

Daily Report

Tuesday, 16 March 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 16 March 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:59 P.M., 16 March 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	7	■ Special Guardianship Orders: Parental Leave	15
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	7	■ Toys and Games: Internet	16
■ Blackmore Bond: Insolvency	7	CABINET OFFICE	17
■ Boohoo: Debenhams	7	■ Census	17
■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme	8	■ Free Zones: Freedom of Information	17
■ Burlington House: Rents	8	■ Government: Publications	17
■ Business: Grants	9	■ Mayors: Elections	18
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	9	COP26	18
■ Foreign Investment in UK: National Security	10	■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Children and Young People	18
■ Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme	10	DEFENCE	19
■ Green Homes Grant Scheme	10	■ Armed Forces: Discharges	19
■ Home Energy and Lifestyle Management	11	■ Armed Forces: West Midlands	20
■ Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund: North East	11	■ Army	21
■ Mathematics: Research	11	■ Devonport Dockyard	22
■ Paula Vennells	12	■ Fiji: Armed Forces	22
■ Post Codes	12	■ Queens Flight	22
■ Re-employment	13	■ Unmanned Air Vehicles	23
■ Renewable Energy	13	DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	23
■ Restart Grant Scheme	13	■ Bank Services: Internet	23
■ Self-employed: Adoption	14	■ Broadband: Finance	23
■ Solar Events	14	■ Broadband: Wales	24

■ Burlington House: Cultural Heritage	26	■ Potatoes: UK Trade with EU	43
■ Dormant Assets Scheme	26	■ Shellfish: UK Trade with EU	43
■ Exercise: Coronavirus	26	■ Sites of Special Scientific Interest	44
■ Internet: Fraud	27	■ Tree Felling	44
■ Old Royal Naval College	27	■ Tree Felling: Urban Areas	45
EDUCATION	28	■ Tree Planting: Urban Areas	46
■ Education: Coronavirus	28	■ Zoo Animals Fund	46
■ Educational Visits: Coronavirus	29	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	48
■ Financial Services: Education	29	■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	48
■ Members: Correspondence	30	■ Georgia: Politics and Government	48
■ Remote Education: ICT	30	■ Hong Kong: Electoral Systems	49
■ School Meals: Finance	32	■ Israel: Palestinians	49
■ Schools: Coronavirus	32	■ Jerusalem: Palestinians	50
■ Students: Coronavirus	33	■ Myanmar: Armed Conflict	50
■ Teachers: In-service Training	33	■ Myanmar: Arms Trade	51
■ Teachers: Training	34	■ Myanmar: Military Coups	51
■ Turing Scheme: Costs	35	■ Myanmar: Overseas Trade	52
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	36	■ Nagorno Karabakh: Armed Conflict	52
■ Dogs: Animal Welfare	36	■ Occupied Territories: Humanitarian Situation	53
■ Dogs: Imports	37	■ Pablo Hasel	53
■ Flood Control	37	■ Palestinians: Disability	53
■ Food: Origin Marking	38	■ Paraguay: Demonstrations	54
■ Food: Recycling	38	■ Sri Lanka: Tamils	54
■ Hedgehogs: Conservation	39	■ Syria: Coronavirus	55
■ Inland Waterways and Rivers: Sewage	39	■ Tanveer Ahmed Rafique	56
■ Packaging: Recycling	40	■ UN Climate Conference 2021	57
■ Pet Travel Scheme: Dogs	40	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	57
■ Plastics Research and Innovation Fund	41	■ Antibiotics: Side-effects	57
■ Plastics: Beaches	41	■ Care Homes: Coronavirus	58
■ Plastics: EU Law	42	■ Coronavirus: Bradford	58

■ Coronavirus: Children	58	■ Health Services: EU Countries	78
■ Coronavirus: Children's Centres and Nurseries	59	■ HIV Infection	79
■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing	59	■ Human Papillomavirus: Vaccination	79
■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	59	■ Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review	80
■ Coronavirus: Halton	60	■ Members: Correspondence	80
■ Coronavirus: Laboratories	60	■ Mental Health Services	80
■ Coronavirus: Liverpool	61	■ Mental Health Services: Children	81
■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing	61	■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People	81
■ Coronavirus: Quarantine	62	■ Neuromuscular Disorders: Medical Treatments	81
■ Coronavirus: Screening	62	■ NHS Test and Trace	82
■ Coronavirus: Sefton	65	■ NHS: Incentives	82
■ Coronavirus: Staffordshire	65	■ NHS: Medical Records	82
■ Coronavirus: Travel	65	■ Obesity: Coronavirus	83
■ Coronavirus: Undocumented Migrants	66	■ Prisons: Coronavirus	84
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	66	■ Social Services: Means-tested Benefits	84
■ Coronavirus: Yorkshire and the Humber	73	■ Surgery: Medical Equipment	84
■ Cutaneous T-cell Lymphoma: Diagnosis	74	■ Test and Trace Support Payment	85
■ Cystic Fibrosis: Medical Treatments	74	■ Vaccination: Local Press	85
■ Dementia: Carers	74	HOME OFFICE	86
■ Dementia: Health Services	75	■ Asylum: Hotels	86
■ Dental Services: Staff	75	■ Asylum: Military Bases	86
■ Disability: Coronavirus	75	■ Domestic Abuse: Children	87
■ Eating Disorders: Young People	76	■ Immigration	87
■ Electronic Cigarettes: Public Places	77	■ Immigration: Married People	88
■ Epilepsy: Children	77		
■ Gardasil	77		
■ Health Professions: Resignations	78		

■ Metropolitan Police Service's Handling of Non-recent Sexual Offence Investigations Alleged against Persons of Public Prominence Independent Review	88	■ Levelling Up Fund and UK Community Renewal Fund: Halton	100
■ Migrants: Coronavirus	89	■ Levelling Up Fund and UK Community Renewal Fund: Wales	100
■ Pets: Theft	90	■ Members: Correspondence	101
■ Police: Cambridgeshire	90	■ Planning Permission: Newbury	101
■ Rape: Criminal Proceedings	91	■ Public Lavatories: Gender Recognition	101
■ Terrorism: Birmingham	91	■ Regional Planning and Development	102
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	91	■ Rented Housing: Coronavirus	102
■ Building Safety Fund	91	■ Rented Housing: Pets	103
■ Burlington House	92	■ Towns Fund	104
■ Business Premises: Insulation	92	■ UK Community Renewal Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund	104
■ Business Premises: Rents	92	■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Local Enterprise Partnerships	105
■ Business: Finance	93	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	105
■ Camping Sites and Caravan Sites	93	■ Tradeshow Access Programme	105
■ Community Development: Finance	94	JUSTICE	105
■ Council Tax	94	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	105
■ Domestic Abuse: Housing	94	■ Business: Coronavirus	106
■ Evictions	95	■ Courts: Coronavirus	107
■ Evictions: Coronavirus	95	■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Agency Workers	107
■ Homelessness: LGBT People	96	■ Prison Officers: Pay	108
■ Housing: Construction	97	■ Prison Service: Training	109
■ Housing: Insulation	97	■ Prisoners' Release: Housing	109
■ Leasehold: Fees and Charges	98	■ Prisons: Crimes of Violence	110
■ Levelling Up Fund	98	■ Prisons: Drugs	111
■ Levelling Up Fund and Towns Fund	99	■ Prosecutions	113
■ Levelling Up Fund and UK Community Renewal Fund	99		

■ Remote Hearings	113	■ Free Zones	128
■ Reoffenders: Sentencing	114	■ Free Zones: National Insurance Contributions	129
■ Sexual Offences: Criminal Proceedings	114	■ Free Zones: Public Expenditure	130
■ Women's Prisons: Costs	116	■ Free Zones: Wales	130
■ Young Offenders: Criminal Proceedings	117	■ In Vitro Fertilisation: Import Duties	130
NORTHERN IRELAND	118	■ National Infrastructure Bank	130
■ UK Trade with EU: Northern Ireland	118	■ National Infrastructure Bank: Staff	131
TRANSPORT	118	■ National Savings and Investments: Complaints	131
■ Airports: Coronavirus	118	■ National Savings and Investments: Interest Rates	131
■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Medical Examinations	119	■ National Savings and Investments: Standards	132
■ Ferries: Freight	119	■ Off-payroll Working	132
■ Free Zones: Plymouth	119	■ Packaging: Taxation	133
■ Free Zones: Yorkshire and the Humber	120	■ Public Sector: Pay	133
■ Motor Vehicles: Noise	121	■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme	134
■ Travel: Coronavirus	121	■ Treasury: Publications	135
■ Wigan North Western Station	122	WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	135
TREASURY	122	■ Ethnic Groups: Equality	135
■ Beer: Excise Duties	122	WORK AND PENSIONS	136
■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme	123	■ Compensation	136
■ Business Banking Resolution Service	123	■ Department for Work and Pensions: Staff	136
■ Business: Coventry	124	■ Employment: Surveys	138
■ Capital Allowances	125	■ Kickstart Scheme	138
■ Child Benefit	125	■ National Insurance Contributions: Republic of Ireland	138
■ Corporation Tax	126	■ Pension Credit: Hackney South and Shoreditch	139
■ Corporation Tax: Coronavirus	127		
■ Employment: Coronavirus	127		
■ Events Industry: Insurance	127		
■ Financial Conduct Authority: Disclosure of Information	128		

■ Pension Credit: Publicity 139

■ Social Security Benefits:
Disability 140

■ Social Security Benefits:
Endometriosis 140

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus 140

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS 142

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE 142

■ Coronavirus: Disability 142

WRITTEN STATEMENTS 143

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE 143

■ 2021-22 Ring Fenced Public
Health Grant to Local
Authorities 143

HOME OFFICE 143

■ Concluding Part One of the
Police and Crime
Commissioner Review 143

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

■ **Blackmore Bond: Insolvency**

Peter Grant:

[\[167260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what specific steps his Department is taking in response to the statutory report filed with his Department by the Joint Administrators of Blackmore Bond plc on the conduct of the Directors of Blackmore Bond plc during the three years immediately prior to the company going into administration.

