



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 15 March 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:37 P.M., 15 March 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Advanced Research and Invention Agency: Finance**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[166409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 157102 on Advanced Research and Invention Agency: Expenditure, when year on year funding allocations for the new Advanced Research and Innovation Agency will be announced; and whether work is taking place on (a) the design of and (b) recruitment to the Agency in the absence of those funding allocations.

Amanda Solloway:

In the single year Spending Review covering financial year 2021-2022, the Government committed to provide the first £50 million in funding for ARIA related activities, and a total £800 million investment by 2024-25.

The precise year-on-year allocations for ARIA after 2021-22 will be determined for, and announced in, forthcoming Spending Reviews.

BEIS officials have been working on the high-level design features of ARIA to support delivery of the ARIA Bill, and delivery of a forthcoming framework agreement between ARIA and BEIS. This said, it is by design that certain operational details are left at the discretion of the independent body.

■ **Companies: Meetings**

Helen Hayes:

[\[166498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2021 to Question 146962 on Companies: Meetings, whether a legislative framework is in place to allow company AGMs to be held (a) virtually or (b) on a hybrid virtual/physical model under the current covid-19 restrictions; and in the event that it is not possible to hold virtual or hybrid AGMs, what guidance he is making available to companies on the safety of physical AGMs during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Companies Act 2006 establishes the framework within which public and traded private companies are required to hold annual general meetings, including where electronic means are deployed. It is ultimately for companies to determine how to balance the requirements of that framework against those of the coronavirus restrictions that pertain to the date of the meeting concerned. The Department has been working with the Financial Reporting Council, the Chartered Governance Institute (ICSA), legal firms and others to facilitate discussions about how companies can strike the right balance. ICSA has recently published guidance to assist companies in this regard.

■ Companies: Registration

Bambos Charalambous: [\[166512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the Government plans to publish a response to the Corporate Transparency and Register Reform: Powers of the Registrar consultation.

Paul Scully:

Our consultation on the powers of the Registrar of Companies closed on 3 February 2021, and I am grateful to the many respondents who took the time to provide us with their views. These are being considered at present and we will publish a response in due course.

■ Energy: Meters

Andy McDonald: [\[166445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to remove meter readers from the list of people permitted to work in other people's homes during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Government guidance on the current national restrictions enables tradespeople, such as meter readers and smart meter installers, to work in peoples' homes if it is a necessary part of their job. The Government is clear that businesses in certain sectors can remain open if they can adhere to Safer Working guidance. When visiting peoples' homes, tradespeople should follow the [guidance](#) and take appropriate Covid-19 secure precautions.

■ Free Zones: Trade Unions

Andy McDonald: [\[166448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on trades union recognition within freeports.

Paul Scully:

Freeports are not deregulatory and the government will ensure that the UK's high standards with respect to workers' rights will not be compromised. Therefore the UK's trade union rights will apply to freeports.

The UK takes a voluntarist approach in relation to industrial relations. Collective bargaining is largely a matter for individual employers, their employees and their trade unions. It is therefore for individual employers to decide whether they wish to recognise a trade union for collective bargaining purposes.

■ Housing: Carbon Emissions

Olivia Blake: [\[166610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) increasing the level 2 NVQ qualification required for construction workers working on green retrofit and (b) mandating that a higher level technician be required onsite.

Olivia Blake: [\[166611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that construction workers involved in green retrofitting are given adequate on the job training.

Olivia Blake: [\[166612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a skills framework in consultation with trade unions and professional bodies to develop the skills of construction workers working on green retrofit projects.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) launched a £6.9m skills competition in September to provide training opportunities for energy efficiency and low carbon heating supply chains to deliver works and scale up to meet additional consumer demand. Funding is provided to support training individuals with existing skills and those new to the sector in energy efficiency and clean heat measures, along with support for installation companies to gain the required PAS 2030 standards or Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) accreditation, including possible contribution to certification costs.

A number of training providers have now started training, offering free or subsidised courses covering a wide range of skills and certifications across both energy efficiency and clean heat measures. More information regarding the skills competition can be found [here](#), with a webpage with links to training provider websites [here](#).

The Government is investing in the UK workforce to ensure that people have the right skills and qualifications to deliver the low-carbon transition and thrive in the high-value jobs this will create. BEIS and the Department for Education (DfE) are jointly leading work to consider the skills and jobs needed to help deliver net zero, including green retrofit skills. The [Green Jobs Taskforce](#) is working with industry, unions and providers to develop solutions and recommendations that will be refined into a shortlist of high impact actions that will make up a final Green Jobs Action Plan (February 2021 to April 2021).

■ Industry: Carbon Emissions

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[166294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Clean Growth Grand Challenge Missions that flowed from the Industrial Strategy remain Government policy.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

'Build Back Better: our plan for growth' sets out the Government's new framework for how the UK will build back better and drive longer-term growth following COVID-19. The plan, and its range of supporting strategies, take forward the best elements of the Industrial Strategy within a new approach that reflects the changed context since 2017. As part of this transition, we will consider how best to evolve the 2017 Grand Challenges and missions within a forthcoming Innovation Strategy; ensuring any renewed approach is responsive to, and able to effectively deliver current priorities – including our climate and clean growth commitments.

■ Knowledge Economy and Technology: Employment

Rachel Reeves:

[\[166397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the the geographical spread of technology and knowledge economy jobs by region of the UK.

Amanda Solloway:

There is no single accepted definition of knowledge economy jobs. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes workforce jobs by region and industry in its JOBS05 dataset, and more detail is available through Nomis official labour market statistics at [:https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/).

Separately the ONS publishes a country and region breakdown of business R&D employment in table 18 of the annual release on research and development performed in UK businesses (BERD). The rounded aggregate figures for 2019 were:

	FULL TIME EQUIVALENT
	Total
United Kingdom	263,000
North East	6,000
North West	20,000
Yorkshire and the Humber	14,000
East Midlands	20,000
West Midlands	26,000

	FULL TIME EQUIVALENT
East of England	42,000
London	31,000
South East	50,000
South West	22,000
England	232,000
Wales	7,000
Scotland	15,000
Northern Ireland	9,000

■ Research: Coronavirus

Chi Onwurah:

[\[166413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on levels of private sector research and development; and whether that effect will impact on the Government's 2.4 per cent research and development spending target.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government is monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on private sector research and development through surveys - such as the Enterprise Research Centre's work on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the status of Innovate UK award holders, published at <https://www.enterpriseresearch.ac.uk/publications/assessing-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-innovate-uk-award-holders-survey-and-case-study-evidence-wave-2-october-november-2020/> .

Office for National Statistics data on R&D performed in UK Businesses in 2020 is planned for release toward the end of 2021. This will help us to assess the effect of the pandemic on R&D investment levels.

We remain committed to increasing UK investment in R&D to 2.4% of GDP by 2027. The Government set out plans at Spending Review to invest £14.6 billion in R&D in 2021/22.

Leveraging investment from the private sector will be vital to reach the 2.4% target and achieve our ambitions for innovation. The Government has already set out at Budget a range of measures to boost private investment in research and development, including a review of R&D tax reliefs, supported by a consultation with stakeholders, and £375 million to introduce Future Fund: Breakthrough, a new direct co-investment product to support the scale up of the most innovative, R&D-intensive

businesses. These developments will complement our existing incentives for private R&D investment.

As set out in 'Building Back Better: our Plan for Growth', we are developing an Innovation Strategy, which will be published in the summer. The Strategy will consider how we can boost innovation across the UK economy to increase productivity and tackle our biggest social and economic challenges.

■ Research: Employment

Rachel Reeves:

[\[166399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the geographical spread of research and development spending by (a) region and (b) local authority of the UK.

Amanda Solloway:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes a country and region breakdown of R&D spending in table 6 of the annual release on UK gross domestic expenditure on research and development (GERD). The aggregate figures for 2018 were:

CURRENT PRICES	£ MILLION
	Total
United Kingdom	37,072
North East	780
North West	2,950
Yorkshire and the Humber	1,641
East Midlands	2,209
West Midlands	3,285
East of England	6,598
London	5,886
South East	7,029
South West	2,483
England	32,862
Wales	786
Scotland	2,706
Northern Ireland	715

The ONS does not publish a breakdown of R&D spending by local authority area.

HM Revenue and Customs publish a breakdown of corporate R&D tax credit claims by county and unitary authority area at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/878879/200408- R_D_Supplementary_final_tables.xlsx, though those numbers are distorted by headquarters reporting effects, since the local and regional allocation is based on the postcode of the company's registered address, which might not correspond to where the R&D activity takes place.

■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes:

[\[166497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the level of risk to shop workers of covid-19; and what discussions he is having with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the prioritisation of shop workers in the next phase of the covid-19 vaccine rollout.

Paul Scully:

Throughout the pandemic, we have taken evidence from SAGE, as well as research by Public Health England, statistics published by the ONS and the international scientific literature into account when making decisions.

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

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI identified that the vaccination of frontline healthcare workers was a priority for the COVID-19 vaccination programme, due to the high risk of acquiring COVID-19 infection and also transmitting that infection to those vulnerable to COVID-19 and other staff. We continue to be guided by the JCVI on the order in which people will be offered the vaccine.

■ Rolls Royce: Employment

Paul Blomfield:

[\[166401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support jobs at the Rolls Royce Advanced Blade Casting Facility at the Advanced Manufacturing Park.

Paul Scully:

The Government's extensive business support measures such as job retention CBILs, and Bounce Back loans have helped companies protect work and jobs in the UK. The aerospace industry and its aviation customers are being supported with

around £11bn made available through loan guarantees, support for exporters, the Covid Corporate Financing Facility, and grants for research and development.

Rolls-Royce has made clear that the restructuring reflects the change in medium-term market conditions which have been impacted by the global COVID19 pandemic and is about the survival of the company and securing its long-term, sustainable future.

Rolls-Royce has reopened a voluntary severance scheme and has offered impacted staff job opportunities at alternative sites in the area. If necessary, the Government will work with Rolls-Royce to make sure that those who lose their jobs are supported, and to help them get back into alternative employment as quickly as possible, particularly through the services of DWP and Job Centre Plus.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Blood: Contamination**

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[165466\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress has been made on ensuring that access to the infected blood support schemes is fair and equal throughout the UK.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[165467\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department has taken to include bereaved parents and children in the infected blood support schemes.

Penny Mordaunt:

Work is currently underway across government to address the concerns of people infected and affected by infected blood, and the House will be updated shortly.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[166343\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent progress has been made in making long-term, specialist psychological support available to people infected or affected by the contaminated blood scandal.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[166344\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to provide additional funding to (a) Scotland, (b) Wales and (c) Northern Ireland to support improvements and equality in the infected blood support schemes.

Penny Mordaunt:

Work is currently underway across government to address the concerns of people infected and affected by infected blood, and the House will be updated shortly.

■ Border and Protocol Delivery Group**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[165678\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to use the work of the Border Protocol Delivery Group to inform the UK's trade policy and arrangements with the EU.

Penny Mordaunt:

The terms of our future trading relationship with the EU are set out in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement that we agreed last year. The Border and Protocol Delivery Group, part of the Cabinet Office, are responsible for coordinating the Government's approach to the border, both in relation to our leaving the EU and in developing our longer term strategy for the most effective border in the world. Insights generated by the work of the BPDG are being and will continue to be used to inform our policy towards the EU in the normal way.

■ Civil Servants: South Yorkshire**Dan Jarvis:** [R] [\[165543\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Government has to relocate civil servants to South Yorkshire.

Julia Lopez:

The Government has committed to ensuring that the administration of Government is less Whitehall-centric with 22,000 civil service roles relocating to the regions and nations of the UK by the end of the decade. As you are aware, HMT and MHCLG both announced their relocation plans in the last few weeks. The Places for Growth programme is working with departments on their relocation plans to ensure a broad geography of the UK is benefiting from this agenda. Further announcements will be made in due course.

■ Coronavirus: Chess**Darren Jones:** [\[158160\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Prime Minister's roadmap to ease covid-19 lockdown restrictions, published on 22 February 2021, what his planned timescale is for permitting (a) chess clubs and (b) chess competitions to resume their activities.

Penny Mordaunt:

On 22 February the Government published it's 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021' roadmap to recovery.

Chess clubs and other social clubs can take place in line with the social contact limits at each step.

In regards to chess competitions, indoor events that bring people from different households together must not run until Step 3 (no earlier than 17th May), unless there is an explicit exemption. However, from 29 March we will allow limited

gatherings outdoors of up to 6 people, or in a larger group if everyone present is from the same two households. A 'household' can include the support bubble linked to that household [if eligible].

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 our country.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Jack Lopresti:

[\[166393\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to (a) make information on covid-19 published on Government websites accessible to people for whom English is not their first language and (b) broadcast information on covid-19 on the (i) Punjab Akaal Channel and (ii) other alternative language channels.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to PQ [144853](#) on 1 February 2021.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Ms Harriet Harman:

[\[161667\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Covid-19 Operations Committee is taking to ensure that local authorities are adequately resourced to tackle covid-19 vaccine safety concerns.

Penny Mordaunt:

We are working at pace to tackle vaccine misinformation and reassure all citizens of vaccine safety and efficacy. The Government has shared social media content and used prominent figures, including actors and experts such as the Chief Medical Officers to drive that message.

Working with the Cabinet Office, vaccine communications from DHSC have appeared in 600 national, regional, local and specialist titles, including BAME media for Asian, Bangladeshi, Bengali, Gujarati and Pakistani communities.

Public confidence in the vaccine is high. By January, vaccine content shared through [NHS.UK](#) channels had reached over 208 million people.

To improve our understanding of vaccine hesitancy, the Government is working with over 90 healthcare provider networks, faith groups, influencers and experts from a range of communities.

■ Government Departments: Coronavirus**Alex Norris:** [\[164610\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Government Department is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policies set out in the Government's Covid-19 Response: Spring 2021 document, published in February 2021, CP 398.

Penny Mordaunt:

The COVID-19 Task Force in the Cabinet Office is responsible for coordinating the Government's response to the pandemic. The Task Force has oversight of the implementation of the policies set out in the Covid-19 Response - Spring 2021, however accountability for individual COVID-19 related programmes rests with Senior Responsible Owners within Government departments.

The COVID-19 Task Force works with departments across Government to perform this role including: supporting decision-making through Cabinet committees; developing overarching strategy; and providing data and analysis.

■ Members: Telephone Services**Rachael Maskell:** [\[163258\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will set up a helpline for MPs to seek guidance on constituency queries related to the reopening of the economy.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Government's recently published 'Covid-19 Response - Spring 2021' sets out the sequencing and indicative timing for easing restrictions in the coming months. Guidance for businesses as we progress through the roadmap can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support> and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will publish further COVID-Secure guidance as the economy reopens.

In addition, throughout the pandemic, I have hosted regular calls for Honourable Members to provide updates and respond to queries on the Government's response to the pandemic. My colleagues in other departments also host regular calls for Members which provide opportunities to raise constituency concerns.

These calls are in addition to the regular statements, debates and correspondence channels that are available to Members. We will continue to keep all engagement under review.

■ Offshore Industry: Staff**Alex Cunningham:** [\[165530\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many offshore oil and gas workers were resident in (a) Teesside, (b) north east England, (c) England and (d) Scotland in (i) 2000, (ii) 2010 and (iii) 2020.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA's response to PQ165530 [UKSA's final response to PQ165530.pdf]

■ Prime Minister: Press Conferences**Rob Roberts:**[\[166585\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will take steps to provide a BSL interpreter on screen along with the Minister and others in all televised Downing Street briefings and press conferences.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to PQ [115575](#) answered on 19 November 2020 and PQs [39766](#) and [41529](#) answered on 4 May 2020.

■ Veterans: Coronavirus**Catherine West:**[\[164570\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking to support (a) veterans and (b) recently discharged personnel during the covid-19 outbreak.

Johnny Mercer:

The Government continues to provide a full range of support services for veterans and recently discharged personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic, with appropriate adjustments to keep people safe. Veterans continue to access a range of NHS services, including Op COURAGE, a new single point of access for all veterans' mental health and wellbeing services in NHS England. Veterans can also access support through Veterans UK and MOD services including its welfare services, employment support for service leavers through the Career Transition Partnership, the Defence Transition Service, and a helpline telephone call back service.

The Office for Veterans' Affairs has also funded a new study with King's College London, exploring the impact of COVID-19 on veterans, and given £6m in grants to over service 100 charities across the UK whose operation had been severely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, directly supporting over 90,000 members of the Armed Forces community. In this year's Budget, an extra £10m has been allocated to help deliver charitable projects across the UK that support veterans with their mental health and wellbeing needs in the wake of the pandemic.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS**■ Church of England: Land****Jim Shannon:**[\[165540\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the church is taking to encourage (a) regenerative agriculture, (b) more treeplanting and (c) good stewardship of hedgerows across its rural estates.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 11 March 2021]: The majority of the Church Commissioners rural estate is tenanted via secure long term agreements. Agreements that were drawn up after 1995 often include a combination of clauses which encourage regenerative agriculture and good stewardship of our landholdings, prohibit the removal of topsoil and the spraying and removal of hedgerows, require watercourses to be kept clear and ensure hedges are maintained.

The Church Commissioners are currently undertaking a natural capital assessment of our assets, and through this, the Commissioners hope to identify land across our estates that might be suitable for tree planting.

COP26**■ UN Climate Conference 2021****Catherine West:**[\[165624\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, how many and what proportion of the UK's team of delegates are women; and for each (a) team and (b) role within the UK delegation, what the gender breakdown is.

Alok Sharma:

We are currently developing plans related to the makeup of the COP26 UK delegation. It is too early to confirm names at this stage.

The UK has committed to championing diversity and inclusion throughout our COP26 Presidency and all civil servants in the Cabinet Office COP26 unit have been appointed in line with civil service guidance and rules. In the COP Unit, 45% of the senior management team in the COP26 unit are women. In 2020, the Prime Minister appointed Anne-Marie Treveylan as the COP26 Adaptation and Resilience Champion.

■ Welsh Government: UN Climate Conference 2021**Ruth Jones:**[\[160806\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on preparations for COP26.

Alok Sharma:

The UK Government is working with the Welsh Government, alongside the other Devolved Administrations to ensure an inclusive and ambitious COP26 for the whole of the UK. I met with the Welsh Government Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs when I chaired the first meeting of the COP26 Devolved Administrations Ministerial Group on 6 November 2020. We discussed the UK Presidency objectives for COP26 and public and stakeholder engagement. The next meeting is scheduled this month. There is also ongoing official level engagement with the Welsh Government on COP26.

DEFENCE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Layla Moran:**[\[913347\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of Official Development Assistance spending by his Department.

James Heappey:

The majority of Defence activity falls outside the definition of Official Development Assistance (ODA), and only around 0.01% of Defence expenditure is reported as ODA.

Our ODA spend has unsurprisingly reduced in the current Financial Year (FY) due to the impact of the pandemic on some activities.

The Ministry of Defence's ODA budget for FY2021/22 has not yet been confirmed.

Ms Marie Rimmer:[\[913349\]](#)

What recent steps he has taken to improve the Armed Forces Covenant; and if he will make a statement.

Johnny Mercer:

Supporting the Armed Forces Covenant is a key priority and the Government has introduced legislation, as part of the Armed Forces Bill, further incorporating the Armed Forces Covenant into law. The legislation introduces a duty of due regard to the Covenant principles on local public bodies, in key areas of health, housing, and education.

The Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report, published each December, outlines progress we have made as a nation to strengthen the Covenant across the UK.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[913356\]](#)

What recent estimate his Department has made of the number of F-35b aircraft required to be procured.

Jeremy Quin:

We are committed to the purchase of 48 F-35B aircraft, with two operational frontline Squadrons formed by 2023. Further decisions on procurement beyond the 48 aircraft will follow the ongoing Integrated Review.

Margaret Ferrier:[\[913371\]](#)

What recent progress he has made on the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant commitment on housing for military personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Johnny Mercer:

The provision of high-quality subsidised accommodation remains a fundamental part of the overall offer to Service personnel and their families.

In July, the Government committed an additional £200 million to further improve both Service Family and Single Living Accommodation. As part of this, 3,500 homes will be fully modernised. In addition, through the Future Accommodation Model, the Department will provide Service personnel with more choice over where, how and with whom they live.

■ Armed Forces: Abortion**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[166450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many female service personnel had an abortion whilst serving between 2000 and 2020; and how many were subsequently discharged from service after the termination.

Johnny Mercer:

Between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2020, 1,275 Armed Forces personnel had a read code in their electronic medical record for a termination of pregnancy. Like for like data prior to 1 January 2010 is not held, as this preceded the roll-out of the Defence Medical Information Capability Programme, the source of electronic, integrated healthcare records of Armed Forces personnel.

Of the 1,275 personnel, 486 are no longer serving as at 1 January 2021. It is not possible to determine an association between their termination of pregnancy and subsequent discharge from service. However, between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2020 there were no medical discharges officially recorded with a principal or contributory cause of termination of pregnancy.

■ Armed Forces: Recruitment**Gavin Robinson:**[\[166451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average time taken was to process applications to join the (a) Army, (b) Royal Navy and (c) Royal Air Force in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Gavin Robinson:[\[166452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average time taken was to process applications to join the (a) Army, (b) Royal Navy and (c) Royal Air Force Reserves in the most recent period for which figures are available.

James Heappey:

Responses from the single Services are as follows:

Naval Service

At the end of Recruiting Year 2019-20, applicants to join the Regular Naval Service took a median of 244 days from the point of application to being offered a start date for basic training. For the Maritime Reserve, the median was 256 days.

Army

At the end of Recruiting Year 2019-20, applicants to join the Regular Army took a median of 176 days from the point of application to being offered a start date for basic training. The average for Army Reserves is not measured.

Royal Air Force (RAF)**RECRUITING YEAR 2019-20 (REGULARS)**

Career Type	Average Days between Application submission to Entrant
Regular Officer	469
Regular Other Rank	315
Regular Senior Non-Commissioned Officers	425

Recruiting Year 2019-20 (Reserves)

The average time taken to process applications to join the Royal Air Force Reserves, in the last recruiting year 2019-20, is shown in the following table:

	AVERAGE DAYS BETWEEN APPLICATION SUBMISSION TO ENTRANT
RAF Reserves Officer	618
RAF Reserves Other Ranks	437

Notes :

Data for Officers and Other Ranks is shown separately as the length of time in the RAF recruitment process differs for Officers and Other Ranks. The Officer data includes sponsorship candidates who can stay in the system for 2-4 years.

The data provided for the RAF spans the time a candidate fully completes their application form to the point that they commence phase one training (rather than the point at which they are offered a start date for basic training). Individuals are not recorded as entrants to the RAF until they have commenced their phase one training and have attested into the RAF. Figures include all application scheme types, except for reactivated applications.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-10/166453>

Gavin Robinson: **[166453]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the drop-out rates were for applicants to the (a) Army, (b) Royal Navy and (c) Royal Air Force in the most recent period for which figures are available.

James Heappey:

Due to the complexity of the accompanying table, the link below is to the web version of the answer:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-10/166453>

■ **Armed Forces: Uniforms**

Gavin Robinson: **[166454]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department spent on (a) items of clothing, (b) uniform and (c) personal protective clothing in each year since 2015.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence has a number of contracts for clothing, uniforms and personal protective clothing with a number of suppliers, but also procures items through local procurement arrangements. Details of the spend on items of clothing, uniform and personal protective clothing in each year since 2015 are not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ **Army**

Mr Kevan Jones: **[166333]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the balance of officers and soldiers in the British Army.

James Heappey:

The overall structure of the Army (Officers and Soldiers) is reviewed every five years and we are currently in the midst of the latest quinquennial review.

As at 1 January 2021, the Trade Trained Regular Strength, which does not include Gurkhas or Full-Time Reserves, was 72,639. This is comprised of:

Trade Trained Regular Officer Strength of 12,256 (16.9%)

Trade Trained Regular Soldier Strength of 60,383 (83.1%)

These figures are part of the Armed Forces Personnel statistics, which are published quarterly and can be found on gov.uk at the following link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2021>

Queens Flight**Gareth Thomas:**[\[164346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his plans are for the future of 32 Squadron (Royal Flight); and if he will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas:[\[164347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the future use of RAF Northolt by 32 Squadron (Royal Flight); and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

RAF Northolt aerodrome is a core military establishment, delivering a breadth of important day-to-day outputs for Defence in addition to providing valuable contingency options, as demonstrated during the Olympics. RAF Northolt is not just an aerodrome, but a vibrant Defence establishment, with over 1,300 personnel based across 34 diverse units, from all three Services and wider Government. Alongside 32 (The Royal) Squadron undertaking operational command support and VIP flying, there are many other major units at the station in a variety of roles: An Army bomb disposal squadron; the British Forces Post Office; the Service Prosecution Authority; an aeronautical publication and mapping centre; two RAF bands; and a very high readiness RAF Regiment unit, which also undertakes ceremonial duties as The Queen's Colour Squadron.

Trident Submarines**Owen Thompson:**[\[166488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the delay to replacing the Trident nuclear submarines.

Owen Thompson:[\[166489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment was made of the (a) financial and (b) social merits of revising the timetable for replacing the Trident nuclear submarines.

Jeremy Quin:

As set out in 2020 Annual Update to Parliament on the UK's future nuclear deterrent, the Dreadnought submarine programme continues to remain within overall budget and on track for the First of Class, HMS Dreadnought, to enter service in the early 2030s.

There will be no compromise to the UK's continuous at sea deterrent, and no consideration has been given to revising the timetable to replace the Vanguard Class.

■ USA: Nuclear Weapons**Philip Dunne:**[\[166353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what collaboration is taking place between the UK and US on the UK's replacement warhead programme.

Jeremy Quin:

We are working with our U.S. counterparts to ensure the UK replacement warhead remains compatible with the Trident missile. The UK Replacement Warhead will be designed, developed and manufactured in the UK. It will be housed in the Mk7 aeroshell, as will the U.S. W93 warhead, but the requirements, design and manufacture of the warheads are sovereign to each nation. This is consistent with our obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts: Advisory Bodies****Tracy Brabin:**[\[163271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has made an assessment of the recent representations made to his Department on establishing a UK Creators Council as a mechanism to improve communication between the Government and representatives from the creative workforce.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government engages regularly with a wide range of leading industry experts in the creative industries, including through the Creative Industries Council (CIC), a forum for Government and industry to convene and share information, and discuss concerns and opportunities. The CIC is formed of a broad range of representative bodies across the sub-sectors of the creative industries.

In January, we received a joint letter from a range of representative bodies including the Design and Artists Copyright Society, the Association of Authors' Agents and the Writer's Guild of Great Britain among others. The letter called for the creation of a UK Creators' Council and highlighted their concern that the issues faced by the UK's creative industries workforce were not being heard, in particular during this Covid crisis.

We would like to reaffirm that the Government and DCMS are keenly aware of the significant challenges faced by the UK creative workforce. These issues have been repeatedly discussed in both CIC meetings and in ongoing conversations with sector bodies across the creative industries. And it is partly as a result of these conversations that the Government announced the expansion of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme scheme to cover over 600,000 newly eligible self-employed individuals, and extended the Culture Recovery Fund with £300m additional funding for 21/22, to continue to support key cultural organisations.

Considering this, we believe that the interests of the creative workforce are well-represented across Government and the benefits of creating a new entity would need to be carefully weighed up against the risks of duplicating the work of existing organisations such as the CIC. However, I would be happy to discuss further ideas to ensure the creative workforce are strongly represented in Government.

■ **Broadband: Capital Allowances**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[166425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what (a) assessment he has made and (b) discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential effect of the Super Deduction on fibre rollout.

