serious crimes; creating robust and effective community sentences; enabling the trialling of secure schools; increasing the use of technology in courts; and improving employment opportunities for ex-offenders. This joint Bill also contains a number of Home Office-led measures, set out in a written statement by the Home Secretary.

The Ministry of Justice-led measures in the Bill will:

1. Deliver on commitments made in the Sentencing White Paper, ‘ [A Smarter Approach to Sentencing](#) ’, announced to the House on [16 September 2020](#), which will reform the sentencing and release framework, so that we have a system that takes account of the true nature of crimes and protects the public from harm.
2. Ensure serious criminals spend longer in custody, including: ending the automatic halfway release point from prison for an additional cohort of serious sexual and

violent offenders; making a Whole Life Order the starting point for the premeditated murder of a child; instead of a life sentence with the possibility of Parole Board release after the minimum term is served; and preventing the automatic early release of prisoners who become of significant public protection concern while in custody.

3. Make community sentences more effective so that they offer an appropriate level of punishment and address the underlying drivers of offending, including: piloting a problem-solving court approach for certain community and suspended sentence orders; improving national consistency for adult Out Of Court Disposals; and extending the use of Electronic Monitoring.
4. Reduce the time periods after which some criminal sentences become spent, aiding rehabilitation by helping offenders to move on with their lives.
5. Deliver on the government's longstanding commitment to increase the maximum penalties for causing death by dangerous driving and for causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drinks or drugs. It will also introduce a new offence of causing serious injury by careless driving.
6. Double the maximum penalty for assaulting an emergency worker from 12 months to two years to ensure that the courts have the necessary powers to deal effectively with offenders who use violence against emergency workers.
7. Strengthen alternatives to custody for children who have offended which promote rehabilitation, and raise the threshold for custodial remand, while at the same time ensuring that children who commit serious offences and pose a risk to the public receive sentences that reflect the seriousness of their offending.
8. Empower future providers of Secure Schools, which represent our vision for the future of youth custody— schools with security, rather than prisons with education: with education, healthcare and purposeful activity at their heart.
9. Enable Prisoner Escort and Custody Service officers to manage Video Remand Hearings in police stations to continue to make the best use of technology and improve future efficiency.
10. Replace the current emergency provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020, which extend the use of video and audio hearings to enable more participants to attend criminal hearings remotely. We will always ensure a full hearing in court will be available when needed in the interests of justice.
11. Introduce measures to facilitate the remote observation of proceedings across the courts and tribunals using video and audio links underpinning the principle of open justice. These measures will also provide the necessary safeguards against the recording or broadcasting of proceedings by participants and observers.
12. Enable British Sign Language interpreters to be present in the jury deliberation room, meaning that profoundly deaf individuals are not prevented from participating in jury service.

13. Extend the scope of positions of trust legislation, which currently covers a number of statutory roles such as teachers and social workers, to include those who knowingly carry out certain activities within religious and sports settings, such as faith leaders or sports coaches.
14. Toughen the law where criminal damage of less than £5,000 is caused to a memorial by increasing the maximum sentence from three months to 10 years imprisonment. This brings it in line with criminal damage of £5,000 or more and ensures our courts have sufficient sentencing powers to punish the emotional harm caused by this type of offending even when the financial impact may be low.

To support the parliamentary scrutiny of the Bill, we are publishing on GOV.UK the following documents:

- Impact assessments covering sentencing, courts and criminal law;
- Delegated Powers memorandum;
- ECHR memorandum; and
- Fact sheets.