Paul Scully:

The content of the joint administrators' report on the conduct of the directors of Blackmore Bond Plc is currently being investigated by the Insolvency Service.

■ **Boohoo: Debenhams**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[164656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what representations he has made to Boohoo executives on the 12,000 Debenhams jobs currently at risk.

Paul Scully:

While Government has no role in the strategic direction or management of private retail companies, officials have been in regular contact with the administrators who have been exploring all potential options to protect Debenhams and its employees throughout the administration process.

Our Plan for Jobs includes a series of measures to protect, support and create jobs and we are helping those who have lost jobs in the pandemic back into employment through our JETS (Job Entry Targeted Support) programme. We have also launched our £2bn Kickstart scheme to create opportunities for young people.

We have temporarily increased Universal Credit by £1,000 a year, are doubling the number of work coaches to 27,000 by this year and have launched a Job Finding Support Service which will help those who have recently become unemployed increase their chances of finding employment.

Additionally, the DWP Rapid Response Service has been in ongoing conversations with Debenhams who have been offered support from the Service. The Rapid Response Service offers support including:

- Helping people write CVs and find jobs.
- Providing information about benefits.
- Helping people to find the right training and learn new skills.

- Helping with costs like travel to work expenses.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Charlotte Nichols:

[164660]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support he is making available to businesses who are unable to access the Bounce Back Loan Scheme as a result of a poor credit rating.

Paul Scully:

The Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) is open to businesses who meet the scheme's eligibility criteria, and pass customer fraud, anti-money laundering and know your customer checks. Certain lenders may require a prospective borrower to open a business account with them before they can apply, in line with their own standard policies, which may include credit checks. This is at the sole discretion of the lender.

If businesses are unable to access BBLs, there are also other forms of support available from the Government, which can be found at the following website:

www.gov.uk/business-coronavirus-support-finder.

The Start Up Loans Scheme is also available to businesses who have been trading for less than two years, it supports individuals by offering access to affordable Government-backed finance of between £500 and £25,000 per owner (limited to £100,000 per business), at a fixed 6% interest per annum.

■ Burlington House: Rents

Tim Loughton:

[167153]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of rent increases at Burlington House on (a) STEM skills, (b) scientific research and (c) international scientific collaboration.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government appreciates the great work of the UK's many great Learned Societies, including those located at Burlington House. They have made vast contributions to their respective fields over their long histories, and are vital to the networking, visibility, and overall health of the disciplines they represent.

We recognise the proposed rent increases do introduce a challenge to their current level of operations. Learned Societies are independent of government and will be best placed to make decisions on how they can best move forward and adapt to changing circumstances. We hope they will continue to make the contributions that they do to STEM skills, Scientific Research, and International Collaboration. I am aware that the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, along with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, are exploring whether there is a solution that can deliver value for taxpayers and help the Learned Societies to remain at New Burlington House.

■ Business: Grants

Lucy Powell:

[\[167209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the restart grants announced in the Budget 2021, how much funding each local authority will receive to administer those grants; and what estimate he has made of the number of businesses that will be eligible for that grant in each local authority area.

Paul Scully:

The Department is using information on eligible businesses, held by the Valuation Office Agency, to help determine the level of support each Local Authority requires.

We expect that over 680,000 businesses will benefit from the new £5bn Restart Grant scheme, and in the coming weeks we will be communicating the level of funding each Local Authority will receive, including publishing on GOV.UK.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Chi Onwurah:

[\[164460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 12 February 2021 to Question 148771, on Vaccines: Manufacturing Industries, what steps he has taken to increase offline vaccine manufacturing infrastructure since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has provided funding to establish Centres of Excellence for vaccines to expand the UK's manufacturing capacity and associated advanced therapeutics. The aim is to respond to this pandemic as well as increase the UK's pandemic preparedness for the future.

Investments which will contribute to our future preparedness include:

- £93 million to accelerate the completion and expanded capacity of the Vaccines Manufacturing Innovation Centre in Oxfordshire;
- £127 million for the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult in Braintree, Essex;
- £8.6 million for the Centre of Process Innovation (CPI) to develop Good Manufacturing Process (GMP)-ready messenger RNA (mRNA) manufacturing capability;
- As recently announced in the Budget, a further £5 million for the CPI to support their creation of a "library" of mRNA vaccines developed to tackle emerging COVID-19 variants;
- Funding for the expansion of the Valneva factory in Livingston, Scotland; and
- £4.7 million for skills training through the Advanced Therapies Skills Training Network which will ensure that the UK has the skills and expertise to operate existing and upcoming facilities.

■ Foreign Investment in UK: National Security

Chi Onwurah:

[\[164464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment has he made of the ability of the Investment Screening Unit to manage an increase in screening referrals from universities due to an expansion in asset transaction screening as a result of the National Security and Investment Bill.

Paul Scully:

The Investment Screening Unit (ISU) will have the necessary resources to deliver the National Security and Investment regime and will draw on expertise and skills held across government and security services.

■ Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme

Sam Tarry:

[\[167341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the deadline for the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme on the development of sustainable jobs and skills.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (LAD) scheme which supports energy efficiency and low carbon heat projects for low-income households is being delivered in three phases:

- Phase 1A; over £74million was allocated to 55 Local Authorities in October 2020 to be delivered by June 2021.
- Phase 1B: around £126million has been allocated to 81 Local Authorities for delivery by September 2021.
- Phase 2: funding of £300m has been allocated to the five Local Energy Hubs, who will work with Local Authorities in their region to deliver projects by December 2021.

BEIS estimates the LAD Scheme will support on average 8,000 jobs per annum over the years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Ms Marie Rimmer:

[\[164525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to expand the eligibility criteria of the Green Homes Grant Scheme to include people who have double glazed windows with a gap smaller than the recommended 16mm.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The list of measures currently included reflects our assessment of the best balance between economic stimulus and maximising value for householders and taxpayers, in terms of bill and carbon savings.

We are listening to feedback on the scheme and will keep eligibility, including eligible measures, under review.

■ Home Energy and Lifestyle Management

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[167253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what information his Department holds on the number of appeals to the First Tier Tribunal as a result of sanction notices issued in response to complaints which do not concern mis-selling as their subject matter but which are related to the activities of Home Energy & Lifestyle Management Ltd (HELMS).

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

To date, no appeals have been made to the First Tier Tribunal in relation to complaints which are related to HELMS but do not concern mis-selling.

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[167254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the total cost to the public purse is of expenditure by his Department on (a) Government Legal Department costs and (b) external legal advice on complaints related to the sale of Green Deal plans by Home Energy & Lifestyle Management Ltd (HELMS).

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Since 2017, the Department has incurred £309,992 on external legal advice in relation to Green Deal activity. This figure cannot easily be disaggregated to give a total for purely HELMS-related costs. The Department has also incurred £79,787 in fees from the Government Legal Department on First Tier Tribunal litigation related to the sale of Green Deal plans by HELMS. The Department gave external legal instructions for a small amount of work prior to 2017 but the details of costs are not readily available.

■ Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund: North East

Chi Onwurah:

[\[164463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of the Industrial Strategy Fund has been allocated to companies based in the North East.

Amanda Solloway:

As of 3rd March 2021, £84 million had been awarded to organisations registered in the North East, out of a total of £1.8 billion of grants awarded from the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund across the whole of the UK.

■ Mathematics: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[164459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much and what proportion of the £300 million allocated to experimental mathematical research

in the 2020 budget has been spent; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of that funding on attracting the best global talent.