Matt Warman:

The government is committed to delivering nationwide coverage of gigabit-capable broadband as soon as possible. To achieve this the government is taking action to reduce barriers to commercial deployment to make it cheaper and easier to build new networks. The super deduction will further incentivise network build to help us level up homes up and down the country.

The Secretary of State regularly meets with Ministers across government, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to discuss the UK's gigabit rollout and measures that can be taken to accelerate this.

■ **Broadband: Ellesmere Port and Neston**

Justin Madders:

[\[166473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many properties in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency are connected to broadband via exchange-only lines.

Matt Western:

According to Ofcom's 2018 Connected Nations report, 3% of UK broadband lines are exchange only lines.

Given the continued deployment of alternative networks, Ofcom estimates that the number of premises that can only receive broadband from such lines is around 1%.

Ofcom does not hold this data at a constituency level.

■ Broadband: Rural Areas**Chi Onwurah:** [\[164473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether BDUK contracts for Rural Broadband coverage stipulate that all premises in a region will be covered by that programme.

Matt Warman:

The contracts for rural broadband coverage form part of the Department's supply side interventions managed through Building Digital UK. Stringent planning activity through open market reviews and public reviews set out which premises within a region are able to be targeted as part of a procurement process, setting out an intervention area. If a premise is already served it will not be within scope. It is the subsequent public procurement process that broadband infrastructure providers respond to that confirms which premises within the stipulated intervention area can be modelled and delivered to.

■ Cricket: Racial Discrimination**Tracy Brabin:** [\[166505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking in response to allegations of racism in cricket.

Nigel Huddleston:

The government is clear that racism has no place in cricket, sport, or society at large. The sport and physical activity strategy 'Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation' has diversity and inclusion at its heart. However, it is ultimately for individual sports to decide on the appropriate initiatives for their circumstances.

The Government welcomes the steps taken by the English Cricket Board (ECB) in recent years to increase diversity in cricket, including the most recent establishment of the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket, chaired by Cindy Butts. This body looks to examine all issues relating to race and equity in cricket. It will play an important role in ensuring inclusivity, and that cricket is a game for everyone, at all levels.

There is still more to do, however, and we will continue to liaise with the ECB to ensure this issue is tackled effectively.

■ Football: Females**Dan Jarvis:** [\[166432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of the Football Association on classing women's academy football as an elite sport.

Nigel Huddleston:

We are absolutely committed to women's sport. I recently met with the Football Association about to discuss a range of issues, and we continue to liaise closely with them on women's football.

It is up to the respective governing bodies to determine what constitutes the boundary between elite and non-elite within their sports and the classification of such competitions.

■ Gambling**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[163733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the leading routes into problem gambling for (a) women, (b) men, (c) people under the age of 30 and (d) people over the age of 30.

Mr Richard Holden:[\[163734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of whether the National Lottery is a potential entry point into problem gambling and gambling related harm for vulnerable people.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Problem gambling is a complex issue and there are multiple and varied factors which contribute to its development in individuals, even within demographic groups. The government launched its Review of the Gambling Act 2005 on 8 December with the publication of a Call for Evidence. The Review will be wide-ranging and evidence led and aims to make sure we have the right protections in place to make gambling safer for all.

While all forms of gambling carry risk, the National Lottery is associated with the lowest rates of problem gambling of all products. Evidence from the 2018 Health Survey for England showed that problem gambling rates for National Lottery draw-based games were 0.9% while the figure for Scratchcards was 1.4%.

■ Gambling: Advertising**Martyn Day:**[\[164541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2021 to Question 155211 on Gambling: Advertising, if he will make an assessment of trends in the amount of gambling advertising broadcast on television since March 2020.

Martyn Day:[\[164542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2021 to Question 155211 on Gambling: Advertising, what information his Department holds on changes in the level of gambling advertising broadcast on television since March 2020.

Martyn Day: [\[164543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2021 to Question 155211 on Gambling: Advertising, what representations his Department has received on changes in the level of gambling advertising broadcast on television since March 2020.

Martyn Day: [\[164544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2021 to Question 155211 on Gambling: Advertising, what discussions his Department has had with relevant stakeholders on changes in the level of gambling advertising broadcast on television since March 2020.

Mr John Whittingdale:

As set out in answer to Question 155211, the government does not hold data on the volume of broadcast gambling advertising. The Advertising Standards Authority has published figures on levels of exposure to advertising, including gambling advertising, during the first national lockdown, a period when television viewing significantly increased. This data does not allow for an assessment of trends throughout the period since March 2020.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport engages regularly with a wide variety of stakeholders and receives many representations on issues related to gambling and gambling regulation.

We launched the Review of the Gambling Act 2005 on 8 December with the publication of a Call for Evidence. As part of the wide scope of that Review, we have called for evidence on the benefits or harms of allowing gambling operators to advertise.

■ Gyms: Coronavirus**Ian Mearns:** [\[166394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Government's Covid-19 Response and Roadmap and guidance on the re-opening of indoor fitness facilities and gyms; at what stage will one to one personal training or rehabilitation sessions be permitted to resume indoors.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are crucial for our mental and physical health. That's why we have continued to make sure that people can exercise throughout the national restrictions and why we have ensured that grassroots and children's sport is front of the queue when easing those restrictions.

On Monday 22 February, the Prime Minister announced a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. One to one coaching and personal training can continue outdoors under the same rules as during national restrictions. As part of step 2, the majority of indoor leisure facilities will be able to open for individual use including one

to one coaching and personal training. As part of step 3, we expect exercise classes to be able to resume.

■ Horse Racing: Animal Welfare

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[164634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much Government funding has been awarded to the racing industry to support race horse welfare and race horse upkeep during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

On 17 April 2020, the Horserace Betting Levy Board (HBLB) and Racing Foundation agreed an immediate cash flow and hardship support package to support racing, of which HBLB contributed £20m and the Racing Foundation £8m. The Racing Foundation's funding supported participants such as jockeys and trainers directly, while the HBLB provided grants and capital loans to courses. HBLB has also increased its contributions to prize money by 50% during the pandemic to mitigate lower amounts made available by courses due to Covid. As well as funding welfare projects directly, HBLB's contributions to prize money enable the industry to maintain fixture lists and field sizes, which in turn facilitates investment in equine welfare.

On 19 November 2020 the Government announced a rescue package worth £300 million to help major spectator sports including horse racing which were affected by the coronavirus pandemic. As a summer sport, horse racing is also expected to benefit from a further £300m for the recovery package across all sports including horseracing that was announced in the recent budget.

■ Horse Racing: Betting

Carolyn Harris:

[\[163714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Horseracing Betting Levy on the horseracing sector.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Horseracing Betting Levy is collected by the Horserace Betting Levy Board (HBLB) from the gross profit of betting on British horseracing. In April 2017, the government reformed the Levy to bring offshore bookmakers in scope for the first time and fixed the rate at 10%. This action reversed a steady period of decline in Levy income. Levy income for the last three years has been:

- 2017/18 - £95 million
- 2018/19 - £83 million
- 2019/20 - £97 million

The HBLB supports racing through prize money grants to racecourses, which in turn supports trainers and jockeys. HBLB's prize money grants normally account for around 40% of total prize money. It also makes payments to racecourses as a contribution towards race day services costs, paying for the majority of racing's

regulation and integrity costs. Other areas it supports include industry recruitment and training, education and the welfare of horses.

During Covid the HBLB has increased its contribution to prize money by 50%. It has also paid almost £3 million towards extra regulation costs that have been necessary to stage racing fixtures safely within the current Covid protocols.

■ National Lottery

Mr Richard Holden: [\[163735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the correlation between playing National Lottery games and gambling-related harm for (a) women, (b) men and (c) people under the age of 21.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Evidence from the [2018 Health Survey](#) for England showed that National Lottery games are associated with the lowest levels of problem gambling across all gambling products. Problem gambling rates for National Lottery draw-based games were 0.9% while the figure for Scratchcards was 1.4%. By comparison, the problem gambling rates for other activities covered by the survey ranged from 2.7% to 12.7%.

The attached table shows levels of problem gambling broken down by women, men and 16-19 year olds.

The Health survey does not provide data at a category level for Online Instant Win Games, and does not break down levels of problem gambling by activity and demographic group.

The government recently legislated to increase the minimum age to purchase and sell all National Lottery products from 16 to 18. We are working with the current operator, Camelot, and the Gambling Commission to ensure a smooth implementation, acting sooner where possible. Camelot has already announced plans to increase the online age limit in April 2021 and also anticipates being able to introduce the change in retail premises in good time before the legislation takes effect in October 2021.

Attachments:

1. Table [Table - PQ163735.docx]

Mr Richard Holden: [\[163736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the correlation between playing National Lottery (a) online instant win games and (b) scratch cards and the risk of gambling-related harm.

Mr Richard Holden: [\[163737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of changes in the level of playing National Lottery games online during the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps his Department is taking to help ensure adequate protections are in place to protect players online.

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[163738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the National Lottery Operator's discharge of its responsibilities on player protection.

Mr John Whittingdale:

As the independent regulator of the National Lottery, the Gambling Commission has a statutory responsibility to ensure that the interests of all National Lottery players are protected and that the National Lottery is run with all due propriety. Under the terms of the current National Lottery Licence the operator is required to implement player protection strategies to prevent underage and excessive play, which must be approved by the Gambling Commission.

In addition, the Gambling Commission conducts regular, detailed monitoring to identify risks to players, and where appropriate, undertakes strategic reviews of areas of the portfolio which are identified as higher (but not necessarily high) risk. Where evidence does emerge of an increased risk of problem play on National Lottery products, the Gambling Commission is quick to take action. In July 2020, the Gambling Commission removed all National Lottery Online Instant Win Games at the £10 price point, following the emergence of evidence showing an association between them and some problem gambling behaviours.

The Gambling Commission and the operator have been closely monitoring the developing trends during Covid-19. Data published by the Gambling Commission in [February 2021](#), shows that online participation for National Lottery draws in the past four weeks, was 13.1% in the year to December 2020, up from 10.5% in the year to December 2019. Analysis indicates that the risk profile of online players has not increased over recent months. This continues to be kept under review.

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[163741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the level of National Lottery participation rates over the third licence period.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Third National Lottery licence started in February 2009. Data collected by the [Gambling Commission](#) shows the percentage of regular National Lottery draw-based game players, aged 16+ in Great Britain, since 2012. This data does not include instant win games (Scratchcards or Online Instant Win Games), sales of which have increased since the licence began.

YEAR	PAST 4 WEEK GAMBLING PARTICIPATION (NATIONAL LOTTERY DRAW-BASED GAMES)
Year to December 2012	46.1%
Year to December 2013	43.4%
Year to December 2014	37.4%
Year to December 2015	32.3%
Year to December 2016	30%
Year to December 2017	27.3%
Year to December 2018	27.6%
Year to December 2019	29.6%
Year to December 2020	27.3%

■ National Lottery: Charitable Donations

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[163742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of return to good causes since the National Lottery was established in 1994.

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[163743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the correlation between the profitability of the National Lottery and the amount that organisation returns to good causes.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Annual good cause income has generally increased since the National Lottery began in 1994, although there have been fluctuations year on year during that period.

DCMS reports annually on the level of good cause income in the [National Lottery Distribution Fund](#) Annual Report and Accounts.

The Government and the Gambling Commission share a statutory duty to maximise returns to good causes, subject to ensuring that the National Lottery is run with all due propriety and that the interests of players are protected. In fulfilling its statutory objectives, following a competitive bidding process, the Gambling Commission issues a licence, which sets out the basis for allocating funds to good causes and profit to the operator.

The Gambling Commission is currently running the competition to award the fourth licence to operate the National Lottery. As with the current licence, the fourth licence

will require the operator to maximise good cause returns, and the alignment between good causes and operator profit reinforces this.

■ National Lottery: Licensing

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[163739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the criteria in place to ensure the Fourth National Lottery Licence competition provides opportunities for innovation and creativity.

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[163740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department plans to take with the Gambling Commission to ensure that the successful fourth National Lottery competition bidder delivers on undertakings made during the bid process.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Gambling Commission is responsible for designing the fourth National Lottery Licence, running the competition, selecting the winning application, and managing the operator in-licence.

DCMS and the Gambling Commission share three statutory duties: to ensure that the National Lottery is run with all due propriety, to protect players' interests, and - subject to those - to maximise returns to good causes. It is upon these duties that the Commission has designed the evaluation criteria for the Fourth Licence competition. Applicants are free to innovate within the legal framework. The next licence will give the operator greater autonomy to make strategic decisions, providing the licensee with the flexibility to innovate while ensuring they meet high standards of player protection and propriety.

The winning applicant will be required to sign a number of agreements with the Gambling Commission to ensure that they deliver on the proposals in their bid.

■ Social Media: Safety

Afzal Khan:

[\[165664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to require an independent auditor to assess the steps taken by social media firms to tackle online harms as part of the forthcoming Online Safety Bill.

Caroline Dinéage:

Ofcom will be named as the independent regulator for online harms in the Online Safety Bill. Ofcom will be responsible for overseeing and enforcing companies' compliance with the regulatory framework.

Ofcom will be given the powers to fulfil its new statutory duties and functions effectively, including the ability to gather information from companies to understand how they are tackling online harms. As part of this, Ofcom will have the power to

require a company to undertake, and pay for, a skilled person report on specific issues of concern, for example where external technical expertise is needed.

■ Sports: Betting

Carolyn Harris: [\[163715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the legislative viability of a fair return system for sport betting in which gambling operators must pay a fee or portion of revenues to sports clubs for using their content for gambling purposes.

Paul Blomfield: [\[164439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a levy on the gambling industry to fund football.

Paul Blomfield: [\[164440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government has taken to support football clubs to develop alternative commercial opportunities to gambling advertising and sponsorship.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government currently has no plans to introduce a requirement for gambling operators to pay a fee or levy to sports clubs and has not had discussions with football clubs about developing commercial opportunities.

The Review of the Gambling Act 2005 was launched on 8th December with the publication of a Call for Evidence. As part of the broad scope of that Review, we have called for evidence on the benefits or harms of allowing operators to advertise and engage in sponsorship arrangements across sports, esports and other areas. The Call for Evidence will remain open until 31 March, and no policy decisions have yet been made. We intend to set out conclusions, including any proposals for change, in a white paper later this year.

■ Sports: Coronavirus

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[167349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department plans to take to help increase the uptake of sport by the general public as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are crucial for our mental and physical health. That's why we have continued to make sure that people can exercise throughout the national restrictions, and why we have ensured that grassroots and children's sport is front of the queue when easing those restrictions.

On Monday 22 February, the Prime Minister announced a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. The government has introduced a step approach to the return of outdoor and indoor sport areas across England. From 8 March, sport can take place in school for all children, or as part of wraparound activities if children are attending in order to enable their parents to work, seek work, attend education, seek medical care, or attend a support group. Any organised outdoor sport can restart on 29 March.

The Government has provided unprecedented support to the sport sector to ensure these facilities are able to open. Beyond elite level sport, on the 22nd October 2020, the government announced a £100 million support fund for local authority leisure centres. Sport England are also providing £220 million directly to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through this pandemic, including their £35 million Community Emergency Fund. Sport England's new strategy, 'Uniting the Movement', dedicated an additional £50 million to support grassroots sports clubs and organisations.

■ **Tourism: Mountains**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[165460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 2 March 2021 to Question 158881, what assessment his Department has made of whether visa processes for mountain leaders and other similar professionals are as prompt and smooth as possible under the UK's agreement with the EU.

Nigel Huddleston:

My Department has not made an assessment of how smoothly the visa process for mountain leaders is running. As stated in my previous answer, the Government continues to engage with stakeholders, including the British Association of International Mountain Leaders, to understand their priorities for the UK's future relationship with the EU. Where this concerns visa processes, this will be fed into the relevant Departments - in this case BEIS and the Home Office.

■ **Video Recordings: Internet**

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[166631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure that platforms carrying user-generated video content engage with the British Board of Film Classification on their best practice age labelling guidelines.

Caroline Dinage:

The BBFC offers unparalleled expertise in content classification. Ministers and officials will continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including the BBFC, on the video sharing platform regime and the upcoming Online Safety Bill.

The video sharing platform regime, for which Ofcom is the regulator, came into force on 1 November 2020. UK-established video sharing platforms must now take appropriate measures to protect the public, including minors, from illegal and harmful

material. Video sharing platforms are not currently mandated to adopt BBFC ratings, nor is it expected that they will be mandated to do so under Ofcom's regulatory regime for video sharing platforms.

The Government recognises age ratings as an important tool for audience protection, however they are most effective when used in conjunction with other protection tools, such as age assurance and parental controls. Video sharing platforms encompass a broad range of services so it is important that there is flexibility in the regime to be able to adopt tailored approaches. Platforms should consider what measures are most appropriate and proportionate when introducing them on their services.

The BBFC is engaging with both Ofcom and online platforms to share their expertise on emerging technologies and the applicability of content ratings. The Government will also continue to engage with the BBFC, Ofcom and industry to encourage platforms to adopt appropriate content labelling and other age assurance measures in relation to the upcoming Online Safety Bill.

EDUCATION

■ Assessments: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[163706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that teacher assessed grades for the 2020-21 academic year are equitable in the (a) state and (b) private sector; and if he will publish guidance on that matter.

Nick Gibb:

Pupils are working hard in preparation for their GCSEs, AS and A levels this year and teachers have made tremendous efforts to provide high quality education both in the classroom and remotely. Given the ongoing disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, we announced in January that GCSE, AS and A level exams will not go ahead as planned this summer. Fairness to young people is fundamental to the Department and Ofqual's decision making. We want to ensure all young people have the confidence that, despite exams not going ahead, they will receive a grade that reflects their ability and enables them to progress.

This year, teachers will not be asked to judge the grade a pupil might have achieved if the COVID-19 outbreak had not occurred. They will be asked to make an evidence-based judgement of the grade each pupil is performing at. Guidance will be provided to teachers by the end of March 2021, to support them in making assessments fairly and consistently.

Schools and colleges will have a range of supporting materials available to help them in marking and awarding grades. There will also be a process for both internal and external quality assurance to support teachers to do what is needed and ensure as much consistency as possible. Head teachers will have to confirm to the exam boards that the requirements for quality assurance have been met at the time of submitting the grades for their centre. Exam boards quality assurance will check the

evidence to support grades submitted at a sample of centres, to ensure consistency in approach between centres. The sample of centres subject to these checks will be drawn to ensure representation of all types of centres, including state and private schools and colleges.

As part of their quality assurance process, schools and colleges will be given guidance on the use of previous performance data for their centre to help benchmark their results. The use of previous performance data is intended for guidance only and will not limit grades awarded for a student if supported by evidence.

We understand that whilst some independent schools choose to take qualifications regulated by Ofqual, many also choose international GCSEs, which are not regulated by Ofqual and are not part of the arrangements for summer 2021 that apply to GCSEs, A/AS levels and VTQs. We have worked closely with the exam boards who have confirmed that exams in England for their international GCSEs will not go ahead and pupils will be awarded grades using teacher assessment.

■ **Childminding: Coronavirus**

Tulip Siddiq:

[164553]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Government's offer of covid-19 home test kits to be posted to families with children attending school, for what reason childminders have been excluded from the recent extension of the rollout of home testing kits to staff in PVI early years settings.

Nick Gibb:

Childminders currently have access to community testing and should continue to use local community testing programmes for regular asymptomatic testing until further notice. More information on where and how these can be accessed is found here: <https://www.gov.uk/find-covid-19-lateral-flow-test-site>.

The Department is also continuing to work closely with colleagues across Government and local authorities to explore the most effective approach for testing childminders. We will update the sector on these developments as soon as we are able.

Robert Halfon:

[166392]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support childminders' access to covid-19 tests.

Nick Gibb:

Childminders currently have access to community testing and should continue to use local community testing programmes for regular asymptomatic testing. More information on where and how these can be accessed is found through the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/find-covid-19-lateral-flow-test-site>.

The Department is also continuing to work closely with colleagues across Government and local authorities to explore the most effective approach for testing childminders. We will update the sector on these developments as soon as we are able.

■ Children: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[164555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 142032, what specific funding his Department plans to allocate to programmes aimed at identifying vulnerable children whose problems have gone unidentified and unsupported throughout the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The government continues to work closely with local authorities, the third sector and charity partners to understand the needs of local communities. It will keep under review any further measures that are necessary to support vulnerable children and young people. The government has supported vulnerable children throughout the COVID-19 outbreak including through keeping education settings open and ensuring the continuation of children's social care and early help services. We are investing £1.7 billion in a comprehensive education recovery programme to help students recover from lost learning as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and we have appointed Sir Kevan Collins, as Education Recovery Commissioner, to advise on plans to support pupils to make up their learning over the course of this Parliament. We are also investing £220 million in the Holiday Activities and Food programme, which will be expanded across England this year, and a £79 million boost to children and young people's mental health support.

■ Children: Day Care

Huw Merriman:

[\[166482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps are being taken by (a) his Department and (b) local education authorities to help ensure that (i) will be (A) sufficient, (B) affordable and (C) local full-time holiday childcare provision for people working in frontline and key services and (ii) working people on lower incomes are prioritised above those not working and able to provide childcare from home during the Easter 2021 and summer 2021 school holidays.

Vicky Ford:

Ensuring working parents and carers have access to the childcare they need remains a priority for the government. That is why we ensured that all before and after-school clubs, holiday clubs, and other out-of-school settings were able to continue to stay open for children eligible to attend school on-site, for the duration of the national lockdown, i.e. for critical worker children, where the provision was reasonably necessary to support them to work, undertake education or access medical care, and for vulnerable children and young people. For this reason, we have also extended the eligibility for attendance as of 8 March, in line with the wider reopening of schools on

8 March, with all parents now able to access this provision for their children for certain essential purposes, including those outlined above, with vulnerable children and young people able to continue accessing provision under any circumstance.

As set out in the 'COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021' guidance, from 29 March, in line with the Easter school holidays, out-of-school settings and wraparound childcare providers will also be able to offer outdoor provision to all children, without any restrictions on the purposes for which they may attend. The guidance can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021>. Indoor provision will also be available regardless of circumstance to vulnerable children and young people, as well as children eligible for free school meals, where they are attending as part of the Department for Education's Holiday Activities and Food programme. Other children will continue to be able to access indoor provision, where the provision is necessary for certain essential purposes, as already mentioned. We have updated our protective measures guidance for the sector, which outlines eligibility and aims to support providers to allow them to open for as many children as safely as possible. This guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

In addition to this, we have also ensured that there are several other ways that parents and carers can continue to access the childcare they need. This includes:

- Childminders, which remain open for children in early years, children of critical workers and vulnerable children and young people.
- Nannies, which are still able to continue to provide services, including in the home.
- Parents are also able to form a childcare bubble with one other household for the purposes of informal childcare, where the child is under the age of 14.
- Some households will also be able to benefit from being in a support bubble, which allows single adult households to join another household.

We have also encouraged all local authorities to consider using local grants made available to them by government to help bolster this part of the childcare sector in their areas, to safeguard sufficient childcare provision. This includes the £594 million discretionary fund for councils and the devolved administrations to support local businesses that may not have been eligible for other support during the current national lockdown, as well as funding streams such as the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, aimed to support disadvantaged children. The expanded programme, which comprises a £220 million fund to be delivered through grants to local authorities, will be expanded to reach all local authority areas during the upcoming Easter, summer, and Christmas holidays this year.

However, where parents are still finding it difficult to access sufficient childcare, we recommend that they contact their local authority's family information services. Local authorities are required by legislation to secure sufficient free early years provision

and paid-for childcare places, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 to 14.

■ Children: Disability

Grahame Morris: [\[166390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Disabled Children Partnership's report, The Longest Lockdown, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a cross-departmental covid-19 catch-up plan for disabled children covering (a) education and (b) health and wellbeing.

Grahame Morris: [\[166391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of the Disabled Children Partnership's recommendation in its The Longest Lockdown report that a specific catch-up plan for disabled children and their families should be implemented, covering (a) plans to scale up therapeutic interventions and (b) short breaks and transition support for disabled children and young people.

Vicky Ford:

The COVID-19 outbreak has been extremely challenging for many families of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Supporting them is a priority for this government, and their wellbeing remains central to our response to the outbreak.

We want pupils and students with SEND, including those in specialist settings, to continue to receive high-quality teaching and specialist professional support. This is because we know that these pupils and students and their families can be disproportionately impacted by being out of education.

We have put in place a range of measures to support children and young people with SEND through the outbreak. We have provided £40.8 million for the Family Fund in financial year 2020-21 to support over 80,000 families on low incomes raising children with disabilities or serious illnesses. This includes £13.5 million to specifically respond to needs arising from the outbreak, which may include, for example, assistive technology to aid remote learning. The National Tutoring Programme has increased access to high-quality tuition for disadvantaged pupils, helping to accelerate their academic progress and tackle the attainment gap between them and their peers. We have announced a major investment in education, including an additional £730 million into high needs in the 2021-22 financial year, coming on top of the additional £780 million in the 2020-21 financial year, which means high needs budgets will have grown by over £1.5 billion, nearly a quarter, in just two years. Additionally, 16-19 tuition fund providers are asked to have regard to the needs of students with SEND when prioritising students that would benefit most from small group tuition.

A priority of the education recovery work is to ensure the specific needs of children and young people with SEND are considered, so they do not fall further behind their

peers. Sir Kevan Collins has been appointed as the Education Recovery Commissioner to deliver this work.

On 24 February, the government announced a new £700 million package for a range of additional measures to give early years settings, schools, providers of 16-19 education, including specialist settings, the tools they need to target support for all students. This builds on the £1 billion catch-up package announced in June 2020, and forms part of the wider response to help pupils make up their lost learning.

Specific targeted support for children and young people with SEND includes a new one-off Recovery Premium for state primary and secondary schools, building on the Pupil Premium, which will be provided to schools to use as they see best to support disadvantaged students. This funding can be used to lay on additional clubs or activities or for other evidence-based approaches for supporting the most disadvantaged pupils, including those with SEND, from September.

We continue to encourage local authorities to prioritise respite support for disabled children, and to consider flexible and pragmatic options to deliver that support including using direct payments and carrying out activities virtually. Where children and young people with an education, health and care plan are in receipt of health provision, settings should work collaboratively with their local authority, Clinical Commissioning Group and health providers to agree appropriate support in view of the latest and current local public health guidance. Therapists and other professionals may continue to visit education settings to provide therapies and support, where this is reasonably necessary.

We are committed to supporting children's and young people's mental health and wellbeing during this period. We have recently announced a £79 million boost to children and young people's mental health support, including through Mental Health Support Teams.

Schools can use their additional funding from the COVID-19 "catch-up" package for pastoral support for mental wellbeing where pupils need it. We have also set up Wellbeing for Education Return, an £8 million scheme funding expert advisers and training in every local authority area, to support education staff to respond to the emotional and mental health pressures some children and young people may be feeling because of COVID-19.

■ Department for Education: Consultants

Wes Streeting:

[165613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much his Department has spent on contracted consultants in each year since 2015.

Nick Gibb:

A summary of DfE Consolidated Group consultancy expenditure for each year can be found in the relevant Annual Report and Accounts, published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dfе-annual-reports>.

Consultants are hired to work on projects in a number of specific situations:

- where the Group does not have the required skill sets
- where the requirement falls outside the core business of civil servants
- where an external, independent perspective is required

This expertise was mainly used to support change programmes across the Group and specialist research contracted out to third parties.

The expenditure for each year is as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	£M
2019-20	12.7
2018-19	13.1
2017-18	14.6
2016-17	12.1
2015-16	8.6

■ Higher Education: Remote Education

Chi Onwurah:

[\[166423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to meet the Office for Students to discuss their recommendations in the Digital Learning and Teaching Review, entitled Gravity Assist: Propelling higher education towards a brighter future.

Michelle Donelan:

In June 2020, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, commissioned the chair of the Office for Students, Sir Michael Barber, to conduct a review of the shift toward digital teaching and learning in higher education since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak. The Secretary of State for Education and I meet very regularly and have regular discussions with the Office for Students on the range of issues covered in Sir Michael Barber's review of digital teaching and learning.

The recommendations that are set out in the review, published on 25 February 2021, are directed primarily at those working in higher education – both on the front line of teaching and in senior leadership positions. Together, they articulate a set of practical steps to help institutions implement the model of successful digital teaching and learning contained in this report.

The government welcomes the publication of the report which will be important in supporting higher education providers to realise the opportunities presented by digital teaching and learning in helping to ensure that all students, whatever their background, have a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives.

The full report can be found here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/gravity-assist-propelling-higher-education-towards-a-brighter-future/>.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[164402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 13 January 2021 on tax-free childcare, reference ZA54965.

Nick Gibb:

I can confirm that a response has been sent to the letter dated 13 January from the hon. Member for West Lancashire.

■ National Tutoring Programme

Wes Streeting:

[164549]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools are participating in the National Tutoring Programme (a) in total, (b) by constituency and (c) by local authority.

Nick Gibb:

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

There are currently 4,227 schools enrolled with Tuition Partners. The Department does not hold the requested information at constituency or local authority level. We are working to ensure that there is a high level of awareness amongst schools of the support available, particularly in areas with high numbers of disadvantaged pupils. In academic year 2020-21, we expect that 250,000 children will be tutored by NTP Tuition Partners.

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

In February 2021, we launched a tendering process to secure a NTP delivery partner to provide a further year of NTP support. Further details will be available in due course but we expect to support approximately 750,000 pupils through the NTP in academic year 2021-22.

■ Outdoor Education

Sir David Amess: [\[166292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential contribution that residential summer camps can play in promoting (a) character development and (b) social mixing as part of young people's education.

Sir David Amess: [\[166293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of engaging with The Summer Camps Trust to promote the use of summer camps.

Vicky Ford:

The department recognises the significant benefits learning outside the classroom can have on children's educational development, as well as their mental health and wellbeing, and is taking steps to unlock outdoor learning and educational visits in line with the COVID-19 road map.

The government also recognises the vital role they can play in character development opportunities they afford for social mixing, which promotes children and young people's wellbeing. That is why we ensured that all before and after-school clubs, holiday clubs, and other out-of-school settings were able to continue to stay open for those children that need or rely on these settings most, for the duration of the national lockdown, and why we have extended eligibility of attendance when children returned to school on 8 March.

At present, providers are able to offer face-to-face provision for all children, where that provision supports certain essential purposes; with vulnerable children and young people able to continue accessing provision under any circumstance. We have updated our protective measures guidance for the sector, which outlines eligibility and aims to support providers to allow them to open for as many children as safely as possible. This guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

The government's intention is that out-of-school settings and wraparound childcare providers will be able to open to all children, without restrictions on access, in time for the summer term, and no earlier than 12 April. However, the government continues to advise against all educational visits. The department is working on advice for schools on the planning and booking of residential visits when it is safe to do so and in line with the government's roadmap to recovery, as set out in:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021>. The advice will be published shortly.

While the department has not thus far engaged with The Summer Camps Trust specifically, since June 2020, we have been in close communication with various stakeholders, to understand the specific challenges that they face. These discussions

have been incredibly beneficial for the department, and the collaboration on this policy area has led to a supportive relationship, which is still ongoing.

■ Outdoor Education: Coronavirus

Afzal Khan:

[\[165663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department plans to provide to outdoor learning providers as part of the covid-19 catch-up provision.

Nick Gibb:

We recognise that extended school and college restrictions have had a substantial impact on children and young people's education and are committed to helping pupils make up lost education as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. In January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, committed to working with parents, teachers, and education providers to develop a long-term plan to help schools support pupils make up their education over the course of this Parliament.

In February 2021, the Department also appointed Sir Kevan Collins, as Education Recovery Commissioner, to advise on the approach for education recovery and the development of a long-term plan to help pupils make up their education over the course of this Parliament. The Education Recovery Commissioner has been clear that sport and broader enrichment activities are a key part of recovery, and will engage with parents, pupils, and teachers in the development of this broader approach which will examine a range of options to help schools to use evidence-based interventions to support their pupils to make up lost education.

£200 million will be made available to secondary schools to run summer schools with an initial focus on incoming Year 7 pupils. The summer schools will offer a mix of academic and enrichment activity. Guidance will be provided to schools, including a reminder that they can work with their usual wraparound or holiday provider to ensure they can collaboratively create a broad and interesting programme for the pupils involved.

The Department recognises the significant benefits that education outside the classroom can have on children's development as well as their mental health and wellbeing and is taking steps to unlock outdoor education and educational visits in line with the COVID-19 road map.

■ Outdoor Education: Finance

Daisy Cooper:

[\[164629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a Nature Premium for children to help tackle inequalities of access to nature.

Vicky Ford:

We recognise that outdoor activity and access to nature is a fundamental part of childhood which supports children's mental health and wellbeing and understanding of the importance of the natural world. We also know that some children have good

access to natural spaces whilst others do not, such as those living in areas of high urban disadvantage.

The national curriculum includes content in different subjects which promotes understanding of the natural world. Primary science and geography give pupils a firm foundation for the further study of the natural environment in secondary school, through teaching about climate, the habitats of plants and animals and how environments can change, which can include positive and negative impacts of human actions. In secondary school, pupils continue to study ecosystems, including positive and negative human interactions with ecosystems and their impact on biodiversity, and are taught about how human and physical processes interact to influence and change landscapes, environments, and the climate. The teaching of this content can be supported by direct contact with the natural environments.

We want headteachers to have as much discretion as possible over how they use their funding. It is for schools to decide how to teach the curriculum and what wider pastoral and extra-curricular activity to put in place, based on the needs of their pupils and drawing on evidence of effective practice. Schools' core funding is rising per financial year by £2.6 billion in 2020-21, £4.8 billion in 2021-22 and £7.1 billion in 2022-23, compared to 2019-20 funding levels.

To support children from disadvantaged backgrounds to have better access to natural environments, the department has provided funding for the 'Children and Nature Programme', working alongside Natural England and the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs. The programme is supporting three delivery projects which aim to demonstrate and improve understanding of the effectiveness of interventions in nature, particularly for schools with the highest proportions of disadvantaged pupils in England.

We also recognise the important role wraparound childcare and other out-of-school activities, such as outdoor education, can play in providing enriching activities which support children's physical and mental health and wellbeing. That is why we have ensured, for the duration of the national lockdown, that these activities have been able to stay open for all children eligible to attend school on site, where it is to support certain essential purposes, and for vulnerable children and young people under any circumstance.

As of 8 March 2021, in line with the wider return of pupils to school, these settings are now able to open for all children. Vulnerable children and young people can continue to attend under any circumstance, with parents of other children able to access this provision for their children where it is:

- Reasonably necessary to support them work, seek work, undertake education or training, address a medical need or to attend a support group.
- Being used as part of their child's efforts to obtain a regulated qualification, meet the entry requirements for an education institution, or to undertake exams and assessments.

- Being used by electively home educating parents as part of their arrangements for their child to receive a suitable full-time education.

As set out in the 'COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021' guidance, we have also committed to ensure all children will be able to access outdoor education and activity provision under any circumstance, from 29 March, in line with when schools close for the Easter holidays. This guidance is available here:

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

We are also exploring the option of introducing a new GCSE in Natural History after receiving a proposal from the exam board OCR. We have had an initial discussion on the proposal with OCR. We have made no commitment to introduce the GCSE at this stage. We, and the independent qualifications regulator Ofqual, will determine whether the proposal meets all the necessary conditions to sit alongside our rigorous suite of reformed GCSE qualifications.

■ Pupil Premium

Neil Coyle: [\[163241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason the eligibility date used to finalise school pupil premium funding has been moved back from January to October.

Neil Coyle: [\[163242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the number of children whose school will not receive pupil premium funding as a result of moving the eligibility date back from January to October.

Neil Coyle: [\[163243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how his Department plans to ensure that the Education and Skills Funding Agency uses school and LEA data to finalise pupil premium allocations.

Neil Coyle: [\[163244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether an equality impact assessment was carried out in relation to the decision to move the pupil premium eligibility date back from January to October.

Nick Gibb:

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

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

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

Further information on this 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>.

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

We will confirm pupil premium allocations for the financial year 2021-22 in June 2021.

Data on the number of pupils who have become eligible for free school meals since 2 October 2020 is currently being collected in the spring school census and is not yet available.

The Department publishes information on pupil premium allocations and the number of pupils eligible annually. The most recent publicly available figures can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021>.

The Department did carry out an equalities impact assessment for this change.

■ Remote Education: Extracurricular Activities

Siobhain McDonagh: [\[165435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of digital teaching in increasing youth participation in extracurricular activities.

Chi Onwurah: [\[166422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of how digital teaching and learning has been used to increase youth participation in extracurricular activities.

Vicky Ford:

The government recognises the important role that extra-curricular activities and other out-of-school settings play in providing enriching activities which support children’s physical and mental health, as well as the development of skills and attitudes which promote their wellbeing. That is why we ensured that all before and after-school clubs, holiday clubs, and other out-of-school settings were able continue to stay open for those children that need or rely on these settings most, for the duration of the national lockdown, and why we have extended eligibility of attendance when children returned to school on 8 March 2021.

At present, providers can offer face-to-face provision for all children, where that provision supports certain essential purposes; with vulnerable children and young people able to continue accessing provision under any circumstance. We have updated our protective measures guidance for the sector, which outlines eligibility and aims to support providers to allow them to open for as many children as safely as possible. This guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Where children are not eligible to attend face-to-face provision, we have suggested in our guidance that providers move to remote provision where possible. The department does not hold a central register of out-of-school activities providers and is therefore unable to make an assessment of the effect of digital learning on participation in such activities. We do, however, recognise that a lack of digital access may make participating in remote activities challenging, in particular for disadvantaged children and young people. The government is therefore investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. We have also partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help 30,000 disadvantaged children and young people in schools, sixth forms and further education institutions to get online as well as delivering over 70,000 4G wireless routers for students without connection at home.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Zarah Sultana:

[165681]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the level of covid-19 transmission risk associated with the return of children to school at the same time.

Nick Gibb:

Alongside the announcement of the full return to school, the Department published the following evidence summary around children, young people, and schools:

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 scientific evidence papers from SAGE meetings, including papers on children and transmission from the Children's Task and Finish Group, are published in tranches and are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/scientific-evidence-supporting-the-government-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19>.

■ Special Educational Needs: Remote Education

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[160698]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that children with SEND are able to access education remotely which meets their needs.

Nick Gibb:

During the period of national lockdown primary, secondary, alternative provision and special schools remained open to vulnerable children and young people, including those with an education, health and care plan.

The Department published guidance regarding the provision of remote education during national lockdown, including guidance for pupils with special educational needs and disability (SEND), which is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/968401/Schools_operational_guidance_-_March-2021-update.pdf. Where remote education is needed for pupils with SEND, their teachers are best-placed to know how their pupils' needs can be most effectively met to ensure they continue to make progress even if they are not able to be in school due to COVID-19. The requirement for schools is to use their best endeavours to secure the special educational provision called for by the pupils' special educational needs remains in place. Where possible, special schools should follow the age-related remote education guidance for primary schools and secondary schools.

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. As of Monday 8 March, over 1.2 million laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, academy trusts, local authorities and further education (FE) colleges.

The Department has also made £4.84 million available for the Oak National Academy both for the summer term of the academic year 2019-20, and then for the 2020-21 academic year, to provide video lessons in a broad range of subjects for Reception up to Year 11. Specialist content for pupils with SEND is also available. This covers communication and language, numeracy, creative arts, independent living, physical development and early development learning. Additionally, the Oak National Academy offers therapy-based lessons and resources across occupational, physical, sensory and speech and language therapy.

We are providing £40.8 million for the Family Fund this year to support over 80,000 families on low incomes raising children with disabilities or serious illnesses: <https://www.familyfund.org.uk/>. £13.5 million of this is to specifically address needs arising from the COVID-19 outbreak, which may include assistive technology to aid remote education.

To ensure pupils with SEND are supported effectively, we have also funded the National Star College to launch their SEND Hub, providing advice and guidance on ways to ensure the curriculum is accessible and inclusive for all. This includes

training on ways assistive technology can be used by teachers and Special Educational Needs Coordinators to support all pupils, including those with SEND.

There is a wide range of resources available to support schools and FE colleges to meet the expectations we have set. The Get Help with Remote Education page on gov.uk provides a one-stop-shop for teachers, signposting the support package, which is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-remote-education>. This includes helping schools and FE colleges to access technology that supports remote education, as well as peer-to-peer training and guidance on how to use technology effectively. It also includes practical tools, a good practice guide and school-led webinars to support effective delivery of the curriculum. Information is also available on issues such as safeguarding, statutory duties and expectations, supporting pupils and students with SEND, and recovery and catch up to stop pupils and students falling behind.

■ **Students: Loans**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[164657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of changing the postgraduate student loan funding guidelines to account for students with an existing Masters degree.

Michelle Donelan:

The funding available for student support is finite and it is necessary to put limits in place to ensure that all eligible students who wish to study a qualification for the first time can do so. Consequently, those who have already achieved a higher education qualification at postgraduate level do not qualify for support for a second postgraduate qualification which is equivalent or lower to the one they already hold. We are closely monitoring take up of the master's loan and the response by students, the sector, and employers. However, at present there are no plans to amend the loan eligibility criteria.

■ **Universities: Antisemitism**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[165688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many universities have adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism; and what action is being taken against those universities that have not adopted that definition.

Michelle Donelan:

The government has asked all English higher education providers registered with the Office for Students (OfS) to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. The IHRA definition is an important tool in tackling antisemitism. Adopting this widely recognised definition sends a strong signal that higher education providers take these issues seriously. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to higher education leaders, most recently in

October 2020, to reiterate the importance of the definition and to urge all providers to consider adopting it.

The government is pleased to report that at least 91 providers have now adopted the definition, with many more preparing to adopt. The decision on adoption of the definition rests with individual providers, but the government will continue to urge them to adopt the definition, and ensure that higher education is a genuinely fulfilling and welcoming experience for everyone.

I am proud that so many providers have taken a positive step towards eradicating antisemitism by adopting the IHRA definition, but further progress is still needed to stamp it out. This is why, in the Secretary of State's most recent strategic guidance letter to the OfS, the government asked the OfS to undertake a scoping exercise, to identify providers which are reluctant to adopt the definition. The letter asked them to consider introducing mandatory reporting of antisemitic incident numbers by providers, with the aim of ensuring a robust evidence base, which the OfS can then use to effectively regulate in this area.

The Secretary of State also asked the OfS to ensure that, if antisemitic incidents do occur at a provider, they should consider if it is relevant in a particular case whether the provider has adopted the IHRA definition when considering what sanctions, including monetary penalties, would be appropriate to apply.

We will continue to work across government to ensure that racism and religious hatred of any kind is not tolerated anywhere, including in our world-leading universities.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Export Health Certificates

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[163703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) effectiveness of qualification requirements for staff issuing Export Health Certificates (EHCs) and (b) potential merits of using lower-qualified staff to issue EHCs.

Victoria Prentis:

In order to be authorised as an Official Veterinarian (OV) for export certification, a veterinary surgeon must obtain an Official Controls Qualification (Veterinary) (OCQ(V)) in the relevant field of export and revalidate these qualifications every four years. These courses, developed and approved by APHA and delivered by an international training provider, are accredited by the International School of Veterinary Postgraduate Studies (ISPVS) to ensure high standards. Veterinary Surgeons provide feedback on their learning on completion of each OCQ course, enabling the training provider and APHA to monitor effectiveness. APHA also carries out audits to assess the quality of the export certification work carried out by OVs. Any training

deficiencies identified during this audit process would be addressed in the OCQ courses.

For many Export Health Certificates (EHC) the requirement to be signed by an OV is outlined in EU law. For any EHC, in order to protect animal and public health it is important that individual signing an certificate has the relevant qualifications and experience to attest to the matters concerned. We have though introduced the role of Certification Support Officer (CSO). Working under the direction of a certifying officer, a CSO can undertake administrative and preparatory work to get a consignment ready for export making the work of OVs more effective. The number of CSOs has increased from c. 100 in November 2020 to c. 500 today and continues to grow.

■ **Fly-tipping: Rural Areas**

Sajid Javid:

[\[163672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle fly tipping in (a) Bromsgrove District and (b) other semi-rural communities.

Rebecca Pow:

Fly-tipping is a crime which blights local communities and the environment, and we are committed to tackling this unacceptable behaviour. The role of central Government is to enable and support local action by providing a clear legal framework of rights, responsibilities and powers and setting national standards. We continue to work with partners to tackle this crime. In recent years we have bolstered local authorities' powers to tackle fly-tipping, such as by introducing the power to issue fixed penalty notices and to stop and seize vehicles of suspected fly-tippers.

Our 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy set out our strategic approach to prevent, detect and deter waste crime. We committed to strengthen sentences for fly-tipping and to develop a fly-tipping toolkit to help local authorities and others work in partnership to tackle this crime. We also committed to increasing penalties for fly-tipping in our manifesto.

Budget 2020 allocated up to £2million to support innovative solutions to tackle fly-tipping. We are exploring funding opportunities and priorities at this stage, including considering the role of digital solutions and supporting research into the drivers, deterrents, and impacts of fly-tipping in urban, suburban and rural areas.

We are also preparing a number of legislative reforms to tackle waste crime, which will help to tackle fly-tipping. We are taking forward the commitment in the Resources and Waste Strategy to develop proposals for the reform of the waste carrier, broker, and dealer regime. We are working with industry and the regulator and we intend to consult later this year. We also intend to consult on the introduction of mandatory electronic waste tracking. This will help to ensure that waste is dealt with appropriately and to reduce the incidence of waste crime and fly-tipping.

The Environment Bill also includes several measures to help tackle waste crime. The Bill will ensure agencies and authorities can work more effectively to combat waste

crime through better access to evidence and improved powers of entry. These new powers will help ensure waste criminals, such as illegitimate waste operators reliant on fly-tipping for income, are held accountable for their actions.

■ Food and Gardens: Waste Disposal

Julie Marson: [\[163726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to review section 45(3) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to ensure that local authorities are not suspending the collection of food waste with garden waste in the event that those local authorities charge for garden waste.

Julie Marson: [\[163727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that local authorities are not suspending collection of food waste with garden waste collections in the event that those garden waste collections are chargeable.

Rebecca Pow:

We support frequent and comprehensive rubbish and recycling collections. Under new measures in the Environment Bill, local authorities will be required to arrange for the collection of a core set of recyclable waste streams from households, which will include food and garden waste. Under these new requirements, food waste must be collected at least once a week and both food waste and garden waste must always be collected separately from the dry recyclable waste streams and residual waste. The food waste and garden waste streams should be collected separately from each other unless it is not technically or economically practicable or there is no significant environmental benefit in doing so. Following support in response to our initial consultation, we are preparing a further consultation on consistency in recycling to be published this spring, which will include further detail on timelines for local authorities to comply with these new requirements.

With regards to charging, under section 45(3) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012, local authorities can recover a reasonable charge for the collection of garden waste. As part of the upcoming consultation, we will be seeking further views on whether local authorities should be able to charge for the collection of garden waste, or whether a free minimum collection service should be provided. Irrespective of the outcome of this, the requirement on local authorities to collect food waste at least once a week will mean that there will be no option for local authorities to suspend the collection of food waste under any circumstances, including where food waste and garden waste are collected together.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Land Mines****Dan Jarvis:**[\[166430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans the Government has to provide financial support to organisations employing former Taliban and Hezbi Islami combatants as deminers in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is a leading donor of demining in Afghanistan. Over the last decade, we have invested nearly £50m in clearing explosive hazards, educating civilians about the risks, and coordinating the national demining effort. We have cleared over 33 square kilometres of land in the last five years alone, benefitting hundreds of thousands of civilians, and supporting Afghanistan to meet its obligations under the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty to become a landmine-free country by 2023. One of the benefits of this investment has been the employment of thousands of deminers in the field who are far less likely to take up arms in the conflict as a result.

We know from other situations that demining can play a powerful role in national peace processes. This can either be as a 'Confidence Building Measure' during negotiations themselves to help build trust between the parties, or as a way of reintegrating former combatants in useful employment as part of a wider 'Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration' effort. Whilst we have no imminent plans to fund such an initiative, we are engaging with our partners to consider how best to support Afghan peace negotiations and a reduction in violence. Any UK financial support will carefully consider the timing and content of such an initiative to contribute meaningfully towards the peace process.

■ Africa: Overseas Aid**Stephen Doughty:**[\[165554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what conflict risk assessment he has undertaken in relation to proposed UK cuts to aid in (a) Nigeria, (b) South Sudan, (c) Somalia and (d) the Sahel region.

James Duddridge:

As announced last year, the impact of the global pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take the tough but necessary decision to temporarily reduce how much we spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA).

The Foreign Secretary has set out seven core priorities for the UK's aid budget, including resolving conflict. We are now working through the implications of these changes for individual programmes. No decisions have yet been made on individual budget allocations.

■ Ahmed Aliouat**Navendu Mishra:** [\[164662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will (a) discuss with the Moroccan Ambassador and (b) instruct HM Ambassador to Morocco to raise with the Moroccan authorities the case of Ahmed Aliouat.

Navendu Mishra: [\[164663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will instruct HM Ambassador to Morocco to send an official to observe the appeal of the Saharawi Ahmed Aliouat in the Military court in Rabat.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of the case of Ahmed Aliouat. We discuss human rights with the Moroccan authorities and raise cases where appropriate.

■ Bahrain: Political Prisoners**Zarah Sultana:** [\[165683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Bahraini counterpart on the release of prisoners of conscience including the 73-year-old leader of the political opposition, Hassan Mushaima.

James Cleverly:

We continue to monitor and raise the case of Hassan Mushaima, as necessary, at senior levels with the Bahraini Government. The UK continues to engage with the Government of Bahrain to support its reform agenda, and to deliver on its international and domestic human rights commitments.

Wayne David: [\[166331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Government of Bahrain on the detention of Hussein Abdulrasool, Fares Husain, Mohammed Jafar and Sayed Hasan Ameen; and whether a UK Government representative will attend their hearing on 11 March 2021.

James Cleverly:

We have followed the detention of Hussein Abdulrasool, Fares Husain, Mohammed Jafar and Sayed Hasan Ameen, arrested for arson, endangering the lives and property of others, and preparing and possessing Molotov cocktails, and will continue to monitor and raise their cases if and when appropriate. We understand the hearing took place on 11 March 2021 and that all were sentenced to 6 months imprisonment, which was replaced with a rehabilitation program under alternative sentencing arrangements within the spirit of the new Child Reform Justice Act. We welcome this retroactive application of the new law's content and purpose. Due to Covid restrictions, it was not possible for Embassy staff to attend the hearing in person.

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus**Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[165638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility in supporting workers in the Global South.

James Duddridge:

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on both UK businesses and workers within their global supply chains. That is why FCDO established the Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility, helping businesses recover from and remain resilient to the economic and social impact of the pandemic. The Facility operates in the garments and agriculture sectors, as analysis shows that both have suffered from drops in demand with resulting job vulnerability, alongside the health risks of COVID-19 to large numbers of workers across Africa and Asia.

Launched in August 2020, the Facility is already delivering impact. 206,000 workers have received critical cash transfers, health services, PPE, COVID-19 prevention and training to build resilience and rights awareness. The Facility seeks to improve the lives of nearly 1 million people in developing countries through partnerships with businesses, helping to addressing the impact of COVID-19.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[165639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2020 to Question 82265 on Developing Countries: Coronavirus, how many workers have been directly supported under the Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility across UK supply chains.

James Duddridge:

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on both UK businesses and workers within their global supply chains. That is why FCDO established the Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility, helping businesses recover from and remain resilient to the economic and social impact of the pandemic. The Facility operates in the garments and agriculture sectors, as analysis shows that both have suffered from drops in demand with resulting job vulnerability, alongside the health risks of COVID-19 to large numbers of workers across Africa and Asia.

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Preet Kaur Gill: [\[165640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2020 to Question 82265 on Developing Countries: Coronavirus, if he will make an estimate of the number of workers in UK supply chains that would not have received support from UK retailers and wholesalers

equivalent to that support provided under the Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility in the event that that Facility had not been introduced.

James Duddridge:

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on both UK businesses and workers within their global supply chains. That is why FCDO established the Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility, helping businesses recover from and remain resilient to the economic and social impact of the pandemic. The Facility operates in the garments and agriculture sectors, as analysis shows that both have suffered from drops in demand with resulting job vulnerability, alongside the health risks of COVID-19 to large numbers of workers across Africa and Asia.

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■ **Electronic Warfare: International Cooperation**

Catherine West:

[\[165625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what engagement his Department has had with international partners on cyber-espionage; and what international partnerships his Department has entered into to help tackle cyber-espionage practices.

James Cleverly:

We engage continuously with international partners on all aspects of cyber policy and security to protect and uphold a free, open, peaceful and secure cyberspace. This happens in a range of settings and fora including the UN, NATO, OSCE and with the EU, and in smaller groups, particularly 'Five Eyes' partners. We also regularly raise issues of cyber policy and security through our cross-Government Cyber dialogues with 30 countries and globally through our growing network of 20+ cyber experts across six continents.

Malicious actors, both State and non-State, conduct activity that harms UK interests or those of our allies. We work closely with allies to deter, mitigate and respond to malicious cyber activity including by raising awareness, attributing attacks and sanctioning those responsible.

■ **Global Partnership for Education**

Layla Moran:

[\[166530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to pledge at least £600m to the replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education.

Wendy Morton:

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

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

■ Gulf Strategy Fund**David Linden:**[\[165650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 November 2020 to Question 11408, on what date the Government plans to publish the Programme Summary of the Gulf Strategy Fund; and whether a copy of that document will be placed in the Library.

James Cleverly:

We will publish a Programme Summary for the Gulf Strategy Fund for 2020/21 in March 2021 through the Cabinet Office's designated cross-Whitehall Transparency window, along with summaries for the other FCDO International Programme Fund programmes. This is in line with the timetable for publication of programme documents for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office using the Cabinet Office Transparency gridslot. The document will be publicly available on [.gov.uk](http://gov.uk).

■ Iran: Nuclear Power**John Lamont:**[\[163719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking following Iran's decision to suspend application of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Additional Protocol.

James Cleverly:

Iran's continued systematic non-compliance with its nuclear commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) is hollowing out the non-proliferation benefits of the deal and jeopardising our efforts to preserve it. On 23 February, the Foreign Secretary, alongside his French and German counterparts, expressed our deep regret at Iran's suspension of the Additional Protocol and urged Iran to return to compliance with its JCPoA commitments. Our priority is now, with the parties of the JCPoA and the new US administration, to find a diplomatic way forward that realises the benefits of the deal.

■ Iran: Nuclear Weapons**Chris Clarkson:**[\[163745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of confirmation from the International Atomic Energy Agency that Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium is 14 times the limit set under the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear agreement.

James Cleverly:

Iran's continued systematic non-compliance with its nuclear commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA), including its increasing stockpile of enriched uranium, is undermining the non-proliferation benefits of the deal and jeopardising our efforts to preserve it. On 18 February in Paris, the Foreign Secretary joined his French and German counterparts and the US Secretary of State Tony Blinken to discuss concerted action to bring Iran back to full compliance. Our priority is to find a diplomatic way forward with the parties of the JCPoA and the US Administration that realises the benefits of the deal.