Amanda Solloway:

UK Research and Innovation has made commitments totalling £100m from within this programme to date. £8m of this is currently allocated for this financial year. This includes £1.76m for PhD Studentships, the first cohort of which had 146 PhD students starting in October 2020 with 29% of these supported under increased residency eligibility flexibility afforded to international students.

■ **Paula Vennells**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[167167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to Answer of 4 March 2021 to Question 160543 on Paula Vennells, for what reason his Department made a different judgement on whether the costs of publishing the correspondence were disproportionate for (a) January to June 2013 and (b) July to December 2013.

Paul Scully:

BEIS officials consider several factors when assessing whether a request can be obtained at proportionate cost. One such factor is the time a request is made. A request made close to the time it is requesting information from is easier to process and respond to. A request sent a significant time after an event is much more difficult to process in a timely way, as it involves a recall of historic records by the records team.

■ **Post Codes**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[164469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will assess the implications for (a) the UK economy and (b) innovation in the UK of Royal Mail's continued ownership of the Postcode Address File as set out under the Postal Services Act 2000; and if he will place that assessment in the Library.

Paul Scully:

The Government understands the role data plays in delivering benefits in the public and private sectors and the UK has traditionally maintained high quality address data that supports a wide range of uses across the economy.

The Postcode Address File (PAF), owned and maintained by Royal Mail Group, is the definitive list of postal delivery points for the UK and a key enabler of the Universal Service Obligation.

The PAF provides access to the private sector on reasonable terms, which are regulated by Ofcom, with free access to small charities and microbusinesses in their first year. On 1 April 2020, the Government extended the PAF Public Sector Licence for a further 3 years to ensure free at the point of use access to PAF data for all

public sector organisations to support the delivery of effective and efficient public services.

■ Re-employment

Andy McDonald:

[\[167213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether ACAS has completed its work into fire and rehire practices; on what date ACAS shared its insights with officials at his Department; if he will publish the ACAS report's findings; and on what date he plans to publish the Government's response to that report's findings.

Paul Scully:

The Department engaged ACAS to gather evidence of how fire and rehire is being used and they have concluded their work.

ACAS engaged with a range of groups, including employer bodies and trade unions, as well as professional bodies with advisory contact with employers, such as employment lawyers, accountants, and payroll services.

Officials are now giving this evidence due consideration, and the Government will communicate our response in due course.

■ Renewable Energy

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[167272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the results of the consultation entitled, Aligning UK international support for the clean energy transition, which concluded on 8 February 2021, will be published.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government is now considering the information received and will respond in due course.

■ Restart Grant Scheme

Lucy Powell:

[\[167208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number businesses eligible in each local authority for restart grants; and how much funding each local authority area will receive through those grants.

Paul Scully:

The Department is using information on eligible businesses, held by the Valuation Office Agency, to help determine the level of support each Local Authority requires.

We expect that over 680,000 businesses will benefit from the new £5bn Restart Grant scheme, and in the coming weeks we will be communicating the level of funding each Local Authority will receive, including publishing on GOV.UK.

■ Self-employed: Adoption

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[164556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to introduce statutory adoption pay for self-employed adoptive parents; and what plans he has to enable self-employed adoptive parents to receive the same benefits as other self-employed parents.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises that it is crucial to the success of an adoption placement that an adopter takes time off work to care for and bond with their child. This is why employed adoptive parents have broadly the same rights and protections as birth parents.

So far, the Government has focused on supporting employed parents as they do not generally have the same level of flexibility over their work as self-employed parents do. But we recognise that affordability may limit the time away from work that some self-employed adopters can take, and this is why statutory adoption guidance says that Local Authorities should consider making a payment - equivalent to Maternity Allowance - in cases where adopters do not qualify for any statutory payment because of their self-employment. Prospective adopters are also entitled to an assessment of their family's needs and can benefit from a range of support including discretionary means-tested financial support, advice, information and counselling, and support services.

We are not ruling out providing further support for self-employed parents in the future and we continue to keep differences in treatment between self-employed and employed people under review. Since 2010, we have taken significant steps to equalise the state benefits provided to the employed and self-employed, including giving the self-employed access to the full rate of the new State Pension for the first time.

■ Solar Events

Chi Onwurah:

[\[164461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth of 18 November 2020, Official report, col 437, what steps have been taken to protect the National Grid from a solar storm.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Great Britain has one of the most robust energy systems in the world and maintaining a secure electricity supply is a key priority for the Government.

The Department works extensively with National Grid Electricity System Operator (NGESO) and other infrastructure operators, to ensure that the impacts of a severe space weather event are well understood, and the appropriate steps are taken to ensure the sector's preparedness for major space weather events.

NGESO has robust plans in place, which are constantly reinforced based on the latest science and information, to mitigate against high impact risks, including solar storms. In recent years, National Grid has increased the number of spare transformers that they hold so that damaged equipment can be promptly replaced, continue to introduce a new design of transformers which are operationally more resistant to the effects of space weather and undertaking emergency exercises aimed at improving knowledge, resilience, and response capability.

In order to improve our ability to predict and mitigate the hazards of space weather, in October 2019 the UK Government announced a £20m boost to predict severe space weather events. This nearly quadruples investment from government into research that can improve systems at the Met Office Space Weather Operations Centre. This will further build the UK's knowledge on how to forecast and better prepare for these space weather events.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[164462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how far in advance the UK's weather capabilities can detect an impending solar storm; and what steps he is taking to collaborate with other nations to increase the detection and mitigate the impact of solar storms.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK is a world leader in space weather forecasting and the Met Office Space Weather Operations Centre provides forecasts and warnings of space weather on a 24/7 basis.

Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs) are responsible for the most severe space weather. Preliminary warnings are issued at least 12 hours in advance for the fastest CMEs. Certainty over the magnitude of an event and its impacts is dependent on critical measurements as the CME passes over monitoring spacecraft positioned 1 million miles from Earth and is provided with approximately 15 to 20 minutes notice. The UK is the largest funder of the European Space Agency "Lagrange" mission, which is due to launch in 2027. This mission will enable better characterisation of CMEs and improve forecasting accuracy of the timing and magnitude of events.

International collaboration is crucial to space weather prediction. The UK's primary partners are the NOAA Space Weather Prediction Centre and the USAF 557th Weather Wing in the United States, with whom the Met Office maintains 24/7 communications in support of our respective operations. The UK also collaborates closely with many nations in Europe notably Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands and Germany.

■ Special Guardianship Orders: Parental Leave

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[164557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to extend statutory parental leave entitlements to special guardians.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the value of the challenging but rewarding role played by special guardians who welcome a child in their home.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is working with the Department for Education, which leads on childcare policies, to assess employment policies in this area.

■ Toys and Games: Internet**Daisy Cooper:**[\[164626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to protect children from dangerous toys being sold by third-party sellers in online marketplaces.

Daisy Cooper:[\[164627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what requirements there are for online marketplaces to check the safety of the products that are sold via their platforms.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to ensuring that only safe consumer products can be sold in the UK. Product safety legislation places obligations on distributors to act with due care to ensure products they are selling are safe. This includes online retailers selling goods via marketplaces. The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) has recently taken action to ensure that a number of non-compliant products being sold by overseas third-party sellers have been removed from sale and are recalled, including toys.

The OPSS is also engaging proactively with major online marketplaces to ensure that they are playing their part in protecting UK consumers from unsafe products. This includes developing a new voluntary commitment for online marketplaces to agree actions they will take to reduce the risks from unsafe products being sold online, enabling them to publicly demonstrate their commitment to the safety of their consumers in the UK.

In order to ensure that the UK's Product Safety framework is flexible and fit for the future, the OPSS is conducting a review. The review will ensure we have a framework that delivers safety for consumers while supporting businesses to innovate and grow and will consider the impact on product safety of non-traditional business models, including third-party sales.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Census****Sir Peter Bottomley:**[\[165423\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which tenure type a residential commonholder or leaseholder should select in a census return.

Sir Peter Bottomley:[\[165424\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether a person with a birthday between the date they completed the census form and the census date can confirm an age that will not be correct.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to PQ 165423, 165424 [UKSA's final response to PQ165423-165424.pdf]

■ Free Zones: Freedom of Information**Andy McDonald:**[\[167214\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will take steps to review the application of the Freedom of Information Act 2001 in designated freeports.

Chloe Smith:

The government remains fully committed to transparency, and there are no plans to review the application of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in designated freeports. Freeports are not deregulatory and the government will ensure the UK's high standards with respect to security, safety, workers' rights and the environment will not be compromised.

■ Government: Publications**Justin Madders:**[\[167235\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will list the publications in which the Government's All Together insertions have been included; and if he will place a copy of each one of those insertions in the Library.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the hon. member to the answer given to [PQ 45460](#) on 18 May 2020 and PQs [152485-152495](#) on 22 February 2021.

■ Mayors: Elections

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[166596]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance his Department has issued to candidates in Mayoral elections on campaigning across their region during the covid-19 national lockdown.