■ Iran: Overseas Aid**John Lamont:**[\[163720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the basis was for the UK's financial aid to Iran of £16 million between 2013 and 2017; what assessment he has made of whether a proportion of that aid funded textbooks that reportedly promote extremism; and whether the UK currently provides funds to improve educational links to Iran.

James Cleverly:

Between 2013 and 2017, total FCO bilateral spending on Iran was approximately £4.4 million. These funds were spent on developing long-term people-to-people educational and cultural links between our two countries, including supporting English teachers, artists and Chevening scholars. Chevening supports exceptional young people all over the world to reach their potential, and remains open for applicants in Iran. We are not aware that any of this spending funded textbooks reportedly promoting extremism. The British Council do not currently operate or fund programmes in Iran.

■ Iraq: Kurds**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[163147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with Iraqi officials on the free speech of journalists working in the Erbil region of Iraqi Kurdistan.

James Cleverly:

We condemn acts of intimidation against journalists and media organisations, and the suppression of information including the internet. I have raised my concerns over restrictions on media freedom in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq with the Prime Minister

of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Masrour Barzani. In the last few weeks, our Ambassador in Baghdad, and our Consul General in Erbil, has also discussed these issues with their interlocutors in the Kurdistan Regional Government.

■ **Libya and Syria: Overseas Aid**

Anna McMorrin:

[\[166515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to announce the UK's allocation of 2021-22 overseas development aid for (a) Syria and (b) Libya.

James Cleverly:

As announced last year, the impact of the global pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take the tough but necessary decision to temporarily reduce how much we spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA). We are now working through the implications of these changes for individual programmes. No decisions have yet been made on individual budget allocations.

■ **Myanmar: Human Rights**

Ian Mearns:

[\[162571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the alleged human rights abuses carried out by members of the military in Myanmar following the Military coup; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure that these allegations are investigated and sanctions brought against those found responsible.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is deeply concerned by ongoing human rights violations in Myanmar. We have been clear that the state of emergency, and all restrictions on rights and freedoms, should be lifted immediately. The people's right to peaceful protest should be respected. The coup must end. We urge the military to exercise utmost restraint and respect human rights and international law. The military must be held accountable for their actions.

I formally summoned the Myanmar Ambassador twice to register the UK's extreme concern regarding the alleged human rights abuses and stressed that the security forces must exercise restraint and not use deadly violence against peaceful protesters.

The UK continues to lead international efforts in pursuing those responsible for the serious human rights violations in Myanmar. Working with partners, including the US and Canada, we have sanctioned 9 military officers, including the Commander-in-Chief, for their role in the coup. This includes cabinet ministers and members of the State Administration Council, established to run the functions of state following the coup. We are exploring options for further sanctions and are working with partners to ensure any sanctions are sufficiently targeted and do not impact the wider population.

■ National Crime Agency**Catherine West:**[\[165626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what engagement he has had with his international counterparts on the international work of the National Crime Agency.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO is committed to supporting the international work of the National Crime Agency (NCA) both through ministerial engagement and the work conducted at diplomatic posts overseas to enhance cooperation with foreign law enforcement agencies.

As the UK Government lead for serious and organised crime and the NCA, the Home Secretary leads on international engagement of this kind. However, other UK Government Ministers also engage with international counterparts on the work of the NCA when appropriate, encouraging further cooperation to tackle shared threats and promote shared interests. It is clear from HMG's international engagement that the work of the NCA is highly valued across the world.

■ Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**Claire Hanna:**[\[165695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) assessment he has made of the potential merits of repaying the UK's historical debt to Iran and (b) timescale he has for the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

James Cleverly:

We are using every tool in our diplomatic arsenal to secure the immediate and permanent release of arbitrarily detained dual British nationals in Iran. We continue to raise Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case at the most senior levels in the Iranian Government. The FCDO remains in regular contact with both Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe and her family, and we continue to provide them with all support possible.

We welcome the removal of Nazanin's ankle tag, but Iran's continued treatment of her is intolerable. She must be allowed to return to the UK as soon as possible to be reunited with her family.

On IMS, we continue to explore options to resolve this 40-year old case.

■ Overseas Aid**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[164583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he received legal advice in respect of lowering the target for ODA from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent prior to 26 November 2020.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[164584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral contribution of 26 November 2020, Official report, col 1018, whether he has received legal advice in respect of whether legislation would be needed in the event that the UK did not return to the target of spending 0.7 per cent of GNI on ODA in the financial year 2022.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 11 March 2021]: The Foreign Secretary took a range of advice before the decision was taken in respect of the reduction in ODA from 0.7% to 0.5% of GNI.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[166508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral statement of 26 November 2020, Official Report, column 1018 on Official Development Assistance, whether his Department has a timescale for returning to spending 0.7 per cent of gross national income on Official Development Assistance.

Nigel Adams:

The UK economy is undergoing the worst contraction for 3 decades. **Against this backdrop, we have been forced to make hard choices, including temporarily reducing the ODA target from 0.7% of GNI to 0.5%.** We remain a world leading donor, and will spend over £10 billion of ODA this year. We intend to return to the 0.7 per cent target when the fiscal situation allows.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[166509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 158010, how much Official Development Assistance has been allocated to fulfil existing commitments to (a) the World Bank, (b) the EU, (c) the Global Fund for Aids, Malaria & TB, (d) GAVI, (e) CDC Group, (f) UN institutions and (g) climate change in the 2021-22 financial year.

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-19 and global health security; girls' education; science and research; defending open societies and resolving conflict; humanitarian assistance; and promoting trade and economic growth. We are working through our internal business planning process which will allocate the ODA budget across these priorities and geographies.

No final decisions have yet been made on budget allocations for 2021/22.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[166510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of the aid budget is already committed to multilateral institutions in the 2021-22 financial year.

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-19 and global health security; girls' education; science and research; defending open societies and resolving conflict; humanitarian assistance; and promoting trade and economic growth. We are working through our internal business planning process which will allocate the ODA budget across these priorities and geographies.

No final decisions have yet been made on budget allocations for 2021/22.

■ Poland: Human Rights**Catherine West:**[\[166502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Polish counterpart on (a) women's rights and (b) LGBT+ rights in that country.

Wendy Morton:

The Foreign Secretary raised our concerns in relation to women's and LGBT rights in Poland during a call with his Polish counterpart, Foreign Minister Rau, in January.

The UK accords a high priority to promoting gender equality, and women's and girls' rights, across the world. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office officials regularly raise gender issues in multilateral fora such as the UN and the Council of Europe. The UK firmly believes that supporting the comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls, through evidence-based public health interventions, saves lives. The British Embassy in Warsaw is active on this agenda and supports Polish NGOs working on women's and girls' rights.

The UK is also implacably opposed to all forms of discrimination and committed to promoting and protecting the rights and freedoms of LGBT people in all circumstances. Our Embassy in Warsaw is engaged in dialogue with both civil society and the Polish Government, as well as with our diplomatic partners. We will continue to work with the LGBT community in Poland to identify opportunities to tackle discrimination and promote inclusion.

■ Religious Freedom**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[163145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that his Department promotes religious freedom throughout the world.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities.

Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities.

Ministers and officials regularly raise specific cases of concern, and discuss practices and laws that discriminate on the basis of religion or belief.

In 2019, the Bishop of Truro released a report commissioned by the then Foreign Secretary looking into the then FCO support for persecuted Christians, with recommendations to improve the lives of people persecuted for their religion, faith or belief. Of the 22 recommendations, we have fully delivered ten, made good progress on a further eight, and we are confident that all 22 will be delivered by the time of the independent review in 2022. The Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon underlined the UK's commitment to FoRB for all in a number of international meetings in November 2020, speaking at the Ministerial to Advance FoRB and the Ministers' Forum of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance ('Alliance'). On 20 December 2020, the Prime Minister reaffirmed his commitment to FoRB by appointing Fiona Bruce MP as his Special Envoy for FoRB. Mrs Bruce represents the UK at meetings of the Alliance who work to advocate for the rights of individuals being discriminated against or persecuted for their faith or belief.

■ **Sayed Hasan Ameen**

Wayne David:

[\[166330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Government of Bahrain on the release on medical and compassionate grounds of Sayed Hasan Ameen before his hearing on 11 March 2021.

James Cleverly:

We have followed the detention of Sayed Hasan Ameen who was arrested with others for arson, endangering the lives and property of others, and preparing and possessing Molotov cocktails, and will continue to monitor and raise his case if and when appropriate. We understand the hearing took place on 11 March 2021 and that he was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment, which was replaced with a rehabilitation program under alternative sentencing arrangements within the spirit of the new Child Reform Justice Act. We welcome this retroactive application of the new law's content and purpose. Due to Covid restrictions, it was not possible for Embassy staff to attend the hearing in person.

■ **South America: Diplomatic Service**

Catherine West:

[\[166504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many staff his Department employed in British Embassies and Consulates in South America in financial year (a) 2017-18, (b) 2018-19 and (c) 2019-20.

Nigel Adams:

We have interpreted the question to mean how many staff were employed by the then Foreign and Commonwealth Office in South America in each of the financial years, (a) 2017-18, (b) 2018-19 and (c) 2019-20. All the figures shown are based on the headcount as at 31 March in each year.

The figures below cover our Embassies, Consulates and High Commissions in Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. These figures do not include staff from the then Department for International Development (DFID).

- 2017-18 = 540-559
- 2018-19 = 560-579
- 2019-20 = 540-559

■ South Sudan: Overseas Aid

Harriett Baldwin: [\[164448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has for allocation of funding of Overseas Development Assistance in South Sudan in the financial year 2021-22; and if he will make a comparative assessment of that allocation of funding with that funding so allocated in the financial years (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2019-20.

James Duddridge:

As announced last year, the impact of the global pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take the tough but necessary decision to temporarily reduce how much we spend on Official Development Assistance. The FCDO is reviewing all individual country allocations as part of the Country Business Planning process, including specific implications for all spend in South Sudan

■ Special Representative on UK Victims of Gaddafi-sponsored IRA Terrorism

Simon Hoare: [\[165609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on (a) what date and (b) for what reason he decided to begin referring to the report on Qadhafi-sponsored IRA terrorism produced by William Shawcross as an internal scoping paper.

James Cleverly:

Mr Shawcross was commissioned in 2019 to produce an internal scoping report on the issue of compensation for UK victims of Qadhafi-sponsored IRA terrorism.

■ Syria: Humanitarian Aid

Anna McMorrin: [\[166516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he (a) has had and (b) plans to have with his international counterparts on international humanitarian aid funding in advance of the fifth Brussels conference on Supporting the future of Syria and the region, scheduled to take place on 29 to 30 March 2021.

James Cleverly:

The Syria Crisis remains one of the UK's top priorities and we will continue to stand by the Syrian people by delivering to those in need, both inside Syria and to refugee hosting countries. The UK is one of the largest bilateral donors to the Syria Crisis, having spent over £3.5 billion to date, our largest ever response to a single humanitarian crisis.

We continue to use our position at the UN Security Council, relationships with International Partners, UN agencies, human rights and non-governmental organisations and others, to push for greater aid access into Syria and more sustainable, long-term solutions, to increase the resilience of millions living in conflict. The UK's Special Representative for Syria plays an essential role in engaging the international community, to improve the lives of over 13 million people who are currently in need of humanitarian assistance. The UK's Special Representative is also committed to driving support for a genuine political process to reach a lasting settlement. The UK will continue to engage with and lead the wider international humanitarian response to do the same, including at the fifth Brussels Conference for Syria and the Region.

The FCDO is in the process of rigorous internal prioritisation process in response to the spending review announcement, and we will provide an update on any implications as soon as possible. We are still working through what this means for individual programmes and no decisions have yet been made.

■ Syria: Overseas Aid**Anna McMorrin:**[\[166517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with (a) UK's Special Representative for Syria and (b) representatives of non-governmental organisations on the UK's allocation of 2021-22 overseas development aid for Syria.

James Cleverly:

The Syria Crisis remains one of the UK's top priorities and we will continue to stand by the Syrian people by delivering to those in need, both inside Syria and to refugee hosting countries. The UK is one of the largest bilateral donors to the Syria Crisis, having spent over £3.5 billion to date, our largest ever response to a single humanitarian crisis.

We continue to use our position at the UN Security Council, relationships with International Partners, UN agencies, human rights and non-governmental organisations and others, to push for greater aid access into Syria and more sustainable, long-term solutions, to increase the resilience of millions living in conflict. The UK's Special Representative for Syria plays an essential role in engaging the international community, to improve the lives of over 13 million people who are currently in need of humanitarian assistance. The UK's Special Representative is also committed to driving support for a genuine political process to reach a lasting

settlement. The UK will continue to engage with and lead the wider international humanitarian response to do the same, including at the fifth Brussels Conference for Syria and the Region.

The FCDO is in the process of rigorous internal prioritisation process in response to the spending review announcement, and we will provide an update on any implications as soon as possible. We are still working through what this means for individual programmes and no decisions have yet been made.

■ Turkey: Trade Unions

Catherine West: [\[166501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Turkish counterpart on the treatment of trade unionists in that country.

Wendy Morton:

We have regular discussions with Turkish counterparts, including ministers, about human rights issues, which cover freedom of association and assembly. We consistently encourage Turkey to take greater steps to improve the human rights situation in a wide range of areas. We welcome the publication of Turkey's human rights action plan on 2 March 2021 and urge Turkey to ensure its prompt and thorough implementation for the benefit of all those living in Turkey. We will continue to monitor its progress.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: UK Delegations

Andrew Rosindell: [\[163163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will list the (a) Conference of the Parties and (b) Meeting of the Parties to which the Government is planning to send a delegation in 2021.

Nigel Adams:

There are numerous international Conferences of the Parties and Meetings of the Parties organised on both environmental and non-environmental issues (e.g. Biodiversity COP, Desertification, Chemical Weapons).

Our attendance at these spans several government departments across Whitehall and the aim of the UK Government is to attend all it is permitted to join.

■ USA: Radicalism

Catherine West: [\[166503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his US counterpart on the threat posed by far right extremism.

Wendy Morton:

Countering the rise of Right Wing Extremism and Right Wing Terrorism is a priority for the UK Government and we speak regularly to our international partners, both bilaterally and multilaterally, to help combat the threat from all forms of transnational terrorism. We regularly engage partners on multiple aspects of this threat, including with the USA, and will continue to do so.

■ Voluntary Service Overseas**Layla Moran:**[\[166533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to (a) extend or (b) renew the Volunteering for Development grant for the Voluntary Service Overseas organisation beyond 31 March 2021.

Wendy Morton:

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

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

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

■ West Bank: Demolition**Paul Blomfield:**[\[163214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the demolition of the Musa family home in Al Khader.

James Cleverly:

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

Andy Slaughter:[\[165462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to end demolitions of Palestinian homes and

structures and prevent forcible transfer of Palestinian communities, such as the Bedouin village of Humsa-Al Bqai'a in Area C of the West Bank.

James Cleverly:

The UK urged the Government of Israel to end demolitions of property in the West Bank at the UN Security Council on 25 February 2021. On the same day, The British Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised ongoing demolitions with the Israeli Authorities in a meeting alongside like-minded partners. I [Minister Cleverly] publicly called on Israel to stop demolitions on 5 February 2021. Officials from the British Consulate General Jerusalem make regular visits to areas at risk of demolition, and visited Humsa Al-Baqai'a on 6 November 2020 to reiterate UK support for the community.

Andy Slaughter:

[\[165463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take in response to Israeli demolitions of Palestinian infrastructure and continued settlement expansion in the West Bank by Israel.

James Cleverly:

The UK urged the Government of Israel to end demolitions of property in the West Bank at the UN Security Council on 25 February 2021. On the same day, The British Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised ongoing demolitions with the Israeli Authorities in a meeting alongside like-minded partners. I publicly called on Israel to stop demolitions on 5 February 2021. Officials from the British Consulate General Jerusalem make regular visits to areas at risk of demolition, and visited Humsa Al-Baqai'a on 6 November 2020 to reiterate UK support for the community.

■ **Xinjiang: Forced Labour**

Kate Osamor:

[\[165618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral statement of 12 January 2021, Official Report, column 160 on Xinjiang: forced labour, whether Magnitsky style sanctions are now being considered against the Chinese officials most closely involved with the human rights abuses against Uyghur Muslims.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government remains gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. On 12 January, the Foreign Secretary announced robust, targeted measures to help ensure that British organisations, whether public or private sector, are not complicit in, nor profiting from, the human rights violations in Xinjiang. These measures will target in a forensic way either those profiting from forced labour or those who would financially support it, whether deliberately or otherwise. We also continue to play a leading role in holding China to account for its human rights violations in the region, working closely with international partners. We keep all evidence and potential listings under the UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime under close review.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Brain Cancer: Research****Hilary Benn:**[\[152409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the latest research findings from research funded by his Department into glioma cancer have shown; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

The information is not available in the format requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Brain: Tumours**David Simmonds:**[\[163339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to (a) promote collaborative working between (i) the National Institute for Health Research, (ii) UK Research and Innovation, (iii) Cancer Research UK, (iv) the Medical Research Council, the (v) Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission and (vi) other relevant brain tumour research stakeholders and (b) award funding to advance the research being undertaken on brain tumours and brain tumour treatment.

Edward Argar:

The Department supported the establishment of the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission (TJBCM) in 2018. The TJBCM is a national convening body for all stakeholders engaged in brain tumour research, treatment and care. Its mission is to unite professional, patient, charity and Government groups to share information, and establish transformative programmes that will lead ultimately to a cure for brain tumours.

Active contributors to the TJBCM include the Department's National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), the Medical Research Council, Cancer Research UK, Brain Tumour Research, the Brain Tumour Charity and Brainstrust as well as representatives of the National Health Service. As part of the establishment of the TJBCM the Department announced £40 million over five years for brain tumour research via the NIHR. The NIHR is also engaging with UK Research and Innovation colleagues.

■ Cancer: Health Services**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[157163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 restrictions announced in January 2021 on the backlog of cancer treatments; and what estimate he has made of the number of patients that (a) have missed and (b) had delays to diagnosis and treatment in respect of (a) cancer surgery, (b) chemotherapy, (c) radiotherapy and (d) follow up.

Jo Churchill:

Data for referral numbers and those starting treatment for cancer in January 2021 will be published shortly.

The Government has taken a number of steps to ensure people can continue to access high-quality cancer care throughout the pandemic. For example, there are 53 live regional diagnostic centre pathways across hospitals in England, compared to 12 in March 2020. In October, NHS England and NHS Improvement and Public Health England launched the latest Help Us Help You campaign to urge people with potential symptoms of cancer to see their general practitioner.

Additionally, COVID-19 protected hubs for cancer surgery have been established to keep vulnerable cancer patients safe. This particularly protects cancer patients from immunocompromised infection. All 21 Cancer Alliances across England have arrangements in place for surgical cancer hubs.

Mr Clive Betts:[\[164352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the £1 billion allocation in the 2020 Spending Review for tackling the patient backlog will be allocated to cancer diagnosis, care and treatment.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 March 2021]: The arrangements for deployment of the dedicated £1 billion elective recovery funding will be set out shortly, including, where appropriate, details of any clinical prioritisation.

■ Care Homes: DNACPR Decisions**Helen Hayes:**[\[115743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he is having with the care sector on the use of Do Not Resuscitate orders in response to concerns on their use in care homes during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 November 2020]: The Adult Social Care Winter Plan reinforces that any advance care decision, including do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation (DNACPR) decisions, should be fully discussed with the individual and their family where possible and appropriate, and signed by the clinician responsible for their care. Blanket DNACPR's are not acceptable.

In October 2020 the Department asked the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to review how DNACPR decisions were used during the COVID-19 pandemic. The CQC were asked to look at how people, and their family, friends and other carers, were involved in planning, managing and making decisions. An interim report was published on the 3 December 2020, with the final report scheduled for publication in March 2021.

■ Coronavirus: Babies and Parents

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[163644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure the health and safety of (a) newborn babies and (b) new parents who have been diagnosed with covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Guidance on caring for pregnant and postnatal women with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and their babies is published and available from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. The guidance sets out that families should be guided on how to identify signs of illness in their new-born or worsening of the woman's symptoms and provided with appropriate details on who to contact if they have concerns or questions. Women who have recently given birth and test positive for COVID-19 should receive all recommended advice, guidance and support in relation to their postnatal physical and mental health and wellbeing and care of their new-born baby.

■ Coronavirus: Bedfordshire

Mohammad Yasin:

[\[130180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when a vaccine for covid-19 will be available to high priority patients in (a) Bedford and (b) Kempston.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The phased vaccination programme commenced on 8 December 2020. The NHS has now offered the COVID-19 vaccine to everyone in the top four priority cohorts which includes people aged 70 years old and over, care home residents and staff, health and care staff and clinically extremely vulnerable patients.

From 15 February 2021, we have been inviting people aged 65 to 69 years old and those who are defined as clinically vulnerable and are therefore thought to be at high risk of serious illness from COVID-19 to book their vaccination. The target to reach all those in priority cohorts five to nine is 15 April 2021.

■ Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups

Hilary Benn:

[\[144599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what studies are being undertaken on the effect of covid on BME communities; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Investment of £4.3 million has been made in new research projects into the impact of COVID-19 among people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, including health and social care workers.

The projects will explore the impact of the virus specifically on migrant and refugee groups; working with key voices within BAME communities to create targeted, digital

health messages; the introduction of a new framework to ensure the representation of people from BAME backgrounds in clinical trials testing new treatments and vaccines for COVID-19; and the creation of one the United Kingdom's largest COVID-19 cohorts.

■ **Coronavirus: Greater London**

Catherine West: [\[137265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether data by London borough will be recorded as part of the national rollout of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement publish weekly data for vaccinations in England by local authority including London boroughs. This is available at the following link:

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

■ **Coronavirus: Injuries**

Andy McDonald: [\[161775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answers of 26 February 2021 to Questions 155053, 155054 and 160680, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the prevalence of long covid; and whether there is a credible risk that (a) fatal injury and (b) an injury that results in a permanent or irreversible disabling condition or requires immediate treatment in hospital as a result of exposure to covid-19 could occur.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 8 March 2021]: No such discussions with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions have taken place to date. However, research into the long-term health symptoms and impacts of COVID-19 is ongoing and we continue to collaborate across Government to monitor emerging evidence including statistics on the prevalence of 'long' COVID-19.

The Department has not made an assessment of 'credible risk' as defined by the Health and Safety Executive's Enforcement Management Model.

■ **Coronavirus: Liverpool City Region**

Derek Twigg: [\[104046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Prime Minister's statement of 12 October 2020 on Covid-19 Update, Official Report, Column 25, if he will publish the Government's correspondence with leaders in Merseyside on reaching an agreement that the Liverpool city region would move into the very high alert level from Wednesday 14 October.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 20 October 2020]: The Department does not hold this correspondence.

■ Coronavirus: Liverpool West Derby**Ian Byrne:****[136089]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of covid-19 vaccinations administered each day are administered in Liverpool West Derby constituency.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement publish weekly data for vaccinations in England. This provides data on vaccinations by local authority, constituency and region. This is available at the following link:

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

We do not publish daily vaccination figures at constituency level.

■ Coronavirus: Mortality Rates**Apsana Begum:****[131495]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the reasons for higher rates of covid-19 deaths among (a) BAME communities, (b) people affected by the benefits cap and (c) people living in overcrowded accommodation.

Jo Churchill:

There has been significant effort to understand the causes of race disparities in COVID-19 infection and to bring the research into policy making to mitigate the disproportionate effects. The direct impacts of COVID-19 improved for ethnic minorities as a whole during the early second wave, suggesting that race disparities in COVID-19 outcomes are driven by risk of infection rather than ethnicity itself being a risk factor for severe illness or death.

Data shows deprivation to be a major driver of the disparities in COVID-19 infection rates for all ethnic groups. Whilst mortality rates in black African men and women have significantly decreased between the first and second waves, the findings that the impact has been greater in South Asian groups indicate the role of wider social determinants in the unequal impact of COVID-19. Tackling deprivation will be a particular focus of the Government work.

No assessment has been made for people affected by the benefits cap. There is no direct evidence concerning overcrowded accommodation, but there is some related evidence of a positive association between household size and composition and COVID-19 deaths. The evidence is summarised in a recent report by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies on housing, household transmission and ethnicity, which is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/943178/S0923_housing_household_transmission_and_ethnicity.pdf

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Zarah Sultana: [\[163731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what evidence his Department has on the potential merits of joggers wearing face masks while running outside during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Wearing a face covering whilst running or exercising may interfere with the ability to breathe comfortably, therefore we do not recommend them for joggers. This follows evidence and guidance from the World Health Organization, which is available at the following link:

<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/337199>

Dr Philippa Whitford: [\[164503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the guidance, entitled Ventilation of indoor spaces to stop the spread of coronavirus, updated by Public Health England on 4 March 2021, whether the Government plans to revise the guidance on the use of personal protective equipment by health and care staff to require the use of FFP3 masks in all settings.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 March 2021]: The United Kingdom-wide Infection Prevention Control (IPC) Cell has recently reviewed the evidence in relation to the transmission route for COVID-19 and the IPC precautions required. The IPC guidance was updated most recently on 21 January and the Cell agreed that no changes to the current personal protective equipment requirements were needed.

There is also consensus across the UK Chief Medical Officers that existing guidance regarding the use of face masks and FFP3 masks by healthcare workers is correct.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Sir Mark Hendrick: [\[164355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether newborns can be discharged to the care of (a) fathers, (b) partners and (c) family members in the event that a mother is awaiting test results for covid-19 after birth.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

'Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection and Pregnancy' produced by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Royal College of Midwives sets out that postnatal care should be individualised according to the woman and newborn's needs and should follow the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidance for postnatal care as far as possible.

Women and their healthy babies should remain together in the immediate postpartum period, if they do not otherwise require maternal critical care or neonatal care. Women with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should remain with their baby and be supported to practice skin-to-skin/kangaroo care, if the newborn does not require additional medical care at this time.

■ Coronavirus: Steroid Drugs

Sir David Amess:

[\[162500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has commissioned research to establish whether the immunosuppressant effect of regular steroid use has led to users contracting covid-19 more easily.

Edward Argar:

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is not currently funding any research into whether the regular use of steroids can lead to users contracting COVID-19 more easily. However, the NIHR continues to welcome funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including on COVID-19 risk factors.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Bill Esterson:

[\[126012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to use Aintree community centre as a vaccination centre for covid 19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 10 December 2020]: Aintree community centre is being used as a vaccination centre for COVID-19.

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[128113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much has been spent on the distribution of the Pfizer covid-19 vaccine in England to date; and what level of Barnett consequential funding the Welsh Government will receive as a result.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 15 December 2020]: The cost of the distribution of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to locations in England which is managed by Public Health England, is estimated at £1.85 million from 4 December 2020 to the end of week commencing 15 February 2021.

The United Kingdom Government has procured vaccines on behalf of all parts of the country. The Barnett formula has been used to calculate vaccine supply allocations to the devolved administrations. This ensures Wales has access to 4.78% of any COVID-19 vaccine doses procured by the UK. Wales has received £5.2 billion upfront funding from the UK Government since the start of the pandemic, on top of the devolved administrations' Spring Budget 2020 funding.

Stephen Morgan:

[128725]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities and hospitals have the resources they need to effectively support covid-19 vaccine rollout programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We have recruited and mobilised an 80,000 strong vaccination workforce and established three delivery models for the programme: community teams, vaccination sites and hospital hubs.

We have ensured that we have the logistical expertise, transportation, workforce guidance and equipment in place, as well as the supporting infrastructure required, including warehousing to deploy the vaccine according to clinical priority.

Marsha De Cordova:

[129104]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the disproportionate effect of covid-19 on Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities, whether he plans to collect ethnicity data on people who are vaccinated against covid-19; and what his Department's reasons are for that data collection decision.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 December 2020]: Data on a patient's ethnicity is recorded on the National Immunisation Management System and on a patient's general practitioner record at the point of vaccination. There is clear evidence that certain black, Asian and minority ethnic groups have higher rates of infection and higher rates of serious disease, morbidity and mortality. Whilst there is no strong evidence that ethnicity is the sole explanation for this, it is important to capture ethnicity data to understand the level of uptake in different groups.

Sir John Hayes:

[129960]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 vaccines have been administered in (a) in South Holland and The Deepings constituency, (b) Lincolnshire, (c) East Midlands and (d) in the UK to date.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England publish weekly data for vaccinations and include a breakdown by Parliamentary Constituency, Lower Tier Local Authority, Clinical Commissioning Group and region at the following link:

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

Chi Onwurah:

[130070]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to his oral answer on 14 December 2020, Official Report, column 46, what definition of elderly is being used for prioritisation of covid-19 vaccinations for people in care homes for the elderly; and whether learning disabilities are considered as part of an overall assessment including age in vaccine prioritisation decisions.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The definition of elderly being used for prioritisation of COVID-19 vaccinations for people in care homes for the elderly is generally age 65 years old and over.

Learning disabilities are considered as part of an overall assessment including age in vaccine prioritisation decisions. All those with learning disabilities will be prioritised for a vaccine either in cohort six or by age, in which category permits the earliest vaccination date. This follows clarification, on 23 February, by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) which recommended that all those on their GP's learning disabilities register should be prioritised for a vaccination.

On 26 February, the JCVI published their interim advice for phase two of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, setting out that the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise people by age. This is because age is assessed to be the strongest factor linked to mortality, morbidity and hospitalisations, and because speed of vaccination delivery is crucial as we provide more people with protection from COVID-19. The Government has accepted this advice in principle and subject to the JCVI's final advice expected later this month.

Justin Madders:[\[130124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when NHS staff employed by ambulance trusts will receive their covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: All frontline healthcare staff and social care workers involved with direct patient care have been prioritised in the deployment of COVID-19 vaccinations. National Health Service ambulance trust staff are included in this definition and have been prioritised for a vaccination in priority cohort two.

Cat Smith:[\[130128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, at what stage in his vaccination timetable critical workers will receive a covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) advice on prioritisation for phase one included frontline health and social care workers as a part of cohort two. Cohorts one to four have now all been offered the vaccine by our target date of 15 February. Frontline healthcare workers who have not received their vaccination can arrange this through the National Booking System or by calling 119.

For phase two of the vaccination programme, the JCVI published its interim advice on 26 February setting out that the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise people by age and not occupation.

Jake Berry:[\[133814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 vaccinations have been administered in each region of England up to 6 January 2020.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: NHS England publishes daily data for vaccinations in England, showing the total first and second doses given to date, by region. This data is available at the following link:

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

Sarah Owen:**[134189]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to prioritise school staff in the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Kate Osborne:**[134196]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will prioritise teachers and school staff for the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We are following the advice from independent experts on the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) on which groups of people to prioritise for COVID-19 vaccines.

The JCVI advised the immediate priority should be to prevent deaths and protect health and care staff, with old age deemed the single biggest factor determining mortality.

The Government will set out plans for phase two of the vaccination programme, based on further advice from the JCVI. Phase two may include further reduction in hospitalisation and targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services.

Duncan Baker:**[134205]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) dentists and (b) frontline health staff working in private dental practices will be prioritised for the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: In line with the guidance and the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, anyone defined as a frontline healthcare worker is prioritised in cohort two, whether they work for the National Health Service or a private healthcare provider. This includes dentists and dental staff.

Charlotte Nichols:**[134229]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his latest forecast is for the covid-19 vaccine to have been offered to everyone eligible for that vaccine in the UK.

Nadhim Zahawi:

On 20 February we set new targets for the acceleration of the programme to offer all adults over 50 years old a first dose by mid-April and the rest of the adult population by the end of July.

Claire Hanna: [\[134245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits making key workers a priority group for covid-19 vaccination.

Claire Hanna: [\[134246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure teachers and school staff in special schools have access to the covid-19 vaccine; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of making teachers and school staff in special schools a priority group for vaccination.

Mr Laurence Robertson: [\[134333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will prioritise teachers in special schools for the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 13 January 2021]: We have no plans to prioritise teachers and key workers by their occupation.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's interim advice for phase two of the vaccination programme sets out the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise people by age.

If teachers or key workers are captured in phase one or two due to their age or clinical need they will be vaccinated accordingly.

Olivia Blake: [\[134283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether home carers are planned to receive a covid-19 vaccination at the same time as those they care for who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Unpaid carers are included in the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's priority group six which comprises of all individuals aged 16 to 64 years old with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality. This also includes those who are in receipt of a carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer fall ill.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[134381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that clinically vulnerable emergency service workers are prioritised for the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 13 January 2021]: NHS England and Improvement have set out Operational Guidance on the Vaccination of Frontline Health and Social Care Workers. This includes all frontline social care workers directly working with people clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 who need care and support irrespective of where

they work, whether they care for clinically vulnerable adults or children or who they are employed by. All frontline healthcare staff who are eligible for seasonal influenza vaccination should be offered a COVID-19 vaccine. This includes paramedics and ambulance drivers. If an emergency worker is not included due to their occupation but is eligible for prioritisation due to their age or clinical risk, then they will be vaccinated in the according priority group.

Martyn Day: [\[134504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will estimate the number of covid-19 vaccinations received by Haemato-oncology staff.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We are unable to estimate the numbers of vaccines given to individual groups of healthcare staff.

Matthew Pennycook: [\[134514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to publish the number of people that have received a covid-19 vaccination by (a) week in which the vaccine was administered, (b) region and (c) Clinical Commissioning Group.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 13 January 2021]: NHS England publishes data on vaccines administered per week and cumulative data on the number of vaccines administered by region and clinical commissioning group, which is available at the following link:

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

Jon Trickett: [\[135807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have received a covid-19 vaccination, by region.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England and NHS Improvement publish daily data for vaccinations in England, showing the total first and second doses given to date, by region which is available at the following link:

www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[135853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the priority given to adults with learning difficulties, as part of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that those with severe and profound learning disabilities, and those with learning disabilities

residing in residential care, should be offered vaccine in priority group six and that all individuals with Down's syndrome should be offered vaccination in priority group four. On 24 February the JCVI published a clarification of their advice on vaccinating people with a learning disability.

The JCVI confirmed their advice that priority should be given to those with a severe and profound learning disability. To efficiently identify those who are more severely affected and may not be invited for vaccination due to coding of learning disability on general practitioner (GP) systems, the JCVI supports a practical approach of inviting everyone who is on the GP Learning Disability Register for vaccination in cohort six.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[136455]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to publish data on the number of vaccinations administered in each local authority area.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement publish weekly data for vaccinations in England by local authority which is available at the following link:

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

Liam Byrne:

[137135]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish statistics on covid-19 vaccinations at constituency level.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England publishes weekly data for vaccinations in England by constituency, which is available at the following link:

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

Daisy Cooper:

[138082]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to extend priority access to the covid-19 vaccine to people with all levels of learning disability.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 19 January 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that those with severe and profound learning disabilities and those with learning disabilities residing in residential care, should be offered vaccine in group six and that all individuals with Down's syndrome should be offered vaccination in priority group four.

On 24 February the JCVI published a clarification of their advice on vaccinating people with a learning disability. The JCVI confirmed their advice that priority should be given to those with a severe and profound learning disability. To efficiently identify those who are more severely affected and may not be invited for vaccination due to coding of learning disability on general practitioner (GP) systems, the JCVI supports

a practical approach of inviting everyone who is on the GP Learning Disability Register for vaccination in cohort six.

The JCVI also supports an approach for the National Health Service to work with local authorities to identify adults in residential and nursing care, and those who require support, for example as part of assisted living in the community and those in shared accommodation with multiple occupancy. This will mean at least 150,000 more people with learning disabilities will now be offered the vaccine more quickly.

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[138456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) the covid-19 vaccination programme is accessible to people with sight loss, (b) information sent to a visually impaired person on vaccinations is available in an accessible format, (c) clear information is provided on the location of the vaccine centre and public transport links and (d) staff are trained to provide support to people with sight loss.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[138917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) information about covid-19 vaccinations is accessible to people with visual impairments and (b) vaccination centres contain (i) clear signage, (ii) good lighting, and (iii) staff trained to support people with visual impairments; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 20 January 2021]: The national booking letters are sent in size 16 font as standard, as defined by RNIB as large print. The national booking letters provide dialling 119 as an option and information will be available in braille, audio, larger print and easy read soon. When sent an invitation for vaccine by letter, the public are directed to the location's individual details on accessibility. The letter also provides links to guidance and advice which can be enlarged on a screen, provided in accessible formats as well as provided in hard copy.

Vaccination centres are subject to the same standards to support people will accessibility needs including visual impairment as all health care services. This includes ensuring good lighting and clear signage. In addition, marshals and staff will help people attending vaccination centres to navigate through the centre safely. All National Health Service staff including those located at vaccination centres are required to undergo equality, diversity and inclusion training which equips healthcare workers with the basic skills. Vaccination centres have shift supervisors who can oversee and instruct staff accordingly. Sites will also have trained Royal Voluntary Service volunteer stewards who can act as way finders for all those who require assistance.

Barbara Keeley:

[\[146836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's advice on priority groups for covid-19

vaccination, whether the UK covid-19 vaccines delivery plan will be updated to confirm that unpaid carers will be offered a vaccine in priority group six.

Barbara Keeley:

[146837]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's advice on priority groups for covid-19 vaccination and the UK covid-19 vaccines delivery plan, what steps he is taking to identify unpaid carers in order to ensure they are offered the covid-19 vaccine at the appropriate point.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: Unpaid carers are included in the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's priority group six. This also includes those who are eligible for a carer's allowance, or those who are the sole or primary carer of an elderly or disabled person who is at increased risk of COVID-19 mortality and therefore clinically vulnerable.

The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for unpaid carers has now been published. The SOP draws on national and local sources for known carers, to help identify and enable them to be invited quickly for a vaccination, as well as making provision for those unpaid carers who may not already be known to the health and social care system to come forward. The SOP is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2021/03/C1182-sop-covid-19-vaccine-deployment-programme-unpaid-carers-jcvi-priority-cohort-6.pdf>

Dr Rupa Huq:

[147941]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people with mild and moderate learning disabilities will be prioritised during phase two of the Government's covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: On 24 February the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) published a clarification of their advice on vaccinating people with a learning disability. They confirmed their view that priority should be given to those with a severe and profound learning disability, but recognised concerns about coding of learning disability on general practitioner (GP) systems and supported a practical approach of inviting everyone who is on the GP Learning Disability Register for vaccination in cohort six in phase one.

Phase two of the COVID-19 vaccine programme will cover all adults under 50 years old not already included in phase one. Interim advice has been published by the JCVI recommending an age-based approach which the Government has accepted in principle. This is subject to final advice from JCVI.

Neale Hanvey:

[148021]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 January 2021 to Question 136640, what criteria will be used to determine who qualifies

as the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill and should therefore be offered the covid-19 vaccination in priority group six.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Unpaid carers are included in the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's priority group six. This also includes those who are eligible for a carer's allowance, or those who are the sole or primary carer of an elderly or disabled person who is at increased risk of COVID-19 mortality and therefore clinically vulnerable.

The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for unpaid carers has now been published. The SOP draws on national and local sources for known carers, to help identify and enable them to be invited quickly for a vaccination, as well as making provision for those unpaid carers who may not already be known to the health and social care system to come forward.

The SOP is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2021/03/C1182-sop-covid-19-vaccine-deployment-programme-unpaid-carers-icvi-priority-cohort-6.pdf>

Chi Onwurah:

[148782]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to publish regional covid-19 vaccination targets; and if he will publish weekly vaccination figures for the North East.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We do not currently have plans to publish regional targets. However, on 20 February we set new targets to offer all adults over 50 years old a first dose by mid-April and the rest of the adult population by the end of July.

NHS England and NHS Improvement publish daily data for vaccinations in England, showing the total first and second doses given to date, by region. NHS England and NHS Improvement also publish weekly data for vaccinations in England, by smaller localities and by ethnicity. This data is available at the following link:

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

Sir Mike Penning:

[149181]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) prevent vulnerable people from falling victim to vaccination scams, (b) publicise that the covid-19 vaccination is free and (c) publicise how people will be contacted when they are called for vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: The Government's Counter Disinformation Unit looks for trends on social media platforms so that we can work with them and other partners to respond to misleading content rapidly. This can range from labelling, downranking, or removal where there is significant risk of harm, in line with platform terms and conditions.

The Department is leading extensive communications activity to reassure the public, providing advice and information to support those who have been prioritised to receive a vaccine and anyone who has questions about the vaccination process.

We have developed the SHARE checklist which aims to increase audience resilience by educating and empowering those who see, inadvertently share and are affected by false and misleading information.

In addition, a range of posters, leaflets and awareness videos have been made available on social media and in public places to help explain more about the COVID-19 vaccine and what the public should expect from the National Health Service.

Justin Madders: [\[151747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in each JCVI priority group have been (a) offered and (b) given vaccinations.

Justin Madders: [\[151748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been (a) offered and (b) given vaccinations in each Clinical Commissioning Group area in England by JCVI priority group and (i) disability status and (ii) ethnicity.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The National Health Service has offered the vaccine to everyone in the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) priority cohorts one to four by 15 February 2021.

We do not currently publish data for the number of people who have been vaccinated by each JCVI group or at clinical commissioning group (CCG) level by JCVI priority group, disability status or ethnicity. NHS England and NHS Improvement publish weekly data for vaccinations in England, including data on the number of people who have been vaccinated by CCG, clinical vulnerability, age group and ethnicity. This is available at the following link:

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

Sir Mark Hendrick: [\[154781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will prioritise special education needs teachers in the covid-19 vaccine roll-out following the vaccination of the existing priority categories.

Nadhim Zahawi:

No decisions have yet been taken on prioritisation for phase two of the vaccination deployment programme but interim advice has been published by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommending an age-based approach which the Government has accepted in principle.

Their advice can be found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-phase-2-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-programme-advice-from-the-jcvi/jcvi-interim-statement-on-phase-2-of-the-covid-19-vaccination-programme>

Thangam Debbonaire:

[155153]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data is being shared with local authorities on local take-up of covid-19 vaccines, by ethnicity.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public health teams have access to vaccination event data for the sustainability and transformation partnerships (STP) for their local authority. This is presented in the validated vaccination events dashboard and the COVID-19 vaccination equalities tool.

The dashboard provides views of all vaccination activity at all sites within a STP by delivery model, site, dose, vaccine type and vaccination uptake across ethnicity, age and other key Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation cohorts. The tool allows local authorities to track age cohort by ethnicity and Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) compared to a national average and an adjustable uptake target. It also identifies gaps between uptake targets and current vaccinations in each age cohort, both by ethnicity and IMD group. Additionally, local authorities can access a daily dataset to view testing and case data. This data is only available for age cohorts over 70 years of age and for lower tier local authorities includes data by detailed ethnic group.

Dean Russell:

[155446]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) voluntary workers supporting vulnerable people and (b) other voluntary workers will be considered for priority in the next stage of the covid-19 vaccine roll-out.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Volunteers working in frontline health or social care settings and at COVID-19 vaccination sites are eligible for vaccination in the first phase as frontline healthcare workers. Voluntary workers working across all other settings who are eligible for a vaccine, because of their age or other clinical factors, such as underlying health conditions, will have access to a vaccine in the first phase.

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[156256]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish line-by-line data on the covid-19 vaccine uptake to local vaccination leads.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 February 2021]: Local authority public health teams have access to NHS England systems where they can view vaccination event data for the sustainability and transformation partnerships (STP) within their boundaries. This is presented in the Validated Vaccination Events Dashboard and the COVID Vaccination Equalities Tool. The Dashboard provides views of all vaccination activity at all sites within a STP by delivery model, site, dose, vaccine type and vaccination

uptake across ethnicity, age and other key Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation cohorts at STP level.

The COVID Vaccination Equalities Tool allows local authorities to track vaccinations by age cohort, ethnicity and Index of Multiple Deprivation compared to the national average and an adjustable uptake target. It also identifies gaps between targets and current vaccination levels in these groups.

Neil O'Brien:

[156558]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish vaccination statistics by ethnicity and within those groups by age.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 February 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement publish weekly data for vaccinations by age group and ethnicity in England. This is available at the following link:

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

Apsana Begum:

[156600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people living in households that include members with (a) blood cancer, (b) HIV and (c) other immune deficiency disorders will be prioritised for the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Those who are eligible for a carer's allowance, or those who are the sole or primary carer of an elderly or disabled person who is at increased risk of COVID-19 mortality and therefore clinically vulnerable, should be offered vaccination in priority group six. This group includes unpaid carers. In addition, consideration has been given by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to vaccination of household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals. However, at this time there is insufficient data on the size of the effect of COVID-19 vaccines on transmission. Further evidence is expected to accrue on transmission during the course of the vaccine programme but currently the JCVI is not in a position to advise vaccination solely on the basis of indirect protection.

Henry Smith:

[160623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how unpaid carer is defined in relation to covid-19 prioritisation; and whether that definition includes adult household members of clinically extremely vulnerable people.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Green Book: chapter 14a defines adult carers as those who are eligible for a carer's allowance, or those who are the sole or primary carer of an elderly or disabled person who is at increased risk of COVID-19 mortality and therefore clinically vulnerable. This includes unpaid carers and those who care for clinically extremely vulnerable people as a sole or primary carer. Adult carers will be prioritised for vaccination and are included in priority group six of phase one.

Other adult members of a household that includes someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable are, in line with the current Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advice, prioritised for vaccination according to their own age, clinical and other risk factors.

Jim Shannon: [\[160669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to publish the Government's vaccine strategy.

Jo Churchill:

The publication of England's national vaccine strategy has been delayed as a result of our ongoing focus on responding to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. However, it has been kept under review and we are now in the process of refreshing the strategy to reflect changes brought by the pandemic, as well as the inclusion of new developments from the COVID-19 vaccine and the extended National Health Service flu programme. This work is ongoing and the vaccine strategy will be published in due course.

Michael Fabricant: [\[162509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, further to the Answer of 3 March to Question 154738, what support his Department is providing for (a) research on and (b) trials of vaccines offering immunity to covid-19 which can be delivered by gradual absorption through the skin using an adhesive patch.

Edward Argar:

The Department has not currently commissioned any research into COVID-19 vaccines which can be delivered through an adhesive patch but the National Institute for Health Research, as the biggest public funder of health research in the United Kingdom, continues to welcome funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including on COVID-19 vaccine related research.

Fabian Hamilton: [\[162517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of the relative quantity of vaccine used by (a) intradermal and (b) intramuscular vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England has not made a comparative assessment of the relative quantity of vaccine used by intradermal and intramuscular vaccination.

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[162629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his policy is on requiring front line NHS staff to be vaccinated against covid-19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 March 2021]: We would encourage all health and care staff to take up the offer of the vaccine, to help protect themselves and others they come into

contact with including vulnerable patients. National Health Service staff are not currently required to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Justin Madders:

[\[162641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that all unpaid carers who meet the definition set out in the Covid-19 Greenbook Chapter 14a for vaccine priority under clinical need will be offered a vaccination in Group 6.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We have published bespoke guidance for unpaid carers set out in a Standard Operating Procedure, which has been co-produced with Carers UK, the Carers Trust, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and the Local Government Association, in order to help ensure that all eligible unpaid carers are offered a vaccine.

Sarah Owen:

[\[162706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure covid-19 vaccine acceptance by undocumented migrants.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 March 2021]: Entitlement to free National Health Service treatment is generally based on ordinary residence in the United Kingdom. If individuals are not registered with a general practitioner NHS regional teams working with various appropriate local systems will contact unregistered people to ensure they are offered the vaccine. This includes those experiencing homelessness, people who may not live in a fixed location, refugees and those seeking asylum.

Locally commissioned arrangements to reach these groups may include local NHS community and mental health trust providers, Primary Care Networks or partnership activity with statutory and voluntary services. Because there is no charge for the vaccine for people living in the UK, the immigration status of a patient is not relevant, therefore no proof of residence is needed and there is no requirement to report anyone to the Home Office.

Christian Wakeford:

[\[163338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure people who are needle phobic have access to a covid-19 vaccine through the development of alternative vaccination methods.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Vaccinators at vaccine sites have received the appropriate training to make sure everyone feels safe. The process is overseen by clinicians who if required would be able to provide further assistance. We recommend that individuals with a needle phobia contact the vaccination centre directly prior to attendance to determine what mitigations they have for relevant patients, and to see if any special arrangements could be identified to help the recipient feel more comfortable.

Currently there is one route of administration of the COVID-19 vaccination.

Grahame Morris: [\[163676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will provide additional funding for research projects investigating the efficacy of the coronavirus vaccines for blood cancer patients.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 10 March 2021]: There is a breadth of research activity being undertaken, including by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), to better understand the effects of COVID-19 vaccination on individuals that are immunocompromised, including those with blood cancers. Specifically, as part of the National Core Studies Immunity Programme, UKRI has provided initial funding of £1.8 million towards the OCTAVE study looking at vaccine responses in groups of immune suppressed individuals, including in cancer and blood cancer patients.

UKRI is also supporting the Data and Connectivity National Core Studies programme with an investment of up to £8.2 million to date to enable the real-world evaluation of vaccine uptake and efficacy across all populations, including cancer patients.

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[163721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what evidence on transmission the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation assessed when deciding whether to prioritise household members of immunocompromised clinically extremely vulnerable people in phase two of the covid-19 vaccine programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 10 March 2021]: On 30 December 2020, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) published its advice on phase one of the COVID-19 vaccination programme. In this advice it stated that consideration had been given to vaccination of household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals. However, at that time there was no data on the size of the effect of COVID-19 vaccines on transmission.

The JCVI is keeping its advice under review, including with regard to emerging evidence on the impact of vaccination on asymptomatic infection and whether this may indicate an impact on transmission. This was last considered at the JCVI's COVID-19 sub-committee on 4 March 2020 and a position is being agreed with the JCVI's main committee members.

Justin Madders: [\[165581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that all people who are not registered with a GP who are eligible for the covid-19 vaccine are (a) identified and (b) contacted to access that vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 12 March 2021]: The terms under which general practitioner (GP) practices are commissioned to deliver the COVID-19 vaccination services enable

practices to vaccinate unregistered patients. Individuals who are not registered with a GP will therefore be able to access the vaccine in line with the priority groups outlined by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisations (JCVI). However, we would strongly encourage everyone to register so that they may be more easily invited for vaccination.

Every local system should have a plan for full coverage for inclusion health groups - for example, homeless people. NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with local government, voluntary, community and social enterprise partners and Healthwatch England on a campaign to support all people, particularly those in inclusion health groups, to register with a GP. A key driver of the registration campaign is to support identification of those who should be prioritised for the vaccine.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[166587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of homeless people that have been vaccinated up to 10 March 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: The information is not collected in the format requested therefore no specific estimate has been made.

■ **Dental Services: Accident and Emergency Departments**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[150812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the level of admissions to A&E for dentistry.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: Data on accident and emergency (A&E) admissions by diagnosis is collected centrally by NHS Digital. NHS Digital records dentistry admissions via A&E within the maxillofacial diagnosis group but are not disaggregated. Specific data on dentistry admission levels is therefore not available for assessment by the Department centrally. Changes in emergency admissions levels will be monitored locally by National Health Service commissioners and providers who are best placed to respond to patient demand locally. The NHS has put in place over 600 urgent dental centres to support the provision of urgent and emergency care.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**

Justin Madders:

[\[158104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 130124 tabled by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston on 15 December 2020.

Edward Argar:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer to Question [130124](#) of 12 March.

Justin Madders:[\[160706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 11 February 2021, when he plans to answer Question 150832 tabled on 8 February 2021 by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 March 2021]: I refer the hon. Member to the answer to Question 150832 of 11 March.

Chi Onwurah:[\[166408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Questions 158042 and 158041 tabled by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central.

Edward Argar:

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

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

■ Drugs: Females**Cat Smith:**[\[158110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to increase funding into safer medicines research for drugs taken by pregnant and postnatal women.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) has funded three studies on anti-epilepsy medication use during pregnancy, one study on blood pressure medication for pregnant women and one study on antidepressant use during pregnancy. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including safer medicines research for drugs taken by pregnant and postnatal women.

■ Drugs: Rehabilitation**Mary Glendon:**[\[166632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's press release, £148 million to cut drugs crime, published on 20 January 2021, whether the deadline for (a) Universal and (b) Accelerator applications is (i) fixed or (ii) flexible.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: The deadline for the Universal and Accelerator drug treatment grant applications is fixed. Where there are exceptional circumstances, Public Health England will work with local areas on a case by case basis to ensure they can submit applications. Local authorities have now received their indicative allocations, proposal templates and supporting materials.

■ Eating Disorders: Children and Young People**Alexander Stafford:**[\[164686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the number of children and young people presenting with acute eating disorders during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Urgent treatment referrals to children and young people's eating disorder services increased in the first quarter of 2020/21. We have announced extra funding for eating disorder services so that an additional 2,000 children and young people can get the support they need. This follows NHS England and NHS Improvement's plans to expand rapid access to specialist treatment for young people with eating disorders across England, aiming to contact patients within 48 hours and beginning treatment as soon as two weeks later.

■ Eating Disorders: South Yorkshire**Alexander Stafford:**[\[164684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support is being provided for young people with eating disorders in (a) Rother Valley constituency and (b) South Yorkshire.

Alexander Stafford:[\[164687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support Rotherham's community eating disorder service to help it meet demands for its services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust provides a community eating disorder service for 0–19 year olds living within the Rotherham, Doncaster and North Lincolnshire localities. This service is modelled on the NHS England children and young people's community eating disorder service standard service specification. Other statutory and voluntary sector organisations also offer support within the wider South Yorkshire region.

The Trust is working with local, regional and national partners to support these children and young people and is currently engaged with local commissioners regarding future service provision and funding. NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with its regions as well as community eating disorder services and commissioners to support teams.

■ Endometriosis: Diagnosis

Dean Russell: [\[164674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce diagnosis times for endometriosis.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Research into the experience of women presenting in primary care with endometriosis-like symptoms is currently underway, hosted by the National Institute of Health Research. The results will be published later this year and will help us to understand delays in diagnosis.

On 8 March, we launched a 12-week call for evidence as part of the first Government-led Women's Health Strategy for England. The online survey within the call for evidence seeks information on gynaecological conditions, including endometriosis.

■ Gastrointestinal System: Diseases

Rosie Cooper: [\[142841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the final findings will be published from the gastroenterology Getting It Right First Time workstream.

Edward Argar:

The recommendations of the work of the gastroenterology workstream of the Getting it Right First Time programme is currently being considered by NHS England and NHS Improvement and will be published later this year.

■ General Practitioners: Registration

Justin Madders: [\[162647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2021 to Auestion 140150 on General Practitioners: Registration, how many people not registered with a GP have received their first covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The information is not held in the format requested.

■ HIV Infection: Disease Control

Florence Eshalomi: [\[166629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure improve gender parity and equitable investment in the UK response to end new transmissions of HIV by 2030.

Florence Eshalomi: [\[166630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve funding for (a) research, (b) data and (c) services for women in the UK response to end new transmissions of HIV by 2030.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: The Government remains committed to achieving zero new HIV transmissions in England by 2030. As part of this commitment, we will be developing a Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and HIV Action Plan on reaching the 2030 target, which we plan to publish in 2021. We will consider issues related to improving gender parity, and issues around research, data and services for women as part of the process to develop both the Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and HIV Action Plan.