Chloe Smith:

Campaigning is an essential part of democracy. Voters deserve to be well informed before going to the polls and there must be a level playing field for candidates. However, all those involved in the electoral process must also ensure that public health is protected. There is therefore a necessary balance to be struck in allowing campaigning activity and continuing to protect the NHS and save lives.

On 22 February the Prime Minister announced the Government's roadmap out of lockdown and on 26 February, we published further guidance on campaigning for all forthcoming polls, reflecting the updated COVID restrictions and guidance. All campaigners should follow the guidance on [how to stop the spread of coronavirus](#) at all times.

COP26

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Children and Young People

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[167225]

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he has taken to ensure that children and young people are (a) involved in and (b) engaging with COP26.

Alok Sharma:

The UK COP26 Presidency is committed to working with young people from across the globe to amplify their climate action and to inspire governments to increase their ambition and deliver an inclusive COP26.

The COP26 Unit has a dedicated youth engagement team who are coordinating the UK Government's strategy to ensure youth voices are heard at COP26 and in its legacy. As COP President Designate I have established a COP26 Civil Society and Youth advisory council, these meetings are co-chaired by youth representatives. Officials also chair a 6 weekly open call, to which we invite a large network of civil society and youth stakeholders to engage them in our planning for COP26.

As COP President Designate, I have committed to meeting young people and civil society organisations in every country I visit. Most recently, I launched an Ethiopian youth 'influencers network' and met with the youth climate cafe in Nepal.

We are also working in partnership with the Italian Government, who will host the Pre-COP and Youth4Climate2021: Driving Ambition Event this September in Milan. In addition, the UK COP26 Presidency has endorsed the sixteenth Conference of Youth

(COY16) and will be working in conjunction with YOUNGO, the official youth constituency to the UNFCCC, to deliver this event.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Discharges

Luke Pollard:

[\[166548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a single tri-service policy in relation to medical discharge.

Johnny Mercer:

There are no current plans to introduce a single tri-Service medical discharge policy. Medical discharge policy is delegated to the single Services to afford each branch of the Armed Forces the necessary flexibility to respond effectively to the unique and varying environments in which their people are employed.

While this does mean variations between Services exist, the Ministry of Defence accepts there are circumstances where the single Services have different policies in place for good reason, and it is important the flexibility to vary policy is maintained in order for the single Services to respond effectively to such circumstances.

A single tri-Service policy, while providing overall consistency, would restrict our Armed Forces ability to tailor such policy to meet their needs.

Luke Pollard:

[\[166549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment the Royal Navy has made of the potential merits of adopting elements of the Royal Air Force's medical discharge policy in relation to autism and Asperger's.

Johnny Mercer:

The Royal Air Force (RAF) does not have a specific discharge policy for either autism or Asperger's.

There are no differences in the Royal Navy and RAF policies for the occupational assessment of Service Personnel (SP) with autism or Asperger's. They are the same as for SP with any significant underlying condition that raises concerns for their continued fitness for Service. Such personnel are assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the effect of their condition on their employability, deployability, and overall function within their trade, branch, and Service as a whole.

Where assessment raises significant concerns, an individual will be referred to a Royal Navy Medical Board of Survey (RNMBOS) or Royal Air Force Medical Board (RAFMB). If the adverse effect on their function is too great for their retention to be practicable, the RNMBOS or RAFMB will recommend their medical discharge.

Luke Pollard:

[\[166550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will review the Royal Navy's policy on retrospective medical discharge to ensure Royal Navy veterans are not disadvantaged

due to their service, in line with the Armed Forces Covenant compared to service in the Royal Air Force or the Army.

Johnny Mercer:

Royal Navy veterans are not disadvantaged due to their Service compared to Army or Royal Air Force veterans, in respect of retrospective medical discharge.

Medical discharge policy is delegated to the single Services to provide each branch of the Armed Forces the necessary flexibility to respond effectively to the unique and varying environments in which their people are employed. While this does mean variations between Services exist, all Service Personnel across the three Services, be they serving or veteran, are able to challenge the nature of their discharge and, equally, are subject to timeline constraints in which to do so.

■ **Armed Forces: West Midlands**

Sajid Javid:

[\[166381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many serving armed forces personnel were recruited from (a) Bromsgrove District, (b) Worcestershire and (c) the West Midlands in each of the last five years.

James Heappey:

The requested information is provided in the following table:

INTAKE TO UK REGULAR ARMED FORCES, BY FINANCIAL YEARS 2015/16 TO 2019/20

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
Bromsgrove	20	20	20	20	20	100
Worcestershire	140	130	120	110	150	640
West Midlands	1,070	1,070	940	900	1,300	5,280

Notes:

1. Figures are for untrained personnel on intake, both Officers and Other Ranks.
2. Figures exclude Gurkhas. Figures may include personnel who have joined more than once during the time period. Untrained Army inflow includes those people who joined as non-Trade-Trained. This will include people who have completed their phase 1 training (also known as basic training) and inflow direct into phase 2 training.
3. Home addresses at the point of recruitment have been identified from contact postcodes recorded in the Defence Recruitment System (DRS).
4. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 in line with disclosure control policy. Figures ending in 5 are rounded to the nearest 20 to avoid bias.

■ Army**Bob Stewart:**[\[165484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the strength is of each (a) English, (b) Scottish, (c) Welsh, (d) Irish and (e) Gurkha battalion.

James Heappey:

The table below shows the Trade Trained Regular strength of English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish Infantry and Royal Armoured Corps regiments, and Infantry Gurkha strength as at 1 January 2021.

ENGLISH	10,440
Scottish	3,060
Welsh	1,540
Irish	1,080
Royal Gurkha Rifles	1,690

Table notes:

1. The above figures are for Infantry and RAC only and include all members within the regiment regardless of whether they are serving at regimental duty.
2. Figures provided are for Trade Trained Regular and Infantry Gurkhas only and the figures do not include Reserves.
3. Regimental data has been provided as opposed to battalion, in order to capture the c.4200 who are not working at regimental duty.
4. All Officers of Paid Rank Colonel and above are included in Staff regardless of late Arm/Corps and have therefore been excluded from the figures.
5. The above Regular figures only include those regiments that are considered English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish. Those who are not associated to a specific country are not included.
6. All other regiments within the RAC are not wholly related to any one country due to historical mergers.
7. The Royal Gurkha Rifles figure includes both GURTAM and Regular Army Officers.
8. Figures have been rounded to 10 for presentational purposes, numbers ending in '5' have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to present systematic bias.

■ Devonport Dockyard

Luke Pollard: [\[166551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential effect of the Plymouth Freeport on the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's training facility in HMNB Devonport.

James Heappey:

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary does not have dedicated training facilities at HMNB Devonport, they use Ministry of Defence training facilities around the country and commercial maritime colleges.

More widely, an early assessment, based on current information, does not envisage a negative impact to HMNB Devonport's training delivery activity.

■ Fiji: Armed Forces

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[164512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on requests to offer Fijian soldiers who served in the UK armed forces citizenship in response to their service.

Johnny Mercer:

Commonwealth Service personnel, including Fijian nationals, who meet Home Office criteria can make an application for British citizenship while serving. However, this is an individual choice as it can have personal implications in some countries.

Commonwealth and Gurkha personnel can also choose to make an application to settle in the UK on their discharge from the UK Armed Forces after at least four years' service or following their discharge for medical reasons associated with their service.

We recognise that the fees for such applications place a financial burden on Service personnel who wish to remain in the UK after service and the Defence Secretary has met with the Home Secretary to consider how we could offer greater flexibility in future. We will launch a public consultation on this matter imminently.

■ Queens Flight

Gareth Thomas: [\[164345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has for the sale of the four BAe 146 passenger jets flown by 32 Squadron (Royal Flight); and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

The BAe 146 aircraft have been in service with the Royal Air Force since 1983 and are due to be withdrawn from service in 2022, when the current support contract also ends.

Disposal of the BAe 146 aircraft, operated by 32 Squadron (Royal Flight), will be managed by the Defence Equipment Sales Authority (DESA) maximising the

revenue-generating potential. DESA disposal also provides opportunities for British industry as part of the Government's Prosperity Agenda.

■ **Unmanned Air Vehicles**

Janet Daby:

[\[166556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department policy is on the use of drone strikes outside of recognised war zones; and what support the Government provides to victims of such strikes.

James Heappey:

As the Government has stated previously there is no separate policy on the use of force outside of an armed conflict. Rather it has a policy to defend the UK and its citizens against both armed attacks and imminent threats of armed attack; *in extremis*, lethal force could be used where there is no other effective option. Every situation would be considered on its merits and the appropriate course of action would depend on the circumstances prevailing at that time.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Bank Services: Internet**

Marion Fellows:

[\[167258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking through the UK Cyber Council to improve online banking security.