HIV Infection: Medical Treatments**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[163276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to advise British Nationals who are living with HIV and residing in the EU and receiving medication from HIV clinics in the UK that they are required to complete the appropriate paperwork and pay the appropriate fee before customs release that medication.

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 on how to access healthcare as a resident in the European Union via the ongoing UK Nationals in the EU transition campaign, which has been led by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

The Department of Health and Social Care is currently working with officials in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office colleagues 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.

The Department cannot comment on customs regulations for EU countries. UK nationals who live in or are visiting the EU are advised to check with the relevant Embassy in the UK if they wish to import medication or have an outstanding issue with medications being held at the border. They will be able to advise individuals of the correct process for having their medication cleared at customs. Those individuals living in the EU will want to confirm their access to these local healthcare services through their local healthcare provider.

Hospitals: Children**Sir Mark Hendrick:**[\[164356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has issued to help ensure that parents of (a) newborn babies and (b) young children in need of in-patient care are able to visit their children in hospital during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England published 'Supporting pregnant women using maternity services during the coronavirus pandemic: Actions for NHS providers' in which neonatal critical care providers are asked to adopt three action points on undertaking risk assessments, changing the configuration of space and using available testing capacity to maximize opportunities for parents to be with their babies and to identify how to facilitate parental presence at all times of day. This guidance states that parents of babies in neonatal critical care need to be involved in their baby's care as much as possible. Parents are partners in care and should not be considered to be visitors. Guidance for visiting children in hospital is set out by NHS England in 'Visiting healthcare inpatient settings during the COVID-19 pandemic: principles'.

Hospitals: Coronavirus**John Redwood:**[\[156226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to strengthen infection control in hospitals treating covid-19 cases.

Jo Churchill:

National Health Service infection prevention and control (IPC) principles are applicable to all healthcare staff in all healthcare settings. The IPC measures recommended are underpinned by the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual practice guide and associated literature reviews and are aligned with World Health Organization guidance. The guidance sets out safe systems of working to reduce the risk of transmitting infection, including through administrative, environmental and engineering controls, as well as interventions such as cleaning and decontamination of the environment and shared equipment, social/physical distancing, hand hygiene personal protective equipment and ventilation.

The Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch (HSIB) completed its investigation into how hospitals can minimise the risk of patients catching COVID-19 on acute hospital wards. The HSIB has produced safety recommendations at a national level, as well as practical advice for trusts.

Hospitals: Disease Control**John Redwood:**[\[156228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what use is made of improved air cleaning and extraction in hospitals to tackle viral infection.

Jo Churchill:

National Health Service infection prevention and control principles recommend healthcare settings implement interventions to reduce the risk of transmitting infection, which include cleaning and decontaminating the environment and shared equipment and increasing ventilation.

The Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch has completed an investigation into how hospitals can minimise the risk of patients catching COVID-19 on acute hospital

wards and has produced safety recommendations at a national level, as well as practical advice for trusts.

In addition, the Health Technical Memorandum (HTM) 03-01: Specialised Ventilation for Healthcare Premises is currently being updated and is going through final draft review and approval processes as is normal for all technical guidance. Health Technical Memoranda give comprehensive advice and guidance on the design, installation and operation of specialised building and engineering technology used in the delivery of healthcare.

■ **Infected Blood Inquiry**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[163659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people affected by the contaminated blood inquiry are kept fully informed on developments in that inquiry.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 10 March 2021]: The Infected Blood Inquiry is a statutory Inquiry sponsored by Cabinet Office. The Inquiry is independent of the Government, therefore we are unable to comment on the Inquiry's work.

■ **Influenza: Vaccination**

Munira Wilson:

[\[165674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons children who turn two years old between September and December are not eligible for that year's flu vaccine.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 March 2021]: Some children are unable to receive the vaccine during the flu season because they were under two years of age on 31 August. Some of these children will reach two years old during the flu season and would therefore become able to receive the flu vaccine under the product license but will not be eligible under the national programme.

Implementing programmes requires pragmatic decisions to be made in the interests of protecting the optimum number of children, whilst making the most effective use of the vaccine early enough in the flu season. The vaccine is only licensed for children aged two to under eighteen years old so children under the age of two years old should not receive the vaccine. Setting a time-limited date reduces the risk of children who are under this age receiving the vaccine by accident and allows the vaccine to be given in time for the flu season.

■ Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review**Cat Smith:****[155159]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the names of the members of the Patient Reference Group that consider the recommendations in the report of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: The membership of the Patient Reference Group is available at the following link:

https://traverse.ltd/application/files/4416/1538/1520/IMMDS_Patient_Reference_Group_members.pdf

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**Peter Kyle:****[155245]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in each of the last five years, how many (a) referrals were made by youth offending teams to children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS), and (b) children referred by youth offending teams to CYPMHS received support.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The information is not held in the format requested Data showing the referrals made by youth offending teams to children and young people's mental health services is only available from 2019/20. Prior to 2019/20, such referrals were included in the total referrals made by the wider justice system.

Available data shows that in 2019/20, there were 845 referrals made by youth offending teams to children and young people's mental health services and 483 children and young people were in contact with mental health services after being referred by youth offending teams. Data showing the number of children and young people receiving support is not available.

■ Mental Health Services: Coronavirus**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:****[144783]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of prioritising for covid-19 vaccination frontline psychotherapists and counsellors who continue to support people psychologically affected by covid-19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: Counsellors and psychotherapists working in frontline health or social care settings and at COVID-19 vaccination sites are eligible for vaccination in the first phase as frontline healthcare workers. Counsellors and psychotherapists working across all other settings who are eligible for a vaccine, because of their age or other clinical factors, such as underlying health conditions, will also have access to a vaccine in the first phase.

Phase two of the COVID-19 vaccine programme will cover all adults under 50 years old not already included in phase one. Prioritisation for phase two has not yet been decided, but interim advice has been published by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation recommending an age-based approach, which the Government has accepted in principle.

■ **Mental Health Services: Finance**

Anne Marie Morris: [\[166436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any of the additional £500 mental health funding for 2021-22 will be allocated to funding post-discharge support for mental health patients.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have already announced that £79 million of this additional funding will go to supporting children and young people with their mental health and wellbeing. Details of how the remaining funds will be allocated will be announced shortly.

■ **Mental Health Services: Offenders**

Alex Cunningham: [\[164455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether Liaison and Diversion services routinely assess the maturity of defendants aged between 18 and 24 for pre-sentence reports.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 March 2021]: Liaison and Diversion services screen and assess individuals of any age who are referred to the service for a wide range of vulnerabilities, including mental health, substance misuse, learning disabilities and difficulties, autism, acquired brain injury, speech language and communications needs. This helps inform an indication of maturity and ability to comprehend or engage with services. There are no currently known assessment tools designed specifically to assess maturity.

If concerns regarding maturity are identified, these will be shared, with the individual's consent, with key decision-makers in criminal justice agencies and Liaison and Diversion outreach workers will design an holistic package of support, making referrals to relevant health, social care and voluntary sector services.

■ **Mental Illness and Self-harm: Young People**

Bambos Charalambous: [\[149312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people aged 18 and under were admitted to A&E for (a) deliberate self-harm and (b) psychiatric conditions in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The information is not held in the format requested.

■ Mental Illness: Personal Income**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[164511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the finding of the recent Mind the Income Gap report by the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute that people with mental health problems median income is 68 per cent of that of people without those conditions, what steps he is taking to tackle that income gap.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We recognise the important link between money and mental health and we are working to improve the financial security of those living with mental illness. A cross-Government group of Ministers was convened to consider the impact of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing and we will be bringing our plans forward in due course.

■ Neuromuscular Disorders: Mental Health Services**Mary Glendon:**[\[163224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) Long Term Condition services have been commissioned for people with (a) Parkinson's and (b) neurological conditions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No Improving Access to Psychological Therapies for Long Term Condition services have been commissioned specifically for people with Parkinson's or neurological conditions.

■ Noise: Pollution**Mark Pritchard:**[\[164407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to assess the effect of urban noise pollution on health outcomes in line with World Health Organisation recommendations.

Jo Churchill:

Following the publication of the World Health Organization Environmental Noise Guidelines in 2018, the Interdepartmental Group on Costs and Benefits Noise Subject Group (IGCB(N)) was convened to consider any necessary updates to relevant government guidance. The IGCB(N) is a cross Government group led by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, that provides analysis and advice relating to the quantification and valuation of noise impacts. Its membership includes health economists from the Department and noise and public health experts from Public Health England. The outcome from the IGCB(N) review will inform any updated government assessment of the effect of noise pollution on health outcomes.

■ Obesity: Health Services**Mary Glendon:**[\[163226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the announcement of 4 March 2021, New specialised support to help those living with obesity to lose weight, what proportion of the allocated funding will be spent on support for (a) Tier 3 weight management services and (b) Tier 4 weight management services; and if he will make a statement.

Mary Glendon:[\[163227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the announcement of 4 March 2021, New specialised support to help those living with obesity to lose weight, what proportion of the allocated funding will be allocated to (a) NHS England and (b) local authorities in England; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

As part of delivering the commitments set out in 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives', the Government announced £100 million extra funding for healthy weight programmes. Of this funding, around £35 million will be allocated to councils and £35 million to the National Health Service to be invested into weight management services. This will enable up to 700,000 adults to have access to support that can help them to achieve a healthy weight, from access to digital apps, weight management groups or individual coaches, to specialist clinical support.

The remaining £30 million will fund initiatives to help people maintain a healthy weight, including access to the free NHS 12 week weight loss plan app, continuing the Better Health marketing campaign to motivate people to make healthier choices, and upskilling healthcare professionals. Decisions about the provision of tier 3 and 4 weight management services, are made at a local level, reflecting varying pressures on local health systems and availability of capacity, including use of the independent sector, and taking into account of the rate of recovery of elective services following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alex Norris:[\[166522\]](#)

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 access to Tier 3 and Tier 4 NHS weight management services; and what progress he is making to resume those services.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: We are aware of the impact of COVID-19 on tier 3 and tier 4 weight management services and are working closely with NHS England on our approach. As part of delivering the commitments set out in 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives', the Government announced £100 million extra funding for healthy weight programmes including specialist clinical support.

Decisions about the provision of tier 3 and 4 weight management services, along with other elective activity, will be made at a local level reflecting varying pressures on local health systems and availability of capacity, including use of the independent sector, and taking into account of the rate of recovery of elective services following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alex Norris: [\[166523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which obesity patient and professional organisations his Department consulted with on the proposals on obesity in the Health and Care White Paper.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: We have consulted extensively on the policies across our healthy weight strategy and received thousands of responses from a range of stakeholders including individuals, professional bodies and experts including organisations with a particular interest in obesity. These include the Obesity Health Alliance and its members, such as the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, British Heart Foundation, British Dietetic Association and Cancer Research UK. We also meet these organisations regularly and will continue this dialogue going forwards.

Alex Norris: [\[166524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the 2020 Obesity Strategy, when Public Health England plans to launch the healthy weight coaches training programme.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: This training programme is currently under development and more information will be launched later in the year.

Alex Norris: [\[166525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's policy paper Tackling obesity: government strategy, published in July 2020, what meetings with relevant stakeholders has Public Health England held to help develop the healthy weight coaches training programme.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: Public Health England has established a steering group that meets regularly, which includes relevant stakeholders. Additional stakeholders and representatives from key organisations will be involved in reviewing the training programme.

■ Palantir: Contracts

Justin Madders: [\[160704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department undertook a data protection impact assessment before extending the NHS data-sharing contract with Palantir in December 2020; and if he will publish that assessment.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 4 March 2021]: We are unable to provide the requested information as it is currently subject to legal proceedings and it would be inappropriate for us to comment.

■ **Parkinson's Disease: Mental Health Services**

Mary Glendon:[\[163225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) Pathway for People with Long Term Conditions for people living with Parkinson's against IAPT National Standards on (a) waiting times, (b) access rate and (c) recovery rates.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment has been made. However, since September 2020, the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) dataset has begun to collect information regarding the specific long term conditions that people presenting to IAPT services have in order to allow NHS England and NHS Improvement to better monitor access and outcomes for different groups accessing IAPT– long term conditions services.

NHS Digital will be publishing long term conditions specific breakdowns of IAPT data later this month and we anticipate including a Parkinson's specific analysis of the data later in the year, subject to there being sufficient numbers of patients presenting with Parkinson's in order to facilitate this analysis .

■ **Poultry Meat: Salmonella**

Daniel Zeichner:[\[163702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many food alerts were issued on salmonella in chicken in each month in (a) 2020 and (b) 2021.

Jo Churchill:

The number of product recall information notice (PRIN) alerts published by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) because of salmonella contamination in chicken products in each month in 2020 and 2021 is shown in the following table:

MONTH	NUMBER OF FSA PRINS PUBLISHED
January 2020	0
February 2020	0
March 2020	0
April 2020	0
May 2020	0
June 2020	0

MONTH	NUMBER OF FSA PRINS PUBLISHED
July 2020	0
August 2020	1
September 2020	0
October 2020	2
November 2020	0
December 2020	1
January 2021	0

■ **Pregnancy: Epilepsy**

Sir David Amess:

[\[156229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will meet SUDEP Action and MBRRACE to discuss the implementation of the recommendations in the newly published maternal deaths inquiry which highlights a more than doubling of deaths in women and their unborn children due to Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP) between 2016-18 compared to 2013-15 and a likely increase expected due to the pandemic.

Sir David Amess:

[\[156231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that in light of the recent MBRRACE maternal death inquiry evidencing continued rising maternal epilepsy mortality women with epilepsy receive balanced messaging from Government, policy makers, the media and clinicians on epilepsy mortality risks and the importance of their medications, to ensure informed choices can be made about their lives and care.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 25 February 2021]: We are unable to meet with SUDEP action and MBRRACE-UK at this time.

In light of the MBRRACE-UK Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is reviewing available data and arranging to meet with key patient support organisations specialising in communication of maternal epilepsy mortality risks and clinicians to explore how information provided to women on important risks can be improved. The MHRA is also working with the wider healthcare network to explore additional ways of improving the reach of regulatory communications.

The conclusions of a safety review by the Commission of Human Medicines of the risks of epilepsy medicines in pregnancy have recently been published to aid

discussions about suitable treatment options and support a balanced message on benefits and risks of each.

■ **Protective Clothing: Procurement**

Justin Madders: [\[165584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of personal protective equipment purchased by the Government was manufactured in the UK in each month in the last 12 months.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 March 2021]: The Government's personal protective equipment (PPE) strategy published in September said that by 1 December 2020, United Kingdom manufacturers would be able to provide 70% of the PPE we expected to use in England through the winter, for all items except gloves. That commitment was met and exceeded. The volume of UK manufactured PPE supplied in the three months from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021 was sufficient to meet 82% of the amount needed over that time period. Data prior to December is not available in a fully validated form.

■ **Respiratory System: Medical Equipment**

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[160630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of changing restrictions to allow the use of the LifeVac choking-prevention device in (a) school and nursery settings and (b) other environments.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The regulatory approach adopted by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) in regards to LifeVac and other airway clearance device products placed on the United Kingdom market seeks to balance the need to support innovative products to be introduced whilst recognising that for such products it is extremely difficult to generate extensive pre-market clinical data to demonstrate performance and safety.

The use of suction devices does not currently fit within the current basic life support protocols in the UK and therefore the MHRA has agreed with these manufacturers that they will take all reasonable steps to ensure that their product should only be used in certain situations.

■ **Surgical Mesh Implants: Hormone Replacement Therapy**

Dr Julian Lewis: [\[159238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the NHS has for the use of Ovestin cream in preference to mesh removal surgery for the future treatment of victims of the vaginal mesh scandal; whether advocates of that alternative method of treatment include surgeons who previously supported the implantation of vaginal mesh; what evidence base there is for the use of Ovestin cream to diminish symptoms arising

from mesh implantation; and what assessment has been made of possible harmful side-effects of using cream as a substitute for mesh removal surgery.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 3 March 2021]: NHS England has not considered Ovestin cream as an alternative to mesh removal surgery, nor the evidence behind its use to diminish symptoms arising from mesh implantation. However, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines NG123 recommend that non-surgical treatment options for mesh removal can include the use of vaginal oestrogen cream, including Ovestin cream, for patients who have a single area of vaginal mesh exposure that is smaller than 1 cm².

Side-effects relating to Ovestin cream can be found in the accompanying leaflet to the medicine which is available at the following link:

<https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/5384/pil>

No assessment made of whether advocates for the use of Ovestin cream include surgeons who previously supported the implantation of vaginal mesh.

■ **Tuberculosis: Vaccination**

Alberto Costa:

[160718]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the NHS plans to (a) resume administering vaccinations for tuberculosis and (b) begin offering appointments for people who were not offered that vaccination as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The significant decline in tuberculosis (TB) in England has meant the BCG vaccination programme is now targeted at protecting the children of people from TB high prevalence countries. The BCG vaccination is given at birth while the mother and baby are in hospital. The potential impact of COVID-19 on the provision of TB services including BCG vaccination was recognised early on and guidance was published in March 2020 which included maintenance of neonatal BCG provision.

Subsequently updated guidance was published in January 2021, which stated: "Childhood vaccination programmes are continuing, including the neonatal BCG vaccination. Therefore, maternity services and other providers of the BCG vaccination should continue to vaccinate for BCG." General practices continue to offer routine vaccination services, using social distancing and personal protective equipment according to national guidelines.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Applications**

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[166336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many officials were employed with responsibility for examining and making decisions on asylum applications in December 2020.

Chris Philp:

The number of officials who were responsible for examining and making decisions on asylum applications in December 2020 is not recorded and held in a reportable format. To obtain this information would require detailed reporting against multiple cost centres and could only be obtained at disproportionate costs.

However, the Home Office are able to provide the number of asylum case working staff for 2019/2020. This data can be found in ASY_04 of the published Transparency data:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-protection-data-February-2021>

■ Immigration: Married People

Stephen Farry: [\[163746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will conduct a review of the effect of income requirements for spouse visas, as recommended by the Migration Advisory Committee in its December 2020 Report.

Kevin Foster:

In February 2017 the Supreme Court upheld the lawfulness of the minimum income requirement, which prevents burdens on the taxpayer and promotes integration, ruling it strikes a fair balance between the interests of those wishing to sponsor a partner to settle in the UK and of the community in general.

We continue to keep the family Immigration Rules under review, including taking into account recommendations made by the Migration Advisory Committee, and will make adjustments should these prove necessary. However, our overall assessment is the Rules, including the minimum income requirement, are having the right impact and building public confidence in the immigration system, by ensuring migration to the UK is not based on access to public services and welfare systems paid for by UK taxpayers.

■ Refugees: Hong Kong

Janet Daby: [\[163722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many refugees from Hong Kong the UK has received since 31 January 2021; and what support the Government has put in place to help those refugees settle in the UK.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Tables Asy_D01 of the [asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#) include the number of asylum applications, broken down by nationality. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data is up to the end of December 2020.

Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in the '[summary tables](#)'. The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement.

Data on asylum applications for January – March 2021, as well as data on the [Hong Kong BN\(O\) visa route](#) will be published in the next quarterly Immigration Statistics on 27 May 2021. Further information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those that need it – and this Government is committed to ensuring that they can take positive steps towards integration as they rebuild their lives in the UK.

All refugees and those granted protection in the UK should be able to fully integrate into life here and become self-sufficient, providing for themselves and their families, and contributing to the economy.

Refugees in the UK have access to mainstream benefits and services to enable their integration; and we are working across Government to ensure these services meet the needs of refugees.

■ Stalking: Sentencing**Dan Jarvis:****[166433]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing the length of custodial sentences for people who have committed stalking offences.

Victoria Atkins:

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

In 2012 the Government created two stalking offences to highlight stalking as a specific behaviour, and through the Policing and Crime Act 2017 the maximum sentences for both stalking and harassment were raised from 5 to 10 years' imprisonment. There are currently no plans to make further changes to the maximum sentences for stalking offences. Sentencing in individual cases is a matter for our independent courts. When deciding what sentence to impose, within the maximum available for the offence, the courts take into account the circumstances of the offence and any aggravating and mitigating factors. The courts are also required to

follow any relevant sentencing guidelines, developed by the independent Sentencing Council.

In January 2020 we introduced new civil Stalking Protection Orders to protect victims of stalking at the earliest possible opportunity and address the perpetrator's behaviours before they become entrenched or escalate in severity. A breach of this order carries a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ Palace of Westminster: Repairs and Maintenance

Dehenna Davison: [\[163304\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what methods the House of Commons Commission has in place to scrutinise the costs of the Restoration and Renewal Programme and ensure the Sponsor Body and Delivery Authority delivers value for money.

Sir Charles Walker:

The Commissions of both Houses are responsible under the Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration & Renewal) Act 2019 for setting the Phase 1 Expenditure Limit for the parliamentary building works, covering the period up to the approval of the Restoration & Renewal (R&R) Outline Business Case. The House of Commons Commission has to date, also received advice from the Commons Finance Committee in setting the Phase 1 Limit.

Since the creation of the Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body, the Commission has also received quarterly progress reports on the R&R Programme. At its meeting on 22 February, the Commission noted the assurance and scrutiny arrangements that the Sponsor Body has established for the Programme and the opportunities to strengthen those arrangements to provide further assurance to both Houses, including on reporting progress to secure further savings against the Phase 1 Expenditure Limit. Work will take place, following publication of the Sponsor Body's Strategic Review report, to confirm Commission and House engagement, decision points and ongoing scrutiny up to Outline Business Case approval.

Dehenna Davison: [\[163306\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, whether the Commission has made an assessment of the potential merits of using the restoration of the Speaker's House as a pilot scheme for the Restoration and Renewal programme to allow parliamentarians to properly understand and anticipate the costs of the project and assess the likelihood of hidden costs.

Sir Charles Walker:

The Commission has made no assessment of the potential merits of using a restoration of the Speaker's House as a pilot scheme for the Restoration & Renewal programme.

A number of capital projects and programmes for necessary works to enable the continuing operation of the Palace of Westminster are currently ongoing, including the Cast Irons Roofs programme and the Mechanical, Electrical, Public Health and Fabric Safety programme. The Elizabeth Tower project, which began before the enactment of the legislation, is nearing its conclusion. The Commission plans for capital investment in the Palace to continue in the years running up to the start of the restoration and renewal works.

In line with best practice, the House Service will work with the Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body to ensure that any lessons learned from current and future works to the Palace are used to inform planning and preparation for the Restoration and Renewal programme.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund

Hilary Benn:

[166327]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Building Safety Fund will cover the cost of remediating missing fire cavity barriers (a) wherever on the building they are found or (b) only where they are directly connected to the removal of unsafe cladding; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

Detailed information on works eligible for funding can be found in the Building Safety Fund prospectus, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#prospectus---outlining-eligibility-for-the-fund> Eligible works covered by funding includes works directly related to the remediation of the unsafe cladding system. This can include fire cavity barriers, where integral to the replacement of the cladding system.

■ Buildings: Insulation

Chi Onwurah:

[166416]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether housing management agencies can apply for funding to pay for (a) waking watch measures and (b) removal of unsafe cladding without consulting leaseholders.

Christopher Pincher:

We expect responsible entities (such as a management agency appointed by the building owner) to inform all leaseholders and residents if they apply for Government funding. Responsible entities also should provide regular updates to leaseholders and residents on the progress of their funding application and works. This is set out clearly in the prospectus and applications guidance for the Private Sector ACM Remediation Fund, the Building Safety Fund and the Waking Watch Relief Fund, available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/building-safety-programme.

■ High Rise Flats: Insurance

Ed Davey:

[\[166307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data his department holds on (a) the costs of buildings insurance in both medium and high rise blocks and (b) the extent to which those costs have increased since the Grenfell fire.

Ed Davey:

[\[166308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information his Department holds on the number of blocks which are (a) unable to obtain building cover via a single insurer or (b) are subject to insurance exclusions or excesses which would not have applied prior to the Grenfell tower fire.

Ed Davey:

[\[166309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department holds data on the number of blocks that are only able to obtain first loss buildings insurance policies that do not cover the full cost of major losses.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department does not hold this information for all medium and high rise blocks in England.

■ Housing: Antisocial Behaviour

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[166457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the mental health implications for (a) tenants and (b) homeowners who are experiencing severe (i) anti-social behaviour and (ii) noise nuisance problems from their neighbours.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government recognises the debilitating effect that anti-social behaviour has on individual victims and wider communities, particularly those suffering from mental health issues.

We remain committed to supporting everyone's mental health, and our ambitions in the NHS Long Term Plan to expand and transform mental health services in England that mean we are investing an additional £2.3 billion a year in mental health services by 2023/24. This will see an additional 345,000 children and young people, and 370,000 adults, benefitting from specialist mental health care if they need it.

In November we published The Charter for Social Housing Residents Social Housing White Paper which sets out measures to clarify the roles and responsibilities of agencies involved in tackling anti-social behaviour and support the resolution of issues for residents.

The White Paper also sets out that we will establish a review of professional training and development to consider the appropriate qualifications and standards for social

housing staff. The review will include consideration of best practice for delivering support on mental health to ensure staff have the appropriate skills and knowledge.

■ Housing: Insulation

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[166341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 10 March 2021 to Question 163654 on Housing: Insulation, if his Department will make an estimate of the potential number of leaseholders who may (a) lose their home and (b) declare bankruptcy as a result of the costs of resolving fire safety issues relating to (i) cladding removal, (ii) balcony remediation, (iii) replacing combustible insulation, (iv) replacing missing fire breaks, (v) increased insurance premiums and (vi) waking watches.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[166342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 10 March 2021 to Question 163654 on Housing: Insulation, for what reason his Department has not made an estimate of the potential number of leaseholders who may (a) lose their home and (b) declare bankruptcy as a result of the costs of resolving fire safety issues relating to (i) cladding removal, (ii) balcony remediation, (iii) replacing combustible insulation, (iv) replacing missing fire breaks, (v) increased insurance premiums and (vi) waking watches.

Christopher Pincher:

It is not possible to make such assessments. This is because the degree to which any fire safety issues require remedial action that impose costs on leaseholders, will depend on a professional fire risk assessment of individual buildings and the extent to which costs may be met by or recovered from developers, contractors or building warranties. In addition, we are unable to assess the potentially wide range of individual factors (such as job security, levels of mortgage commitment and personal circumstances) which could lead to people either losing their home or declaring bankruptcy due to additional costs.

However, we do recognise the financial pressures being placed on leaseholders through no fault of their own as a result of historic remediation costs. We have been clear that building owners and industry should make buildings safe without passing on costs to leaseholders – and where they have not stepped up, we have stepped in.

The Government is taking the following steps to ease these pressures:

- In relation to the removal and replacement of unsafe cladding, we are providing over £5 billion of Government grant funding for the removal of unsafe cladding from buildings of 18 metres and above, and a low interest finance scheme (under which no leaseholder will need to pay more than £50 per calendar month) for the removal of unsafe cladding from buildings of 11-18 metres in height.

- As part of our funding for remediation of unsafe cladding, the Government is providing full funding for the replacement of combustible insulation and missing or defective cavity barriers where these form part of an unsafe cladding system.
- In relation to insurance premia we recognise that some leaseholders in high rise buildings are facing rises in buildings insurance. Officials, leaseholders, the ABI and British Insurance Brokers' Association (BIBA) have met to discuss buildings insurance. Government is working with industry and looking at a range of options.
- In relation to waking watch costs, the Government has announced a £30 million Waking Watch Relief Fund, to promote replacement of costly Waking Watch interim safety measures with fire alarms, which the National Fire Chiefs Council have confirmed are both safer and cost effective.

Mike Amesbury:

[166541]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of buildings affected by the retraction of three tests carried out on Kingspan K15 insulation; and what assessment he has made of the effect of that retraction on the fire safety implications for leaseholders, tenants and residents.