Matt Warman:

DCMS has funded the creation of the new, independent UK Cyber Security Council to establish professional standards and support efforts to address skills shortages in cyber security. We anticipate that its work will reach across the whole UK labour market, including those focused on online banking security, in order to provide the necessary quality assurance and structure to those entering and developing a career in this area.

■ **Broadband: Finance**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[166424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March 2021 to Question 162594 on Broadband: Finance, when his Department plans to allocate the remaining £3.8 billion of funding for the UK gigabit programme.

Matt Warman:

The current spending profile takes into account extensive engagement by the department with suppliers in the telecoms industry, and reflects what we believe the industry will be able to deliver by 2025 in these hard to reach areas at this stage. The remaining £3.8 billion of funding for the UK Gigabit Programme will be allocated at

future spending reviews, the profile of which will be determined by further engagement with the market to understand their delivery ambitions.

Delivering gigabit capable broadband to the hardest to reach areas of the UK requires more industry resources than delivering in commercially viable areas. However, we have been clear that the £1.2 billion is a floor not a ceiling. We continue to work with suppliers to accelerate this investment and explore options for releasing additional funding in the spending review period to 2025. We are improving conditions for the commercial sector, who will deliver the majority of gigabit capable coverage, through new legislation, planning and streetworks support. We are also continuing to explore methods for increasing capacity in the sector. This includes incentivising the training and employment of telecoms workers through interventions such as the Chancellor's Plan for Jobs, the Apprenticeship Levy and the recently announced £21m expansion of Technical Skills Bootcamps.

The Government will continue working with the industry to identify how we can increase capacity and maximise coverage in harder to reach areas by 2025.

■ Broadband: Wales

Ben Lake:

[\[167290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to (a) support consumer choice and (b) protect against overcharging during the rollout of gigabit capable broadband to rural properties in Wales.

Matt Warman:

In its Statement of Strategic Priorities, the department set out a clear strategy to deliver the rapid rollout of gigabit capable broadband by promoting network competition. We expect that - in time - consumers in up to 80% of the country will be able to choose between two or more gigabit capable networks. Competition will protect consumers against overcharging.

In addition, during the next market review period from April 2021 to March 2026, Ofcom is proposing to continue to regulate BT Openreach's network across the whole of the UK to ensure that retail Internet Service Providers like Sky and TalkTalk can continue to access their network at a regulated price to provide retail choice to consumers using this network.

Around 20% of the country is harder to reach and only likely to be able to support one gigabit capable network, which is why the government is proposing to invest £5 billion to ensure that these areas get gigabit capable broadband. The department's proposed contracts require the successful bidders to make their government subsidised network available to retail Internet Service Providers on a similar basis to that required by Ofcom in relation to BT Openreach.

Ben Lake:

[167291]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what (a) key dates by which key milestones will be met and (b) other metrics his Department has developed to measure progress of the UK Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme in Wales.

Matt Warman:

In relation to gigabit coverage, at UK level key milestones and metrics include:

- One in three UK premises can now access gigabit-capable broadband (38%), up from 12% in 2019.
- By the end of 2021 more than half of the country will be connected to gigabit-capable networks.
- We are on track to build up to an annual build rate of 4.5 million premises or more, higher than build rates in comparable countries.

As part of the Rural Gigabit Connectivity programme, the government has funded the following projects which are delivering gigabit connections to public sector sites in Wales:

1. Projects with the Welsh Government (i) in the Cardiff Capital Region covering approximately 180 public sector sites and (ii) across ten local authorities covering approximately 100 rural public sector sites;
2. A project with Denbighshire across the six local authorities in North Wales covering approximately 350 public sector sites;
3. A project with Pembrokeshire to cover approximately 70 public sector sites.

This totals approximately 700 public sector sites to be delivered between 2019-2021.

In addition, residents and businesses in rural areas of Wales have been able to apply for vouchers under the Rural Gigabit Connectivity programme to support the cost of installing new gigabit-capable connections. As at February 2021, in Wales there are 351 connected premises worth £646,000 and a further 932 premises in the pipeline worth £1.79m. This scheme is closing on 31 March 2021 and it is proposed that a replacement scheme will continue from April 2021 as part of the UK Gigabit Programme

The government is now taking forward further work with industry to target a minimum of 85% gigabit-capable coverage by 2025, as part of our £5 billion Gigabit programme and our 100% target. Within this, the UK government is working with the Welsh Government to develop gigabit-capable interventions in Wales. This includes exploring opportunities to utilise the current Superfast Cymru (Wales) project to extend gigabit capable coverage to premises which do not currently have superfast broadband capability, in addition to the 39,000 premises in Wales which will get gigabit capable coverage under this programme by the end of 2022.

■ Burlington House: Cultural Heritage

Tim Loughton: [\[167154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the cultural and heritage contribution of the Societies of Burlington House; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Dinenage:

Government recognises the value of Learned Societies and the cultural and heritage contributions of their collections which are housed at New Burlington House.

Government is working with the Learned Societies to enable them to remain at the site. The current rent agreement was put in place following a legal decision by the High Court in 2005 and subsequent arbitration in 2015. The Learned Societies agreed to the current rent agreements which allow them to pay discounted rents over the next 80 years.

Both DCMS and MHCLG understand the societies' position and are working closely together to explore whether there is a solution that can deliver public value and help the Society to remain in situ at New Burlington House

■ Dormant Assets Scheme

Stephen Timms: [\[167155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using dormant assets to fund the delivery of national primary financial education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Dormant Assets Scheme has allocated £96m to tackling financial exclusion and improving financial capability. Fair4All Finance has used this money to increase access to affordable financial products and services for people in vulnerable circumstances.

Following a 2020 public consultation, the government is developing new legislation to expand the Scheme, which could unlock £880m for social and environmental initiatives.

We are considering whether the ways that dormant assets funding can be spent should be reviewed, and will update on this.

■ Exercise: Coronavirus

Alberto Costa: [\[165594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when indoor personal training sessions can resume as part of the Government's Covid Roadmap.

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.

■ Internet: Fraud

Debbie Abrahams:

[161766]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of powers of (a) the Financial Conduct Authority and (b) the Advertising Standards Authority and (c) other regulators to effectively ensure that online platforms are protecting their users against fraudulent and scam content.

Caroline Dinenage:

I am deeply concerned about the growth and scale of online fraudulent and scam content. My officials are working closely on this matter with those from other government departments, including the Home Office (as the government department responsible for tackling fraud), the Treasury as well as with industry, regulators, and consumer groups with a view to tackling this issue in a cohesive and robust way.

My department has been considering how online advertising is regulated through our Online Advertising Programme, and we will be consulting on this issue later this year following an initial call for evidence in 2020. Our aim is to foster fair, accountable and ethical online advertising that works for citizens, businesses, and society as a whole. In particular, we want to ensure standards about the placement and content of advertising can be effectively applied and enforced online so that consumers are protected from harmful or misleading advertising.

■ Old Royal Naval College

Tim Loughton:

[166297]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment was made of the (a) public value benefit and (b) value to the public purse when the Old Royal Naval College was transferred to the Greenwich Foundation in 1997.

Caroline Dinenage:

Old Royal Naval College (formally called The Greenwich Foundation for the Old Royal Naval College) was established as a charity to conserve the Baroque buildings and grounds for present and future generations and to provide opportunities for wide and diverse audiences to enjoy and share its significance.

The Dame Jennifer Jenkins Report, completed in 1996, was the main assessment undertaken when the Royal Navy had vacated the site and discussions about its future took place. This report considered the public value benefit of transforming the

site into a commercial space that allows visitors to experience and enjoy the historic assets located on the site, such as the Painted Hall and Chapel. The report concluded that the creation of a Trust to manage the site would bring considerable scope to enhance public enjoyment and understanding of the site, as well as the opportunity to generate independent commercial income which would be used for the benefit of the site.

EDUCATION

■ Education: Coronavirus

Munira Wilson:

[165676]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason the Government has not issued safety standards on face coverings used in education.

Nick Gibb:

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

The Department recently published updated guidance for schools to support the return to full attendance from 8 March 2021, which includes updated advice on face coverings and how to access them. The guidance can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-coronavirus-covid-19-operational-guidance>.

Within our guidance, we signpost to the wider DHSC guidance on face coverings which outlines what a face covering is, the reasons for using face coverings, when to wear one and exemptions. In the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, a face covering is something which safely covers the nose and mouth: reusable or single-use face coverings, a scarf, bandana, religious garment or hand-made cloth covering which must securely fit around the side of the face. Face coverings are not classified as personal protective equipment and they are instead largely intended to protect others, not the wearer, against the spread of infection.

DHSC guidance also explains that due to the complexity of the different contexts in which COVID-19 can spread and the rapidly changing and growing evidence base on the effectiveness of face masks and coverings, there are currently no UK product standards for face coverings. The DHSC guidance can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>.