Christopher Pincher:

We do not have any estimate of the number of buildings which will be affected by the retracted tests.

On 10 March 2021 we issued a letter to fire safety professionals and building control bodies reminding them that Kingspan has retracted three test reports. The letter is available here : <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-building-control-bodies-on-the-retraction-of-three-tests-carried-out-on-kingspan-k15-insulation>

The letter recommends that fire safety professionals and buildings control bodies review their records to check that any assessments they have carried out using these tests are identified and revisited in light of the information highlighted during the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. The content of this letter is not new and is simply a reminder of the steps they should take in light of this information.

■ Local Plans: Oxfordshire

Layla Moran:

[166532]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Prime Minister's oral contribution of 3 March 2021, Official Report, Column 245, what assessment he made of the effect of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan on the Green Belt prior to his statutory intervention in its adoption.

Christopher Pincher:

The South Oxfordshire District Council's Local Plan is subject to proceedings in the High Court, which precludes a more detailed response than what follows. The Secretary of State's 3 March 2020 Local Plan intervention decision letter to South Oxfordshire District Council sets out matters he considered in reaching his decision that intervention action was justified. The letter is available online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/south-oxfordshire-local-plan-holding-direction-letter-to-council> . The Local Plan's consistency with national policy was subsequently tested at examination by an independent planning Inspector. The Council adopted the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 on 10 December 2020.

■ Social Rented Housing

Thangam Debonnaire: [\[163712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to introduce the Charter for Social Housing Tenants.

Eddie Hughes:

The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper, was published on 17 November 2020. The Charter will deliver transformational change for social housing residents, creating proactive consumer regulation and rebalancing the relationship between landlords and tenants. It will ensure that complaints are dealt with quickly and fairly, improve the safety and quality of social homes and empower tenants.

■ Target Housing: Help to Buy Scheme

Dan Jarvis: [\[166434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if his Department will provide support to Help to Buy scheme customers of Target Housing who have been provided with incorrect templates by that organisation when seeking to apply for a (a) deed of postponement and (b) deed of release.

Christopher Pincher:

Homes England have standard templates for Deed of Release (DOR) and Deed of Postponement (DOP). These are based on Land Registry requirements and incorporate relevant Homes England clauses and protections that relate to the equity loan. These are standard forms and ensure consistency and protection of public funds by being in a standard acceptable form. Target Servicing Limited (Target), who administer the equity loan on behalf of Homes England, are provided these templates in the form of a Solicitors' Pack. Target issues the Solicitors' Pack to the customers' conveyancing solicitor and this provides clear guidance about how to complete the appropriate template and how to follow the equity loan process. This is a standard pack provided to every customer's solicitor for the purposes of carrying out a DOP or DOR and each template ensures Homes England has the information required to complete an application. Lenders may attempt to introduce alternative templates that cannot be accepted as these deviate from Homes England standard policy and practice. In these circumstances, Target, working with the solicitor, request the correct Homes England template to be completed so the transaction can advance. It is important to stress that UK Finance were engaged in respect of Homes England's standard template of Deed of Postponement and lenders are aware of Homes England's requirements

Where customers are dissatisfied with the service they receive from Target, they can raise a complaint directly with them. If customers are not happy with the resolution, complaints can be escalated to Homes England customer complaints team as per the complaints policy.

■ **Thakeham Group: Planning Permission**

Steve Reed: [\[166442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he discussed any planning applications (a) due to be submitted and (b) under consideration at his meeting with development firm Thakeham on 28 February 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

A delegate at a local government conference had his photograph taken with the Secretary of State on 28 Feb 2020. At no point was an individual planning application raised.

■ **UK Community Renewal Fund**

Andrew Gwynne: [\[165458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2021 to Questions 163173 and 163174, when he plans to publish the methodological note explaining how the 100 priority places were selected for funding from the UK Community Renewal Fund.

Eddie Hughes:

[Holding answer 12 March 2021]: At Budget 2021, the UK Government published a prospectus for the UK Community Renewal Fund: an additional £220m funding for 2021/22 to help local areas prepare for the launch of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 2022.

The UK Community Renewal Fund aims to support people and communities most in need across the UK to pilot programmes and new approaches. It will invest in skills, community and place, local business, and supporting people into employment.

As set out in the prospectus published on 3 March, 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 have published a methodological note on the index used for the Fund: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus>.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Data Protection: Japan****Emily Thornberry:**[\[165481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement data provisions are (a) models for agreements on digital and data with other countries the UK is seeking to negotiate trade or digital deals with and (b) bespoke arrangements for the circumstances of UK-Japan trade.

Greg Hands:

The UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) seeks to remove unjustified barriers to data flows to ensure trade can flourish. CEPA recognises the importance of data protection by committing both parties to maintain national data protection regimes. The UK-Japan CEPA does not undermine or change the UK's data protection laws, or provide a legal basis for the transfer of personal data to Japan.

The ability to transfer data across international borders is crucial to a well-functioning economy, alongside wider priorities such as law enforcement and security. The UK will therefore pursue ambitious provisions in future agreements which seek to commit parties to the cross-border free flow of data, consistent with local laws restricting personal data flows.

■ Iron and Steel: UK Trade with EU**Jane Stevenson:**[\[166570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with her EU counterparts on removing tariff rate quotas on steel and aluminium products exported to the UK; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Department for International Trade and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy have engaged closely with the European Commission to secure tariff-free quota allocations for some British steel exports into the EU from 1st January 2021.

The United Kingdom has put in place some country-specific allocations within its overall tariff rate quotas for steel products subject to the steel safeguards also, to enable EU companies to trade tariff-free into the United Kingdom. These tariff-free allocations came into operation on 1st January 2021 too.

Aluminium products exported to the United Kingdom are not subject to safeguard measures.

■ Minerals: Procurement**Steve Double:** [\[163713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 5 March 2021 to Question 160719 on Minerals: Procurement, what the agreed actions to mitigate risks of potential disruption to the UK's critical minerals supply chains are.

Graham Stuart:

The Government's approach to supply chain resilience emphasises the importance of free, fair, and open trade, and our approach to securing the UK's critical minerals supply chains reflects this. This includes actions to diversify our global sources of critical raw materials; to engage international partners; and to identify long-term opportunities to strengthen and protect UK supply.

■ Trade Agreements: Albania**Imran Ahmad Khan:** [\[166588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the timeframe is for the free trade agreement with Albania to come into force.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom-Albania trade deal was signed in Tirana on 5th February 2021 and formally laid in Parliament on 19th February 2021. It is expected to enter into force in early May, following the completion of both British and Albanian domestic processes.

We have published the text of the agreement and guidance for British business at: [gov.uk/government/collections/uk-albania-partnership-trade-and-cooperation-agreement](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-albania-partnership-trade-and-cooperation-agreement).

■ Trade Agreements: Mexico**Imran Ahmad Khan:** [\[166590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the timeframe is for the free trade agreement with Mexico to come into force.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom-Mexico trade deal was formally laid in Parliament on 26th February 2021. Mexico is in the process of completing their domestic legislative processes required to bring the agreement into force too.

We have published the text of the agreement and guidance for British business at: [gov.uk/government/publications/ukmexico-trade-continuity-agreement](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukmexico-trade-continuity-agreement).

JUSTICE■ **Marriage: Children****Mrs Pauline Latham:**[\[166395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to end child marriage across England and Wales.

Alex Chalk:

The Government continues to listen carefully to the debate on the legal age of marriage. Justice officials liaise closely with officials in other departments that have an interest in this matter and in forced marriage, which Government made an offence in 2014.

I am aware of my Hon. Friend's Private Members' Bill which seeks to raise the age for marriage and civil partnership formation in England Wales from sixteen or seventeen to eighteen years of age. It also seeks to provide for related offences including an offence of failing to protect a child from entering marriage. Her Bill would also place a requirement on certain professionals to notify the police, if any such marriage has taken place, or could take place, and seeks to provide for a new child marriage protection order.

My noble and learned friend Lord Wolfson, in his new role as minister for family justice, will arrange to meet with my hon. friend shortly to discuss these important issues with her.

■ **Sudbury Prison: Coronavirus****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[166358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether release on temporary license for (a) employment purposes and (b) other purposes has continued at HMP Sudbury during the covid-19 national lockdown announced on 5 January 2021.

Alex Chalk:

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is working closely with public health authorities to support prisons to re-introduce release on temporary licence (ROTL) where it is safe and practicable to do so and in line with national restrictions on movement during the pandemic. HMPPS is adopting a cautious approach to recovery which is carefully monitored on a prison by prison basis. The safety of staff and prisoners and the protection of the NHS remains the priority.

Currently, ROTL is suspended in England and Wales except for those with roles as essential workers in the community or for compelling, compassionate reasons such as key health appointments. Prisoners at HMP Sudbury had been temporarily released for those reasons since January, but all ROTL at the prison is currently suspended as a precautionary measure.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[166359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the reasons for the covid-19 outbreak at HMP Sudbury.

Alex Chalk:

Due to the nature of Covid-19 and the potential for asymptomatic transmission it is not possible to definitively determine the source of the outbreak.

The safety of staff and prisoners remains paramount. We have introduced robust measures, based on public health advice, to limit the spread of Covid-19 in custody. We are working to support a multi-agency Outbreak Control Team, chaired by Public Health England, to manage and contain the outbreak.

■ **Young Offenders: Sentencing**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[166405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of young adults aged 18 to 25 years received (a) a pre-sentence report, (b) a maturity assessment alongside a pre-sentence report and (c) an assessment for neuro-disabilities alongside a pre-sentence report in the most recent period for which that information is available.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[166406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of adverse childhood experiences on levels of criminality among young adults aged 18-25 who are (a) charged and (b) sentenced.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[166407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of young adults aged 18-25 who are sentenced for serious and violent offences have been a victim of (a) crime (b) violent crime and (c) sexual offending as a child.

Alex Chalk:

Young adults aged 18-25 year olds are recognised as a group that has distinct needs, which may include factors such as psychosocial maturation, neurological development or history of acquired brain injury, among other issues.

A detailed assessment is contained within the Offender Assessment System (OASys) and specific screening processes are also used. The Maturity Screening Tool allows practitioners to identify young adult men with lower levels of maturity who are most in need of support.

The Choices and Change Resource Pack can be used with young adult men to support the development of psychosocial maturity. It is important to note that there are a range of accredited programmes available, which young adult men can access if they meet the suitability criteria in terms of risk, need and responsivity factors. The screening tool can be completed at a number of stages, including as a pre-sentence report or as part of sentence planning. An individual's history, including adverse

childhood experiences, can also be noted. This information is recorded on an individual's case file and shared as necessary.

The number of young adults who received a pre-sentence report between July and September 2020 is outlined in table 1 below:

TABLE 1: COURT REPORTS PREPARED, JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2020, ENGLAND AND WALES (1) (2) (3) (4)

Age group	Number of court reports prepared
18-25	4,234
All ages	16,993

(1) Excludes breach, deferred sentence and court review reports (for further details please see the guide to offender management statistics at the link below).

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2020

(2) During April to June 2020, the number of cases processed at the criminal courts was substantially reduced as a result of the operational restrictions that were put in place on 23 March 2020 following the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is likely that the impact of these operational restrictions will continue to affect subsequent periods as numbers recover to the levels seen before the pandemic.

(3) Data refers to court reports prepared rather than individuals, therefore, the same individual may be counted more than once.

(4) Age on sentence date.

For **part (a)** of **PQ 166405**, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) can only provide figures on the number of young adults receiving a pre-sentence report. The second element of part (a), which requests figures on the proportion of young adults receiving a pre-sentence report, could only be obtained at disproportionate cost as it involves linking court data with probation data.

The information requested for parts **(b) and (c)** of **PQ 166405** is not collated centrally by the MoJ.

The MoJ does not collect data on the effect of adverse childhood experiences on levels on criminality in young adults who are either charged or sentenced.

The MoJ does not hold any data that would allow us to say what proportion of young adults convicted for serious offences were themselves past victims of the specified offence types

TRANSPORT**■ Cycling: Accidents****Zarah Sultana:**[\[164653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he took in response to cyclist fatalities in 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government takes very seriously the safety of cyclists and other vulnerable road users, and is committed to reducing the rate of cyclists killed or seriously injured on England's roads. In July 2020 the Prime Minister launched ambitious plans to boost cycling and walking, with the ambition that half of all journeys in towns and cities are cycled or walked by 2030. This includes a £2 billion package of funding for active travel over 5 years, which is the largest ever boost for cycling and walking, and will deliver transformational change and improve safety for people cycling.

One of the commitments within the plan, which will improve safety for people cycling, is to deliver the review of the Highway Code promised in the 2018 Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy Safety Review. The consultation on the review of the guidance in the Highway Code closed in October 2020 and the Government will issue its response in due course.

■ Electric Vehicles: Bicycles**Bill Esterson:**[\[166403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to ban the sale of SpeedBox devices in the interests of public safety.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department is aware of devices such as SpeedBox which modify the performance of an electrically-assisted pedal cycle but no assessment has been made.

Once an electrically-assisted pedal cycle is modified such that it no longer complies with the speed or power limits laid down in regulation, it is considered to be a motor vehicle (most likely a moped or motorcycle). If the vehicle were to be used on public roads then it and the rider are required to comply with the laws appropriate to those vehicle categories. Enforcement of the law is a matter for the police.

■ Eurostar**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[164595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions the Government has had with the French Government on Eurostar.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department has held initial but constructive discussions with the French Government to explore possible options regarding Eurostar's financial situation and we will continue to engage very closely with them and Eurostar over the coming months. However, these talks are at an early stage and there is no agreement in place.

We will also work closely with the wider international rail sector as we look to the restart and recovery of international travel, when it is safe and appropriate to do so. The Secretary of State will lead a successor to the Global Travel Taskforce to develop a framework that can facilitate greater travel when the time is right, while still managing the risk from imported cases and variants.

Motorways: Safety**Daisy Cooper:**[\[164628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to implement all of the recommendations from smart motorways review before allowing any new smart motorways to start operating again.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department and Highways England are committed to meeting all of the actions as set out in *Smart Motorway Safety Evidence Stocktake and Action Plan*, with a package of infrastructure, technology and education measures worth £500 million. The Secretary of State has asked for a one-year on report from Highways England setting out progress in delivering the 18-point Action Plan and identifying actions that can be delivered early. He has asked for the report by 12 March 2021 so any accelerated works can be rapidly put in place.

Railways: Safety**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[164597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps he has taken to ensure the health and safety of (a) passengers and (b) workers on the rail network in (i) response to the covid-19 outbreak and (ii) general terms.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The safety of both staff and passengers remains of the utmost importance. During the coronavirus pandemic, we have issued comprehensive guidance to train operators on the steps they need to take to protect staff in line with Public Health England advice.

Health and safety on the rail network is regulated by the Office of Rail and Road, who provide health and safety guidance to operators in addition to conducting research to promote continuous improvement of rail safety.

■ Taxis: Coronavirus**Sam Tarry:** [\[164677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what additional support he plans to provide to taxi drivers ineligible for grants or financial help under existing covid-19 financial support packages as a result of falling below the thresholds set out for those support packages during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The majority of taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) drivers are self-employed and can therefore apply for grants through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). A fourth round of the scheme, which will be available from the end of April, was announced in the Budget on 3 March (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/self-employment-income-support-scheme-grant-extension/self-employment-income-support-scheme-grant-extension>).

An online 'support finder' tool is available to help businesses and self-employed workers determine what financial support is available to them during the pandemic (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-support-for-businesses-during-coronavirus-covid-19>).

■ Transport for London Financial Review**Sarah Olney:** [\[166507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much his Department has spent on costs associated with KPMG's report on the Government-led financial review of Transport for London, commissioned by his Department in June 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

Costs associated with the Government Led Review of Transport for London's financial position totalled £1,216,107. This expenditure is critical to providing evidence to support Government's policy making, including the funding settlement with TfL from October 2020, worth up to £1.7 billion. This is part of the overall extraordinary government support of up to £3.3 billion for TfL to date.

■ Travel: Quarantine**Daisy Cooper:** [\[166572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will extend the list of travellers exempt from covid-19-related travel quarantine restrictions to include those children whose custody is shared between one parent in the UK and another abroad, subject to a negative covid-19 test result.

Robert Courts:

The decision to implement additional border measures is in direct response to scientific and medical data, which represents an increased risk to UK public health and an increased risk of community transmission of COVID-19 variants of concern

identified in those countries. These are intended to be temporary measures and the government keeps data for countries and territories under constant review.

The government has put in place measures to reduce the impact of border measures on families. For arrivals who have not been in a red-list country in the previous 10 days children are required to self-isolate, however they can do so in the family home and may also move between family homes during that period of isolation.

For managed quarantine facilities, family groups will be able to quarantine together as long as the hotel is able to accommodate them. This includes couples and parents with children.

TREASURY

■ Bank Services

Sir Mark Hendrick: [\[163641\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations he has received of cases of NatWest closing customer accounts without explanation.

Sir Mark Hendrick: [\[163642\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support is available to people who have had their bank account closed but are unavailable to access funds from that account.

Sir Mark Hendrick: [\[163643\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on what basis are banks permitted to close customers' bank accounts.

John Glen:

In most circumstances, the provision of a bank's services is a commercial decision for the bank and the Government does not intervene in these decisions. The terms and conditions of the contract between the two parties govern the termination of that contract, and although the Treasury sets the legal framework for the regulation of financial services it does not have investigative or prosecuting powers of its own and is not able to intervene in account closures.

HM Treasury sometimes receives representations from consumers with questions or concerns about their banking. However, any dispute arising between a bank and its customers is usually best resolved by the parties involved. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rules require the banks to properly investigate all complaints and, through ongoing supervision, it continues to monitor the banks' complaint handling processes. If customers are unable to resolve the issue with their bank, they will be eligible for further review by the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS). The FOS provides a free, independent dispute resolution service for bank customers.

Customers who are experiencing financial difficulty following a bank account closure may wish to contact the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS), an arms-length body

of the Department for Work and Pensions. MaPS was established to support consumers with comprehensive, consistent, guidance for every stage of their financial lives. It offers free and impartial information on money matters, available to all online, face-to-face or via telephone. This includes an impartial Debt Advice Locator Tool for those needing debt advice immediately.

■ Budget March 2021: Publicity

Layla Moran: [\[166534\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2021 to Question 163295, what assessment he has made of the cost of his Department's (a) advertising and (b) video production previewing Budget 2021 in each of the last two months as a proportion of its in-house communications team's annual budget.

Kemi Badenoch:

All content for HM Treasury channels is produced by the department's in-house communications team at no additional cost.

Layla Moran: [\[166535\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2021 to Question 163295, what the annual budget of his in-house communications team (a) is currently and (b) has been in each of the last five years.

Kemi Badenoch:

HM Treasury's communications team budget, including all staff and running costs for the past five financial years is: 2016/17- £1,950,886, 2017/18 - £1,838,437, 2018/19 - £1,838,272, 2019/20 - £2,138,268, 2020/21 £2,706,529 (year to date). The difference in costs seen in the current financial year has been driven largely by the additional demands of responding to the coronavirus crisis including new insight contracts (reference numbers CCZZ20A32 and CCZZ20A50, available to view [here](#) and on the Governments contract finder website) to support the department's policy response to the pandemic.

■ Coronavirus: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher: [\[166458\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to help provide new employment opportunities to people affected by the covid-19 outbreak in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

John Glen:

Throughout the pandemic, the Government's economic priority has been to protect jobs and livelihoods across the UK, including in Coventry North East and Coventry.

Alongside unprecedented support for businesses, we have protected jobs through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), which were extended to September 2021 in the Budget.

Provisional HMRC statistics indicate that there were 7,300 jobs furloughed in

Coventry North East constituency and 20,200 in Coventry as at 31 January 2021. Across the first three SEISS grants, there were a total of 28,100 claims within the Coventry Unitary Authority, totalling over £71 million.

For those who have unfortunately lost their job, the Government's Plan for Jobs has put in place a comprehensive package of support to help people find work. At the Spending Review 2020 we provided £3.6 billion additional funding in 2021-22 for DWP to deliver employment support to those who need it most. This includes funding for Job Centres Plus to sustain the doubling of the number of work coaches; the £2 billion Kickstart scheme; and the new 3-year long £2.9 billion Restart programme.

To continue to support low income families, at Budget the Government announced a six-month extension to the temporary £20 per week uplift to the Universal Credit (UC) standard allowance. The Government has also announced similar support for eligible Working Tax Credit (WTC) claimants, where we will provide a one-off £500 payment in April.

Taken together, these measures will help to protect jobs, support low income families and help people into new employment opportunities in Coventry and Coventry North East.

■ Free Zones

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[164433\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the total number of freeport bids from among which eight successful applications were announced on 3 March 2021, how many separate bids there were in total; and how many of those bids (a) were unsuccessful as a result of their proposed governance arrangements, (b) received the (i) highest and (ii) lowest score available in respect of their proposed governance arrangements, (c) received the highest score available in respect of their proposed governance arrangements and were not successful overall and (d) received the lowest score available in respect of their proposed governance arrangements and were successful overall.

Steve Barclay:

The government received 18 bids for Freeport status in the England bidding process. The government has decided to create eight Freeports in England, with selection processes for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland still to be announced.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government will shortly publish the rationale behind the selection of these Freeport locations according to the process laid out in the Prospectus.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[166400\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish, for each the eight successful freeport bids, the list of Standard Industrial Classification codes which that bid identified as ones which, in accordance with section 4.4 of the bidding prospectus, were classes of businesses (a) which formed part of the bid and (b) the bid aimed to attract.

Steve Barclay:

The Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government will shortly publish the rationale behind the selection of these Freeport locations according to the process laid out in the Prospectus.

■ **Free Zones: Devolution**

Bridget Phillipson: [\[164430\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what level of involvement the devolved Administrations will have with respect to the development of freeport policy in each of (a) Scotland, (b) Wales and (c) Northern Ireland.

Steve Barclay:

We want to ensure that the whole of the UK can benefit, not just England. We remain in ongoing discussions with the DAs to establish at least one Freeport in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as soon as possible.

It is important that a Freeport model is developed that is in the best interests of the whole of the UK and we have been engaging with the DAs in the appropriate way.

■ **Free Zones: Employment**

Grahame Morris: [\[165497\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the estimates that his Department uses for the number of new jobs that will be created in each year to 2025 at each of the freeport locations announced in Budget 2021.

Steve Barclay:

Our focus has been on getting places to send us their bids and proposals, rather than second-guessing what they will do. The modelling we have done to support that process remains sensitive at this point and liable to change significantly now the locations have been announced.

■ **Free Zones: Staff**

Andy McDonald: [\[166447\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to ensure that employment law is enforceable for all employees within the freeports announced in the Government's Budget 2021 on 3 March 2021.

Steve Barclay:

The government is pleased to have announced the locations of 8 new English Freeports at Budget, including Solent. These new Freeports will create jobs in deprived communities across the country

Freeports are not deregulatory and the government will ensure that the UK's high standards with respect to workers' rights will not be compromised.

■ Free Zones: Yorkshire and the Humber

Karl Turner: [\[165510\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Humber Freeport bid included commitments to maintain existing collective bargaining agreements with trade unions organising seafarers working on merchant ships working from Hull port; and if he will place a copy of that bid in the Library.

Karl Turner: [\[165511\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to consult trade unions on (a) employment rights and (b) governance structures before the eight Freeports announced in the Budget statement on 3 March 2021 begin operating.

Steve Barclay:

The government is pleased to have announced the locations of 8 new English Freeports at Budget. The Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government will shortly publish the rationale behind the selection of these Freeport locations according to the process laid out in the Prospectus.

Successful bidders will be confirmed subject to a business case review, agreement of governance arrangements, and the fulfilment of the appropriate authorisations.

Freeports are not deregulatory and the government will ensure that the UK's high standards with respect to workers' rights will not be compromised.

Emma Hardy: [\[165656\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on the potential effect of the Humber Freeport on the availability of seafarer apprenticeships in (a) Hull and (b) the Humber region.

Steve Barclay:

The Chancellor has not met with the Secretary of State for Education to discuss Freeports since the bidding process closed on the 5 February, in line with the government's commitment to the fair, open and transparent assessment process outlined in the Bidding Prospectus.

Our focus has been on getting places to send us their bids and proposals, rather than second-guessing what they will do. The government will continue to work with successful bidders to help them achieve their objectives, across a variety of sectors.

■ Overseas Aid

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[166511\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total cash value was of Official Development Assistance Budget in 2020-21.

Steve Barclay:

HM Treasury will publish 2020-21 Official Development Assistance allocations in due course.

As usual, the FCDO National Statistics publication, 'Statistics on International Development', will provide a breakdown of high-level UK Official Development Assistance spend for the 2020 Calendar Year. This is due to be published on 8 April.

■ **Research: Tax Allowances**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[163690\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to page 39 of the Budget Report 2021, for what reasons steps taken to prevent the abuse of the Research and Development relief for small and medium-sized enterprises result in an increase in the cost to the Exchequer of that programme.

Jesse Norman:

In order to deter abuse, for accounting periods beginning on or after 1 April 2021, the amount of SME payable R&D tax credit that a business can receive in any one year will be capped at £20,000 plus three times the company's total PAYE and NICs liability (unless a limited exemption applies). The figures published in the costing report at Budget 2021 relate to changes that have been made to the design of the measure since April 2020 (following the second policy consultation) and the delay in implementation to April 2021. The measure is expected to raise £145 million from the end of the scorecard 2025-26.

■ **Retail Trade: Non-domestic Rates**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[163650\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the business rates holiday to empty retail units to reduce the costs to leisure and retail property owners.

Jesse Norman:

The Government maintains an Empty Property Relief (EPR) to support property owners between the reoccupation of vacated premises.

Under EPR, owners of retail properties do not normally have to pay business rates on newly vacated buildings for three months.

Properties which have closed temporarily due to the Government's advice on COVID-19 should be treated as occupied for the purposes of the business rates holiday for retail, hospitality and leisure properties.

■ **Royal Opera House: Self-employment Income Support Scheme**

Chris Grayling:

[\[163647\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will enable theatrical freelancers whose self-employment income was incorrectly classified as PAYE by the Royal Opera House to claim the full grants through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government announced at Budget 2021 that the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will continue until September, with a fourth and a final fifth grant. This provides certainty to business as the economy reopens and means the SEISS continues to be one of the most generous schemes for the self-employed in the world.

HMRC work out SEISS eligibility based on information submitted by individuals on their Self-Assessment tax returns. As the deadline for 2019-20 tax returns has now passed, HMRC will now use these tax returns for the fourth and fifth grants, provided they were submitted by 2 March 2021.

This means more than 600,000 people are brought into scope who either became self-employed in 2019-20, or were ineligible for previous grants, but now may be eligible for the fourth grant on the basis of submitting their 2019-20 tax return.

The SEISS provides generous support to the self-employed, including freelancers who meet the eligibility criteria.

In addition, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has been available to all employers with a PAYE system and all employees on PAYE regardless of their employment contract. As such, freelancers and those on short term contracts could be eligible for the CJRS if they are on PAYE and meet the eligibility criteria. The furloughing of staff through the CJRS is a voluntary arrangement, entered at the employers' discretion and agreed by employees.

People who are ineligible for CJRS and the SEISS may qualify for other elements of the £407bn package of support the Government has made available.

■ Self-employed: Coronavirus**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[163648\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent measures his Department has taken to support self-employed workers whose trade is affected by ongoing covid-19 restrictions.

Jesse Norman:

The Government announced at Budget 2021 that the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will continue until September, with a fourth and a final fifth grant. This provides certainty to business as the economy reopens and places the SEISS among the most generous schemes for the self-employed in the world.

The Government has also announced a major improvement in access to the SEISS. HMRC will now take into account 2019-20 tax returns to determine eligibility and calculate the fourth and fifth grants. This will increase the number of self-employed people who could claim these grants by about 600,000 to a total of up to 3.7 million.

The fourth SEISS grant, available to be claimed from late April, will be worth 80% of average trading profits, paid out in a single instalment covering three months' worth of annual profits, and capped at £7,500 in total.

The fifth and final SEISS grant will cover May to September. Further details of the SEISS grants will be published in due course.

The fourth and fifth SEISS grants constitute an estimated £13.5bn of additional support, taking total support for the self-employed to over £33 billion since the start of the pandemic.

In addition, there have been extensions within the wider package of support for the self-employed.

The temporary £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance has been extended for six months, and the Government has decided to extend the suspension of the Minimum Income Floor for three months, to the end of July 2021, so that where self-employed claimants' earnings have fallen significantly, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[166462\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of self-employed people who will be ineligible to apply for the fourth round of Self-Employed Income Support Scheme grants as a result of their tax return for the tax year 2019-20 not having been submitted by 2 March 2021.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[166464\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) tax returns for the tax year 2019-20 that were outstanding as at 31 January 2021 and (b) recipients of support under the third round of Self-Employed Income Support Scheme grants whose tax returns for tax year 2019-20 were outstanding as at 31 January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC waived the late filing penalty for tax returns filed online by 28 February in order to provide relief to all Self-Assessment taxpayers and agents at a time of significant pressure. The statutory filing deadline of 31 January did not change.

According to HMRC, 11.4 million people had submitted their 2019-20 Self-Assessment tax returns by 28 February. About 1.1 million returns are outstanding. Not all of these cases will ultimately file a return or will be self-employed.

HMRC analysis of filing volumes around this period suggests that an estimated 97% of individuals who claimed the third Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant, about 2.1 million people, had submitted their 2019-20 Self-Assessment tax return by 28 February.

An estimate of the number of self-employed individuals who will be ineligible for the fourth SEISS grant as a result of their tax return for the tax year 2019-20 not having been submitted by 2 March 2021 is not available. This will depend on the number of individuals that file a 2019-20 return after that date and the information they submit.

At Spring Budget the Government announced a major improvement in access to the SEISS. HMRC will use 2019-20 tax returns to determine eligibility for the fourth and fifth grants, provided they were submitted by 2 March.

This means about 600,000 people, many of whom became self-employed in 2019-20, may now be able to claim the fourth and fifth grants, bringing the total number of people who could be eligible to about 3.7 million.

■ Taxation: Self-assessment

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[166463\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what notice his Department provided to people already in receipt of a Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant that they would be required to submit their tax return for the 2019-20 financial year by 2 March 2021 to be eligible to apply for the fourth round of grants under that scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government announced at Budget 2021 that the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will continue until September, with a fourth and a final fifth grant.

This means more than 600,000 people are brought into scope who either became self-employed in 2019-20, or were ineligible for previous grants but now may be eligible for the fourth grant on the basis of submitting their 2019-20 Self-Assessment tax return.

HM Revenue & Customs waived the late filing penalty for Self-Assessment tax returns filed online by 28 February to provide relief to taxpayers and agents at a time of unprecedented pressure. The statutory filing deadline of 31 January did not change.

Taxpayers who are registered for Self-Assessment will have been issued with a notice to file their return.

HMRC run a prominent, annual communications campaign to prompt taxpayers to file their return by the due date. This year, in addition, they issued further press releases during February, complemented by messaging via social media and, where possible, direct emails and SMS texts to taxpayers who had not yet filed returns, and their agents.

■ Tour Operators: VAT

Drew Hendry:

[\[166484\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending VAT relief to passenger vehicles used exclusively for tours with under 10 seats.

Jesse Norman:

The supply of transport services in passenger vehicles, including those used for tours, with less than 10 seats 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 to passenger vehicles further.

WALES

■ Entertainers: EU Countries

Ruth Jones:

[\[166564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the effect of the removal of work-permit free travel for musicians and performers to and from the EU on the UK's creative industries.

Simon Hart:

I have regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues on a wide range of subjects including how we can best support the Welsh creative industry sector.

Leaving the EU has always meant that there would be changes to how touring musicians and performers from the UK operate in the EU. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has engaged with the sector extensively throughout negotiations and since the announcement of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement to understand the diverse circumstances of companies, organisations and individual practitioners and how they may need to adapt as they plan activity across the European Union.

DCMS has established a Working Group to bring together sector representatives, other key government departments and the devolved administrations. The Group will work together to provide clarity regarding the practical steps that need to be taken by creative sector professionals when touring the EU. It will explore how these sectors can be supported to work and tour in the EU with confidence.

Going forward DCMS will continue to work closely with the sector and the devolved administrations to ensure businesses and individuals have the advice and guidance they need to meet new requirements.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Disability: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[166460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the financial effect of the covid-19 outbreak on disabled people and their carers in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Justin Tomlinson:

Disabled people and their carers have access to the full range of social security benefits according to their circumstances.

DWP Ministers and officials regularly discuss support for disabled people and carers with their counterparts across Government and recognise and value the vital contribution made by carers in supporting some of the most vulnerable in society.

Ruth Jones:

[\[166633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps the Government has taken to help protect disabled people from the effects of 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.

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

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

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

The Government will publish the National Strategy for Disabled People this year taking into account the impacts of the pandemic on disabled people. The strategy will focus on the issues that disabled people say affect them the most in all aspects of life.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[167230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made on the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the finances of households with one or more disabled residents.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[167231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Government's Disability Unit has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the employment rate among disabled people; and what steps that Unit is taking with other Government departments to support disabled people who are unemployed due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[167232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Government's Disability Unit has made of the potential effect on disabled people of the proposed ending of the £20 uplift to universal credit; and what steps she has taken in response to that assessment.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[167233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Government's Disability Unit has made of the effect on disabled people of the ending of temporary easements in the welfare system introduced during the first lockdown, including a pause on sanctions, a suspension of benefit reassessments, and a suspension of benefit recovery; and what steps she has taken in response to that assessment.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave to PQ UIN [161760](#) on 8 March 2021.

■ **Employment: Coronavirus**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[164651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to make support available to employees suffering from long covid.

Justin Tomlinson:

On 18 February 2021, the Government announced that the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research Innovation (UKRI) had been awarded £18.5 million in funding for four research projects to help understand and address the longer-term health effects of COVID-19 in non-hospitalised patients.

As research into the long-term health symptoms and impacts of COVID-19 is ongoing, we are collaborating across Government to monitor emerging evidence and consider our response.

People with a condition arising from exposure to the Covid-19 virus are able to access Personal Independence Payment in the same way as other people with long-term health conditions or disabilities. Disability benefits do not include or exclude by condition, instead they look at the needs arising from a long-term health condition or disability.

Financial support is available through Statutory Sick Pay, Universal Credit, New Style ESA. People who have symptoms of Long Covid should see their GP, if their health condition impacts on their ability to work a fit note may be issued. People can claim ESA or Pension Credit depending on their individual circumstances.

■ **Free Zones: Industrial Health and Safety**

Andy McDonald:

[\[166449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 will apply within freeports; and what recent discussion she has had with Cabinet colleagues on health and safety regulation within freeports.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 applies to ports and guidance on how to manage the main causes of injury and ill health in those settings is published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) at [Health and safety in ports and docks - HSE](#).

Freeports across Great Britain, when established as secure customs zones will not be treated any differently from other ports from a health and safety perspective.

Risks associated with warehousing operations, moving vehicles, lifting operations or storage of hazardous substances are examples of the areas that freeport operators, whether state or private enterprise, will be required to effectively plan for and control.

■ Health and Safety Executive: Inspections

Stephen Timms: [\[165426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many amber /red covid-19 concerns dealt with by Health and Safety Executive regulatory staff have been handled by (a) visiting officers, (b) regulatory contact officers and (c) inspectors in each month since March 2020.

Stephen Timms: [\[165427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many amber /red covid-19 concerns dealt with by Health and Safety Executive regulatory staff have resulted in (a) formal written advice and (b) enforcement in each month since March 2020.

Stephen Timms: [\[165428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many regulatory interventions in relation to the covid-19 outbreak have been conducted (a) as a result of a site visit and (b) without a site visit in each month since March 2020.

Stephen Timms: [\[165429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many regulatory interventions recorded by the Health and Safety Executive in relation to the covid-19 outbreak there were by each class of reason in each month since March 2020.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 12 March 2021]: HSE's evidence is that more than 90% of the businesses checked have the right precautions in place or are willing to make necessary changes promptly and without the need for formal enforcement action. HSE inspectors do not conclude an intervention until they are confident a business has the right controls in place. HSE will continue to take enforcement action where appropriate, but the best use of its time and resource to ensure employers take the right action promptly is often to educate, persuade or require matters to be put right immediately.

In response to PQ 21/165426, the information is provided in the table below:

MONTH / YEAR	CONCERNS DEALT WITH BY VISITING / REGULATORY CONTACT OFFICERS	CONCERNS DEALT WITH BY INSPECTORS
March 2020	-	-
April 2020	203	1510
May 2020	148	835
June 2020	63	482
July 2020	55	339
August 2020	39	258
September 2020	74	330
October 2020	86	396
November 2020	94	387
December 2020	102	134
January 2021	154	271
February 2021	74	59
March 2021	4	6
Totals	1096	5,007

Notes:

i. Data was extracted from HSE's live operational database on 10th March 2021 and is subject to change, eg.as there can be a delay of up to ten working days before information is uploaded to the system.

ii. HSE systems do not distinguish (in a readily accessible format) between interventions by Regulatory Contact Officers and Visiting Officers, who carry out a similar role but in different operational divisions.

In response to PQ 165427, the information is provided in the table below:

MONTH / YEAR	CONCERNS RESULTING IN FORMAL WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE	CONCERNS RESULTING IN ENFORCEMENT NOTICES
March 2020	-	-
April 2020	46	1
May 2020	41	8
June 2020	37	10
July 2020	41	4
August 2020	23	4
September 2020	40	5
October 2020	30	1
November 2020	40	2
December 2020	17	0
January 2021	29	3
February 2021	14	1
March 2021	1	0
Totals	359	39

Note: Data was extracted from HSE's live operational database on 10th March 2021 and is subject to change, eg.as there can be a delay of up to ten working days before information is uploaded to the system.

In response to PQ 165428, the information is provided in the table below:

MONTH / YEAR	COVID-19 INTERVENTIONS WITHOUT SITE VISIT	COVID-19 INTERVENTIONS WITH SITE VISIT	COVID-19 INTERVENTIONS WHERE VISIT STATUS UNCLEAR FROM RECORDS
March 2020	4	2	-
April 2020	1,686	44	-
May 2020	924	134	-
June 2020	1,989	198	2
July 2020	2,527	1,646	48
August 2020	3,406	1,582	49
September 2020	9,008	2,202	52
October 2020	11,408	5,378	87
November 2020	11,256	9,382	52
December 2020	9,197	10,019	157
January 2021	11,721	13,586	42
February 2021	22,170	15,580	31
March 2021	6,586	3,870	8
Totals	91,882*	63,627	528

*In addition, there are over 14,500 'green' concerns assessed as 'low risk' which have been dealt with by HSE's Concerns and Advisory Team.

Note: Data was extracted from HSE's live operational database on 10th March 2021 and is subject to change, eg.as there can be a delay of up to ten working days before information is uploaded to the system.

In response to PQ 165429, the information is provided in the table below:

MONTH / YEAR	WORKPLACE			RIDDOR		TOTALS
	CONCERN INTERVENTIONS	SPOT CHECK INTERVENTIONS	OUTBREAK INTERVENTIONS	RIDDOR INVESTIGATIONS (NON FATALITIES)	RIDDOR INVESTIGATIONS (NON FATALITIES)	
March 2020	331	6	0	0	0	337
April 2020	3,721	12	1	0	0	3,734
May 2020	2,060	71	0	39	14	2,184
June 2020	1,247	1,632	5	33	15	2,932
July 2020	1,269	3,774	51	10	31	5,135
August 2020	1,016	4,692	45	5	7	5,765
September 2020	1,152	10,779	76	13	21	12,041
October 2020	1,520	16,252	131	7	14	17,924
November 2020	2,347	20,043	149	10	65	22,614
December 2020	1,202	19,071	64	16	35	20,388
January 2021	3,105	24,850	55	23	29	28,062
February 2021	1,578	37,608	39	21	26	39,272
March 2021	187	10,454	3	5	22	10,671
Totals	20,735*	149,244	619	182	279	171,059

*This total includes those concerns listed in the table above in response to PQ 21/165426, with the remainder being those concerns categorised as 'green' (assessed as 'low risk') which have been dealt with by HSE's Concerns and Advisory Team.

Notes:

- i. For RIDDOR investigations the number relates to specific matters; typically, there will be more than one visit when dealing with the matter.
- ii. Data was extracted from HSE's live operational database on 10th March 2021 and is subject to change, eg.as there can be a delay of up to ten working days before information is uploaded to the system.

■ Pensioners: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[166461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that pensioners in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry receive adequate welfare support during the covid-19 outbreak.

Guy Opperman:

This Government has taken significant action to support pensioners in Coventry and across the UK during the pandemic.

The Social Security (Up-rating of Benefits) Act 2020 ensured that the Government can uphold the triple lock commitment. This means that from April 2021, the full yearly basic State Pension will be £2050 higher than in 2010.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Drew Hendry:

[\[166483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect on claimants of having to proactively reapply for personal independence payments as opposed to having an integrated process of automatic renewal of those payments.

Justin Tomlinson:

On Personal Independence Payment (PIP), we do not have an integrated process of automatic renewals but review claimants to ensure their award reflects their needs. Once someone has been awarded PIP, which can be paid at one of eight rates, that award will be reviewed. Award rates and their durations are set on an individual basis, based on the claimant's needs and the likelihood of those needs changing. Regular reviews are a key feature of the benefit and ensure that payments accurately match the current needs of claimants, something fundamentally missing from Disability Living Allowance, which PIP began to replace in 2013. Award durations are based on an individual's circumstances and can vary from nine months to an on-going award, with a light touch review at the ten-year point.

Some claimants can be given a shorter, fixed-term award which isn't subject to a review on the basis that the individual's needs will improve to the point they are not entitled by the end of their award. Claimants subject to such an award are free to make a new claim before their award ends if they consider they may still be entitled.

Since PIP was introduced we have implemented changes and improved guidance which reduces the frequency of reviews for most pensioners and those with the highest needs and where those needs will not improve or will deteriorate.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Terminal Illnesses

Jessica Morden:

[\[166354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications his Department has received for an extension of personal independence payments under the special rules for terminal illness after the expiration of the three-year award since 2019; and how long the waiting times were for applications to be processed in those such instances.

Justin Tomlinson:

4,270 Personal Independence Payment claimants under an existing Special Rules for Terminal Illness (SRTI) award registered Advance claims under SRTI at the end of their 3 year fixed term award between January 2019 – October 2020 (latest available data).

The median end to end clearance times were 7 working days for Advance claims cleared under special rules.

Notes

Source: PIP ADS

- SRTI awards are identified based on the initial decision at New Claim or Reassessment from DLA. This data excludes instances where end dates or award types have been updated following this initial decision.
- PIP data includes both new claims and reassessment claims from Disability Living Allowance.
- This is unpublished data. It should be used with caution and it may be subject to future revision.
- Please note that claimants who register under SRTI but are deemed not to be eligible under the SRTI criteria are sent a PIP2 form and continue their claim under the Normal Rules claim journey. This means that claimants who register a PIP claim can change to Normal Rules during the customer journey:
- The 'Registration to DWP decision (end to end)' clearance time is measured as the average time between the date of registration of the claim (or for Special Rules, the date of transition if the claim moves from being a normal rules claim to being a special rules claim during the claimant journey) and the date of the DWP decision to either award or disallow the claim.
- Clearance Time measures do not include claims that were withdrawn by the claimant or claims that were disallowed by DWP prior to referral to the Assessment Providers (e.g. for failure to meet basic eligibility criteria).

- Advance claims are defined as a New Claim or Reassessment from DLA registration made by a claimant with an existing award either less than 6 months prior to the end date or up to 6 months after the end date of an existing award.

■ Sick Pay

Daisy Cooper:

[\[166574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will review the definition of Statutory Sick Pay to fully recognise long-term and fluctuating conditions.

Justin Tomlinson:

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is payable for up to 28 weeks per sickness absence. Sickness absences which are less than 8 weeks apart count as the same period of sickness. In a new period of sickness, employees are eligible for 28 weeks of SSP. In this way, those with long-term or fluctuating conditions are supported through SSP.

SSP provides a minimum level of income for employees when they are sick or incapable of work. Employers are legally required to pay SSP to eligible employees who are off work sick or incapable of work, where employees meet the qualifying conditions. Some employers may also decide to pay more, and for longer, through Occupational Sick Pay.

■ Social Security Benefits: Motor Neurone Disease

Dan Jarvis:

[\[166429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans he has to remove the reasonable expectation of death within six months provision under the Special Rules for Terminal Illness for benefit claimants who are terminally ill with motor neurone disease.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department is committed to delivering an improved benefit system for all claimants that are nearing the end of their lives and is working across Government to bring forward proposals following the evaluation. I remain committed to implementing the key areas identified in the evaluation; a consensus to change the six-month rule; improving consistency with other services used by people nearing the end of their lives; and raising awareness of the support that is available.

■ Social Security Benefits: Temporary Accommodation

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[166513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people in receipt of income-based jobseekers allowance who are unable to migrate to Universal Credit as they are living in temporary accommodation.

Will Quince:

Claimants on income-based Jobseeker's Allowance can make a claim for Universal Credit if they believe that they will be better off. Claimants should check carefully their eligibility and entitlements under Universal Credit 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.

Claimants that are living in temporary accommodation can continue to receive housing support through Housing Benefit alongside Universal Credit.

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

David Linden:

[165649]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what written communications her Department has had with claimants of universal credit advising those claimants that the £20 uplift to that benefit is a temporary measure during the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

The Government's economic response to the COVID-19 outbreak has been widely reported on and the Department has worked through external media channels to ensure we informed the largest possible audience as welfare-related decisions were made.

DWP benefit and pension rates for 2021 to 2022 are published on GOV.UK at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-and-pension-rates-2021-to-2022 And, following the necessary legislation being laid, to reflect the decision announced in the Budget to extend the temporary uplift in the Standard Allowance for a further six months, this will be updated.

Additionally, at the end of each monthly assessment period, all Universal Credit claimants have access to a statement which includes information surrounding the rate of Standard Allowance awarded.

Jon Trickett:

[166322]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the total cost per month, of extending the £20 weekly uplift in Universal Credit until September 2021.

Will Quince:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered his Budget to Parliament on 3 March 2021. The Budget in full and supporting documents are published and available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/budget-2021-documents>

■ Young People: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher:

[166459]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to increase (a) employment and (b) training opportunities for young people in (i) Coventry North East constituency and (ii) Coventry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

The Government recognises that young people have been especially vulnerable during the pandemic and are committed to providing support to help them move into

work in these difficult times. Our £30bn Plan for Jobs includes specific interventions targeted at young people

From September 2020 we started the implementation of the DWP Youth Offer for all 18 to 24 year olds making a claim to Universal Credit and who are in the Intensive Work Search Group.

Our 13-week Youth Employment Programme delivers wrap-around support for many of the Plans for Jobs initiatives, and helps young people to take up work-related training or a job, such as Kickstart, which has seen young people starting work, a traineeship, an apprenticeship and Sector-based Work Academy Programmes. The Youth Employment Programme is live and our dedicated Work Coaches are delivering the programme to young people.

The Jobcentre team in Coventry have developed a Youth Hub based at the Coventry Jobshop to provide outreach support for young people in Coventry, and have partnered with employers in the area to deliver Mentoring Circles and Sector Work Academy Programmes. In addition, our Jobcentre Youth Employability Coaches are providing flexible support to young people with significant complex needs and barriers to help them move into employment and offering six weeks of in-work support when they start work.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DEFENCE

■ **Baseline Profit Rate 2021-22 for Single Source Defence Contracts**

Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):

[\[HCWS846\]](#)

I am today announcing that I have set the baseline profit rate for single source defence contracts at 8.31%, in line with the rate recommended by the Single Source Regulations Office (SSRO). The baseline profit rate is calculated on a three-year rolling average of underlying profit rates. The underlying profit rate decreased from 8.23% for 2020-21 to 8.19% for 2021-22. I have accepted the methodology used by the SSRO to calculate these figures.

In addition to the main rate, I am announcing an additional baseline profit rate of 0.057%. This will only apply to Qualifying Defence Contracts where:

- i. the contract is between Secretary of State and a company incorporated under the Companies Act that is wholly owned by the UK Government; and
- ii. both parties to the contract agree that it should apply.

The intention is that this rate can be used to set Contract Profit Rates at a rate that does not result in such companies making a profit, should it not be appropriate for them to do so. Application of the five further steps set out in Section 17 of the Defence Reform Act 2014 may result in a rate that is slightly different from zero on individual contracts.

Setting this additional rate diverges from the SSRO's recommendation. The SSRO has welcomed the intention to bring contracts into the regime where it is appropriate that the contractor does not make a profit. This will enable the pricing and transparency provisions of the regulatory framework to be applied to both the contract and relevant subcontracts, which provisions are intended to assist the government to obtain value for money and contractors to be paid fair and reasonable prices.

I am also announcing new Capital Servicing Rates and a SSRO funding adjustment as recommended by the SSRO, which can be found at Table 1 below. These rates have been published in the London Gazette, as required by the Defence Reform Act 2014.

All of these new rates will come into effect from 1 April 2021.

Table 1: Recommended Rates agreed by the Secretary of State for Defence

ELEMENT	2020 RATES	2021 RATES
Baseline Profit Rate (BPR) (%) on contract cost)	8.22%	8.31%
Baseline Profit Rate to apply to contracts between the Secretary of State and a	N/A	0.057%

ELEMENT	2020 RATES	2021 RATES
company wholly owned by the UK Government and where both parties agree (% on contract cost)		
Fixed Capital Servicing Rate (% on Fixed Capital employed)	3.66%	3.27%
Working Capital Servicing Rate (% on positive Working Capital employed)	1.22%	1.33%
Working Capital Servicing Rate (% on negative Working Capital employed)	0.61%	0.65%
SSRO Funding Adjustment	-0.052%	-0.057%

HOME OFFICE

■ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):

[\[HCWS848\]](#)

I am pleased to announce Mr David Neal's appointment as the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration. The appointment has been made in accordance with the UK Borders Act 2007 and in line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments, following a fair and open competition. The appointment will be for a fixed term of three years. Mr Neal will take up post on 22 March 2021.

David Neal was appointed by HM The Queen as the Provost Marshal (Army) and commanded the 1st Military Police Brigade from 2016 until 2019. He led the Royal Military Police through major reforms including the Service Justice System Review, and was responsible for Operation Northmoor, the Royal Military Police investigation into allegations of illegal killings by British troops in Afghanistan.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Negotiations on the UK's Future Trading Relationship with Australia: Update

Secretary of State for International Trade (Elizabeth Truss):

[\[HCWS845\]](#)

The fourth round of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations with Australia took place between Monday 22 February and Friday 5 March. During the two weeks, negotiators

held 51 negotiation sessions, covering 27 different chapter areas. In total, we have had 170 sessions since launching negotiations in July 2020.

Both the negotiation teams shared text and additional proposals before the round, including on Digital, Labour and Technical Barriers to Trade, allowing negotiators to enhance their substantive conversations. From this, negotiators were able to build mutual understanding, and make further progress consolidating texts in most chapter areas. Focused engagement has enabled negotiators to provisionally identify shared ambition and remaining points of divergence to work through ahead of the next round.

Good progress has been made in areas including Customs, Rules of Origin, and Professional Services. The majority of text has been agreed in chapters on Good Regulatory Practice, as well as Small to Medium-Sized Enterprises. Development in the latter reflects the commitment of both Australia and the UK to ensuring businesses of all sizes can benefit from the FTA.

Some text was agreed in cross-border trade in services. Negotiators were also able to hold technical discussions on mobility, international maritime transport services, express delivery services and domestic regulation.

Meanwhile, progress was also made on Procurement and Digital, with parts of the text agreed. In addition, there were productive discussions on the Innovation chapter.

Discussions were taken forward on Investment, where we hope to include provisions which further enhance our strong bilateral relationship, building on the UK's position as second largest direct investor in Australia and the second largest recipient of Australian Foreign Direct Investment in 2019.

The Australia and UK negotiation teams have also planned an intensive period of intersessional discussions in the coming weeks to continue this momentum ahead of a fifth round of talks.

Below is a summary list of the areas discussed in the round, which continued to take place by video conference:

- Anti-Corruption
- Competition
- Customs and Trade Facilitation
- Development
- Digital/ e-commerce
- Environment & Clean Growth
- Financial Services
- Good Regulatory Practice
- Innovation
- Intellectual Property
- Investment

- Labour
- Legal and Institutional provisions
- Government Procurement
- Rules of Origin
- Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
- Services, including movement of natural persons, professional services, international maritime transport services and delivery services.
- Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
- State-to-State Dispute Settlement
- Technical Barriers to Trade
- Telecommunications
- Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment
- Trade in Goods
- Transparency

Any deal the UK Government agrees will be fair and balanced and in the best interests of the whole of the UK. As we will in all negotiations, we remain committed to upholding our high environmental, labour, product and food safety, and animal welfare standards in our trade agreement with Australia, as well as protecting the National Health Service (NHS).

TRANSPORT

■ Local Transport Update

Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

[\[HCWS847\]](#)

Today the Government has published "Bus Back Better", the long-term National Bus Strategy for England outside London.

Our strategy will deliver better bus services for passengers across England, through ambitious and far-reaching reform of how services are planned and delivered. The Prime Minister's announcement of transformational funding (a combined £5 billion for buses, cycling and walking) in February last year demonstrated the Government's commitment to buses and active travel. Following publication in June 2020 of Gear Change: A Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking, today's publication explains how buses will be transformed.

Buses are our most used form of public transport but, even before COVID-19, they faced challenges. There are pockets of good bus performance outside London, but far too many places have fallen behind. Turning this around is central to this Government's objectives of reaching net-zero and levelling up.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on buses, as with all transport. It gives urgency to the strategy, but also an opportunity. Dealing with the emergency fostered greater cooperation between bus operators and local authorities, which we can build on. We know that wherever and whenever bus patronage grows, there are bus operators and local government working together to deliver improvements for passengers. We want this for all passengers, and the strategy sets out that we want every local transport authority and bus operator in England to be in a statutory Enhanced Partnership or a franchising arrangement, using existing powers in the Bus Services Act 2017. We will make £25 million available straight away to develop these.

The developing partnerships will be asked to produce robust and ambitious Bus Service Improvement Plans by the end of October 2021. We will expect the plans to set out a roadmap to better services for passengers and communities, urban and rural, and be fully informed by local needs.

The strategy also sets out our ambitious roadmap to a zero-emission bus fleet, including a commitment that we will consult on ending the sale of new diesel buses. This will bring buses into line with other vehicles - we have already announced ending the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030.

Disabled people rely on bus services more than most and the strategy confirms our continuing commitment to supporting an inclusive transport system. One of the strategy's aims is to improve equality of opportunity, particularly for older and disabled people. We want to see improvement plans that drive improvement in accessibility for all. Disabled people should have the confidence to travel when and where they want to, and our plans ensure that bus services play their part in making that possible.

Alongside this, we have also announced today that 17 rural and suburban communities will see an additional investment of £20 million from the Government's Rural Mobility Fund to trial innovative on-demand services that are able to get closer to where people live and at a time convenient for them – another example of the Government's work to level-up transport infrastructure across the country.

I am placing a copy of the National Bus Strategy in the Libraries of both Houses.