PHE has also published guidance on how to make a simple face covering. This guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>.

As with all measures, we will continue to keep our policy on face coverings under review and update guidance as necessary.

■ Educational Visits: Coronavirus

Catherine West:

[164572]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department will publish specific covid-19 guidance on residential school trips.

Nick Gibb:

Schools are advised against all educational visits at this time. The Department is working on advice for schools, nurseries and colleges on the planning and booking of residential trips when it is safe to do so and in line with the Government's roadmap to recovery, 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.

■ Financial Services: Education

Marion Fellows:

[164523]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to encourage primary schools to introduce the subject of financial education in response to the financial pressures experienced by young people as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Marion Fellows:

[164524]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to encourage primary school teachers and staff to have conversations about financial education with their pupils to help build stronger financial resilience among young people.

Marion Fellows:

[167382]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make a statement on the importance of financial education at primary level.

Nick Gibb:

It is important that pupils are well prepared to manage their money, make sound financial decisions and know where to seek further information, if required. The Department has introduced a rigorous mathematics curriculum, which provides pupils with the knowledge and skills to make important financial decisions and has also published statutory and non-statutory programmes of study for mathematics and citizenship that outline what pupils should be taught about financial education from Key Stages one to four.

In 2014, for the first time, financial literacy was made statutory within the National Curriculum as part of the citizenship curriculum for 11 to 16 year olds. To enable schools to plan their whole curriculum, we also published a non-statutory citizenship curriculum for Key Stages one and two, which is clear that, by the end of primary education, pupils should be taught how to look after their money and realise that future wants and needs may be met through saving.

In the primary mathematics curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on the arithmetical knowledge that pupils should have. This knowledge is vital, as a strong understanding of numeracy will underpin pupils' ability to manage budgets and money. There is also some specific content about financial education, including calculations with money.

Primary schools are free to include additional content on financial management in their curricula, including working with external experts. The Department does not monitor this and trusts schools to use their professional judgement and understanding of their pupils to develop the right teaching approach for their particular context.

We will continue to work closely with the Money and Pensions Service and other stakeholders such as Her Majesty's Treasury, to consider what can be learned from other sector initiatives and whether there is scope to provide further support for the teaching of financial education in schools.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

John Penrose:

[\[164409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to respond to the letters from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 11 January 2021 and 8 February 2021 on behalf of his constituent, Michael Saunders, on funding for a university course.

Nick Gibb:

I can confirm that a response has been sent to the letters dated 11 January and 8 February 2021, from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare.

■ **Remote Education: ICT**

Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[165431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to issue new guidance on the use of technology in schools for self-isolating (a) pupils and (b) staff as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[165432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing disadvantaged pupils with (a) devices and (b) other technology after covid-19 restrictions have ended.

Siobhain McDonagh:

[165433]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data his Department holds on the number of schools that have used (a) allocated devices and (b) digital platforms to deliver teaching.

Siobhain McDonagh:

[165434]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his department has made of the number of electronic devices that have been allocated to disadvantaged pupils during national covid-19 restrictions since March 2020.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care. We are making available 1.3 million laptops and tablets to schools, colleges, academy trusts and local authorities, supporting disadvantaged children and young people who would not otherwise have access to a digital device.

As of Monday 15 March, over 1.2 million laptops and tablets have been delivered.

More information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/laptops-and-tablets-progress-data-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

The Department has been publishing this data every week during term time. The next publication will be due on Tuesday 23 March.

Once received, the laptops and tablets are owned by schools, academy trusts, local authorities or further education colleges who can lend these to children and young people who need them the most. These laptops and tablets are intended to give schools the flexibility to provide remote education support and can continue to be used in the longer term either in the classroom or from home.

The Department does not collect any data on how devices are used once they are received by the school.

We know that a range of other local and community initiatives have also provided technology for remote education, and that some schools have also invested in technology at this time. We do not hold comprehensive data on device provision outside of the Get Help with Technology Programme during this period.

Over 5,000 schools are now accessing a digital platform for remote education via the department's grant funded Digital Platforms Programme

The Department plans to examine the broader impact of these interventions over the coming year.

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

Where it is needed, schools are expected to offer pupils 3-5 hours of remote education. This includes either recorded or live direct teaching alongside time for pupils to work independently to complete assignments that have been set.

We have recently updated our guidance and resources for schools around safeguarding and delivery of remote education, which can be accessed here: <https://get-help-with-remote-education.education.gov.uk/safeguarding>.

■ School Meals: Finance

Tahir Ali: [\[167321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has for extending the provision of funding for school breakfasts beyond July 2021.

Vicky Ford:

Up to £24 million will be available to extend our support for school breakfast clubs until 2023, to make sure thousands of children in disadvantaged areas have a healthy start to the day.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[164518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of offering the same provision of catch-up support available to state maintained schools to schools run by Community Interest Companies for pupils with state maintained places.

Nick Gibb:

In June 2020, the Government announced a £1 billion catch up package that included a £650 million catch up premium. Independent schools with pupils who have an education, health and care plan or special educational needs and disability support funded by the local authority attract catch up premium funding at a rate of £240 per pupil. Mainstream schools attract funding of £80 per pupil. We have applied additional weighting to specialist schools, recognising the significantly higher per pupil costs they face.

In February 2021, the Government announced a further £700 million Education Recovery plan. As well as a range of measures to support all pupils to recover lost education, the plan includes significant funding aimed at addressing the needs of disadvantaged pupils. This includes a one-off £302 million recovery premium for the next academic year that will be allocated to schools on the same methodology as the pupil premium. This will provide each mainstream school with £145 for each eligible pupil and special (including special units within a mainstream school), alternative provision and hospital schools with £290 per pupil across the 2021-22 academic year.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Stuart Anderson:

[\[165672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to support students experiencing hardship as a result of the outbreak of covid-19, with particular reference to (a) term-time accommodation costs and (b) income lost from possible redundancies.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is aware of the disproportionate impact the COVID-19 outbreak will have on some students. We have made an additional £70 million of student hardship funding available to higher education (HE) providers this financial year. The new funding means that universities are able to help students impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak, for example those facing additional costs for alternative accommodation, loss of employment, or extra costs to access their teaching online.

Providers will have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to students, in a way that will best prioritise those in greatest need, including those that have already applied for hardship funding previously but now need additional support. The funding can be distributed to a wide population of students, including postgraduates (whether taught or research) and international students.

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

This has been a very difficult time for students, and we encourage universities and private landlords to review their accommodation policies to ensure they are fair, clear and have the interests of students at heart.

We know that not all students will face financial hardship. The current measures aim to target support for students in greatest need and the government continues to monitor the situation going forward to look at what impact this funding is having.

■ Teachers: In-service Training

Emma Hardy:

[\[165658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many teacher training days his Department has scheduled for the 2020-21 academic year.

Emma Hardy:

[\[165659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of reducing the number of teacher training days during the covid-19 outbreak in the 2020-21 academic year.

Nick Gibb:

Teachers continue to benefit from five days of inset training each year and the Department has not identified any need to reduce this. Schools have the freedom to

determine the dates on which they hold inset days and what they use them for. Inset days have been helpful to support teachers in managing additional pressures during the COVID-19 outbreak. In December, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, announced that schools could take an additional inset day on 4 January 2021 to help teachers train and prepare for COVID-19 testing in schools.

The local authority is required to set term dates for community schools, community special schools, voluntary controlled schools, pupil referral units and maintained nursery schools. The governing bodies of foundation and voluntary aided schools are required to set their own term dates. Local authorities and governing bodies must set dates in line with the requirement of the length of the school year as set out in the Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999.

Academy trusts, of academies and free schools, set their own term dates and they are not bound by school day and school year regulations.

With regard to initial teacher training (ITT), the ITT criteria requires programmes to be designed to provide trainees with enough time in school to demonstrate that they have achieved all the Teachers' Standards. These typical periods of time are set out in the ITT criteria and supporting advice, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-criteria/initial-teacher-training-itt-criteria-and-supporting-advice#c23-training-in-schools>. For most courses, this will typically be 120 days. The Department has clarified to ITT providers that in the event of disruption due to the COVID-19 outbreak, courses with fewer than 120 days physically in school are acceptable. This will not result in non-compliance in relation to C2.3 of the ITT criteria. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-initial-teacher-training-itt/coronavirus-covid-19-initial-teacher-training-itt#changes-to-the-itt-criteria-for-2020-to-2021>.

■ Teachers: Training

Daisy Cooper:

[164630]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the methodology used by his Department to determine the level of teaching bursaries allocated to different subjects in England from 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The bursaries offered by the Department for initial teacher training (ITT) are intended to incentivise applications to ITT courses. The Department does not use a fixed methodology to decide bursaries but does take account of a number of factors when considering the bursary offer in each subject, including historic recruitment, forecast economic conditions, and teacher supply need. The Department also prioritises English Baccalaureate subjects to provide young people with a strong academic foundation that keeps options open for work and further study.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[164631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of reducing the levels of teaching bursaries to zero for some subjects on the diversity of applicants from (a) lower socio-economic groups and (b) other groups under-represented in those teaching cohorts.

Nick Gibb:

The bursaries offered for initial teacher training (ITT) are reviewed before the start of the annual recruitment cycle. In doing this, the Department considers factors such as historic recruitment, forecast economic conditions, and teacher supply need. Being able to change bursary amounts gives flexibility in responding to the need to attract new teachers and ensures money is spent where it is needed most.

It remains the case that all trainee teachers on tuition fee-funded ITT routes can apply for a tuition fee loan, so they do not have to pay the fee up-front. They can also apply for a means-tested maintenance loan of up to £12,382 to support their living costs. Additional means-tested funding is available from Student Finance England for trainees in particular circumstances, including those with children, adult dependants or those who have a disability.

■ **Turing Scheme: Costs**

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[167328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Turing Scheme will cover the (a) tuition fees, (b) travel costs and (c) cost of living for participants in that programme; and whether those costs will be means-tested.

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[167329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Turing Scheme will be an international exchange programme.

Michelle Donelan:

The £110 million Turing scheme will provide funding for around 35,000 students in universities, colleges and schools to go on placements and exchanges overseas, starting in September 2021. This global scheme will have levelling-up at heart so that this life-changing educational opportunity is opened up to more students and pupils across the country.

The Turing Scheme is the UK's global programme to study and work abroad. We are funding UK-based providers so that their students, learners and pupils can go on mobilities abroad and we expect overseas partners to do the same in return thereby facilitating international exchanges. The UK is a very attractive destination for international students, the most attractive in the world after the USA. It is clear that we have considerable appeal as a destination and partner in international mobilities and exchanges, not just within the EU, but across the world.

For all students participating in the Turing Scheme, we expect tuition fees to be waived by host institutions, as is typical under Erasmus+ and other exchange

programmes. This is a matter for individual institutions to agree, and something that universities do as a matter of course when they form exchange partnerships with international providers.

All participating students will receive grants to contribute towards their cost of living, which will be dependent on the destination country. Under Erasmus+, HE students can receive a maximum of 540 Euros per month for cost of living in programme countries, including the disadvantaged supplement. For an Erasmus+ study placement, this includes 370-420 Euros per month for cost of living plus 120 Euros per month disadvantaged uplift. Under the Turing Scheme, participants can receive the equivalent of a maximum of 573 Euros per month. This includes equivalent to 392-445 Euros per month for cost of living plus 129 Euros per month disadvantaged uplift. These rates are based on an exchange rate of 1.17 Euros to 1 Sterling Pound. Students can continue to apply for student finance.

For schools and colleges, all participants will receive travel funding. For disadvantaged students in HE, the Turing Scheme will provide travel costs to all destinations. Disadvantaged participants in all sectors can receive additional funding for visas, passports, insurance and other travel-related costs. We would cover up to 100% of actual costs. More information on funding available can be found at www.turing-scheme.org.uk.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Dogs: Animal Welfare

Neil Parish:

[164442]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of trends in the number of cases of illegal dog ear cropping in the last six years; and what steps his Department is taking to help (a) halt that practice and (b) prevent the importation of dogs that have had their ears cropped.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has not made a specific assessment on the numbers of dogs with illegally cropped ears but we continue to raise awareness regarding the improper selling of pets by deceitful sellers in the UK and abroad through our 'Petfished' campaign. This seeks to educate prospective pet buyers on common tricks and tactics used by deceitful sellers which may result in the purchase of a mistreated or unwell pet, including those that have been subject to cropping. The campaign urges buyers to mitigate risks, for example by buying from trusted sellers such as those under the Kennel Club's Assured Breeder scheme, viewing puppies with their mothers and siblings, asking questions of the seller and following the Animal Welfare Foundation and RSPCA Puppy Contract to ensure that puppies are in good health when purchased.

The practice of mutilating dogs' ears is abhorrent and has rightly been banned in the UK for 15 years. The maximum penalty for causing unnecessary suffering to an

animal or cropping a dog's ears in England is six months' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine. However, the Government is committed to increasing the maximum custodial penalty for both of these offences from six months to five years. The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill, currently before Parliament, which will implement this increase, will continue to receive Government support as it completes its passage through Parliament.

We already have some of the world's highest animal welfare standards. The end of the transition period has opened up new opportunities for managing our own pet travel and commercial importation rules. We are actively listening to the concerns of stakeholders and the Government is considering options regarding the importation and commercial movements of dogs with cropped ears into Great Britain in line with World Trade Organization rules.

Importers of animals must adhere to welfare standards as set out in Council Regulation (EC) 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport and in domestic legislation, The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006 (WATEO). This legislation aims to protect the health and welfare of animals during transportation and applies to dogs that are suffering injury as a result of non-exempted mutilations including cropped ears.

■ **Dogs: Imports**

Kenny MacAskil:

[\[164637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many Intra-Trade Animal Health Certificates were issued for dogs entering the UK in (a) November 2020 and (b) December 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

In November 2020, there were 4,944 Intra Trade Animal Health Certificates issued for dogs entering the UK. In December 2020, there were 4,424 Intra Trade Animal Health Certificates issued for dogs entering the UK.

This response has been compiled by the Animal and Plant Health Agency from data provided by third parties, and as such is reliant on the providers for the accuracy of the information.

■ **Flood Control**

Kelly Tolhurst:

[\[164539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure adequate flood defences in England.

Rebecca Pow:

By the end of March 2021, the Environment Agency will have invested £2.6 billion to better protect 300,000 homes from flooding and coastal erosion risk between 2015/16 and 2020/21. Since April 2015, the Environment Agency and other Risk Management Authorities will have completed almost 750 new flood and coastal defence projects across the country.

From April 2021, a new 6 year investment programme will start, which will invest the £5.2 billion announced in the March 2020 Budget. This will ensure a further 336,000 homes and non-residential properties are better protected from flooding and coastal erosion.

In addition, a further up to £170 million will be spent to accelerate work on 22 shovel-ready flood defence schemes that will begin construction before the end of 2021/2022. This additional funding will provide an immediate boost to jobs supporting local economies as communities recover from the impact of coronavirus.

An additional £200 million will also be invested in the Innovative Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme. This will help over 25 local areas over six years to take forward wider innovative actions that improve their resilience to flooding and coastal erosion.

■ Food: Origin Marking

Alicia Kearns:

[\[164661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many food and drink producers his Department is working with to support their early adoption of the UK Geographical Indication schemes.

Victoria Prentis:

We have shared the UK GI logo requirements, and guidance on how to add these to packaging, to UK GI producers, retailers, and wider industry groups, to ensure that they are aware of their new responsibilities. We are now providing further advice and responding to queries on the logos on an individual basis.

To support the adoption of the logos, Defra hosted a webinar in November 2020 to answer technical questions on the UK schemes and logos, which was attended by over 120 stakeholders. In addition, we have provided information on the logos at various Defra forums, such as the SME and retailer forums, to ensure that we are reaching as many stakeholders as possible.

■ Food: Recycling

Dan Jarvis:

[\[167204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans her Department has to introduce a food recycling system across (a) the UK, (b) England and (c) in each local authority.

Rebecca Pow:

Waste and recycling policy is a devolved matter. Following support in response to initial public consultation, the Environment Bill will require all local authorities in England to arrange for the separate collection of food waste from households, at least once a week, so that this material can be collected for recycling. Businesses and organisations in England will also be required to arrange for the separate collection of food waste for recycling. We will be launching a further consultation on recycling consistency this spring. In this consultation, we will be seeking further views

on implementing separate food waste collections, including transition timelines for local authorities and businesses, and statutory guidance for waste collectors.

The Government will ensure that local authorities are resourced to meet net costs arising from new statutory duties. This will include the additional costs associated with the requirement to separately collect food waste.

■ Hedgehogs: Conservation

Zarah Sultana:

[\[164645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect the UK's hedgehog population.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Bill contains measures that will help improve the status of threatened species, including by setting at least one biodiversity target in law, as well as strengthening the biodiversity duty on public authorities to take action to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

We are also taking action, through our net gain provisions in the Bill, to support the role of new development in helping protect and create the habitat that our native species, including hedgehogs, need to thrive.

We are working with stakeholders and end users to determine the specific actions that will be paid for under our new schemes that reward environmental land management. We will set out more details on this later this year. The Agricultural Transition Plan set out examples of the types of actions that we envisage paying for under the schemes, including creating, managing and restoring habitats such as woodland, heathland and species-rich grassland, which could all benefit species such as hedgehog.

■ Inland Waterways and Rivers: Sewage

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[164600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that untreated sewage is not discharged into rivers and other inland waters.

Rebecca Pow:

Tackling the harm caused by sewer overflows is a top priority for this Department.

Since the privatisation of water companies, around £25 billion has been invested to reduce pollution from sewage, covering improvements in sewage treatment and in sewer overflows.

During periods of significant rainfall untreated sewage diluted by rainwater will discharge through storm overflows to avoid streets, premises and sewage treatment plants from being flooded. Water companies are committed in the five-year business planning period (2020-25) to a significant programme of improvements to the monitoring and management of storm overflows at a cost of around £1.1 billion. This

investment includes undertaking 800 investigations and 798 improvement schemes to provide environmental improvements by reducing spills from frequently spilling overflows.

I recognise that there is more to do to manage sewage pollution. I met water company CEOs in September last year and made clear that the volumes of sewage discharged into rivers and other waterways in extreme weather must be reduced. To achieve this, I have set up a new Taskforce - bringing together Government, the water industry, regulators and environmental NGOs - which has agreed to set a long term goal to eliminate harm from storm overflows. The Taskforce is now working on plans to start making progress towards that goal, and they have commissioned research to gather evidence on the costs, benefits and feasibility of different options.

Water companies are currently producing for the first time comprehensive Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans to assess the capacity of their wastewater networks. We are also taking key steps through the Environment Bill to require water companies to produce such Plans on a statutory basis. These plans will be another tool to help address the risks that storm overflows pose to the environment.

■ **Packaging: Recycling**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[164420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department plans to announce whether (a) food and drink cartons and (b) plastic bags and film will be included in the core set of recyclable products collected by local authorities from 2023.

Rebecca Pow:

Following support in response to the first consultation on increasing the consistency materials collected for recycling in England, the Environment Bill states that local authorities must make arrangements for a core set of recyclable waste streams to be collected from households. This core set includes: paper and card; plastic; metal; glass; food waste; and garden waste.

We are preparing to publish a second consultation on recycling consistency this spring, which will seek further views on the materials to be included under the definition of each recyclable waste stream, which will include seeking views on the inclusion of food and drink cartons, and plastic films. We will also seek further views on transition timelines for local authorities in the upcoming consultation.

■ **Pet Travel Scheme: Dogs**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[164638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason the Answer to Question 155409 of 24 February 2021 advised that 17,984 dogs were imported under the Pet Travel Scheme in July 2020 but the Answer of 9 September 2020 to Question 85115 stated that 5,423 dogs were imported under the Pet Travel Scheme in July 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

The number of dogs imported under the Pet Travel Scheme in July 2020 was 17,984.

In answer to question 85115, the figure of 5,423 was based on information provided by checkers employed by approved carriers of pet animals. The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) advised at the time that the information supplied was a true reflection of the data that had been provided.

APHA is unable to guarantee the accuracy of this data, as it can only rely on the information provided by third parties. Subsequently, figures may be amended as third parties submit new data, as occurred in this instance.

■ Plastics Research and Innovation Fund**Dr Matthew Offord:****[164421]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the delivery objectives are of the Plastics Research and Innovation Fund.

Rebecca Pow:

The Plastics Research and Innovation Fund (PRIF) was a £20 million investment delivered by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) which began in 2018. Its aim was to explore novel ideas and innovations with the potential to make the plastics sector more circular and address the challenge of persistent plastic pollution. The last PRIF funding competition, Designing Sustainable Plastic Solutions, closed on the 16 September 2020.

The PRIF programme consisted of three components: funding for cutting edge interdisciplinary research programmes led by universities; investment in business-led research and development projects through both grants and an innovative investor partnership with Sky Ocean Ventures; and a core programme designed to provide leadership and knowledge exchange activity.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.ukcpn.co.uk/news/the-plastics-research-and-innovation-fund/>

■ Plastics: Beaches**Sir Geoffrey Cox:****[164389]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help alleviate the environmental impact of (a) polystyrene bodyboards and (b) other disposable beach products.

Rebecca Pow:

We know that when polystyrene bodyboards and other items used at the beach are littered they can have harmful impacts on the environment. The Government is committed to encouraging local solutions for local problems. This is particularly relevant in dealing with litter and fly-tipping issues, which require a local approach, tailored to the characteristics of the area and the community in which the problems occur.

The Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse advises councils to monitor and clean beaches below the high-water mark areas as appropriate. Beaches present unique challenges. They may not always be cleaned to the maximum standard possible because of the terrain, conditions, accessibility and the need to be sensitive to habitats. The duty body should do as much as is practicable. It is recommended that councils and beach managers are aware of the different types and nature of beaches in their areas and carry out regular monitoring and suitable cleaning.

The Government's Resources and Waste Strategy for England published in December 2018 sets out our plans to reduce plastic pollution and move towards a more circular economy. This builds on the commitment in the 25 Year Environment Plan to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste. The measures set out in the Strategy will help our society move away from a 'take, make, use and throw' approach regarding resources and materials to where we reuse, recycle, and repair more and waste less. Our Environment Bill will enable us to significantly change the way that we manage our waste and take forward a number of the proposals from the Resources and Waste Strategy.

In general, we prefer to help people and companies make the right choice, rather than banning items outright. There may, however, be times when a ban is appropriate as part of a wider strategic approach. Which is why we introduced measures to restrict the supply of plastic straws, plastic drink stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds in October 2020. We will continue to review the latest evidence on problematic products and/ or materials to take a systematic approach to reducing the use of unnecessary single-use plastic products.

■ Plastics: EU Law

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[164422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to extend measures contained in Directive 2019/904 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment.

Rebecca Pow:

Having left the EU, we now have the freedom to tackle single-use plastic items in ways that work best for us, including considering alternative approaches to the EU's Single-Use Plastic Directive to deliver a better overall outcome. Where policy areas are devolved, the devolved administrations are taking their own approach.

This year in England we are increasing our highly successful single-use carrier bag charge to 10p and extending it to all retailers, and in April 2022 a new plastic packaging tax will come into force to incentivise businesses to use 30% recycled plastic instead of new material in plastic packaging. We are also taking powers in the Environment Bill to create extended producer responsibility schemes; introduce deposit return schemes; establish greater consistency in the recycling system; better

control the export of plastic waste; and give us the power to set new charges for other single-use plastic items.

■ Potatoes: UK Trade with EU

Dave Doogan:

[\[167318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March to Question 164621 on Potatoes: UK Trade with EU, for what reasons a maximum residue level applies to EU imports but not to potatoes produced in England.

Victoria Prentis:

At the end of the EU Exit Transition Period, all extant EU maximum residue levels (MRLs) were carried over into the pesticides regulatory regime in place in Great Britain. These have not changed since and there is currently no difference between the EU and GB MRL for potatoes for 1,4-dimethylnaphthalene (1,4-DMN). The 1,4-DMN MRL therefore applies to both domestic produce and produce imported from the EU. The key difference is in which pesticides are authorised for use in each country.

As of 1 January 2021, there is an autonomous pesticides regime in Great Britain. This means that the UK Government and the devolved administrations take our own decisions about which pesticides to authorise for use, based on scientific assessment of the risks. We may therefore sometimes take different decisions to countries in the EU or elsewhere. Last year, our regulator, the Health and Safety Executive, passed concerns arising from their risk assessment for 1,4-DMN to the EU for them to take into account.

In the meantime, emergency authorisations have been granted by all four UK administrations allowing limited and controlled use of a 1,4-DMN product.

We aim to establish a formal MRL review programme in the next few years and we are able to review MRLs when necessary, for example, to protect public health.

■ Shellfish: UK Trade with EU

Mark Tami:

[\[164366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what financial support the Government (a) has provided, (b) is providing and (c) plans to provide to assist in the purchase of equipment for the depuration of cockles for export to the EU from waters where depuration was not required prior to the end of the transition period; and what proportion of that support is available as (i) grants and (ii) loans.

Victoria Prentis:

There is no scientific or technical justification for the European Commission banning the import of Live Bivalve Molluscs (LBMs), including oysters, from class B waters (where depuration/processing is required after harvest). We are seeking urgent resolution on the European Commission's decision.

Grant funding to support the purchase of equipment for depuration was previously made available across the UK through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). In England similar support was delivered through the Maritime and Fisheries Fund (MFF), with equivalent funding provided to the devolved administrations. The MFF will continue to fund activities such as depuration as long as funding remains available under this scheme.

At the Spending Review the Government provided replacement funds to enable the four nations of the UK to deliver their own domestic funding schemes, tailored to the needs of their sector. In England, we intend to open a new scheme for delivering grant funding in April. This will include support for the purchase of new equipment for depuration. The devolved administrations are responsible for the design and delivery of their own schemes.

All of the support available has been provided through grants.

■ Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Kelly Tolhurst:

[\[164538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to ensure that Sites of Specific Scientific Interest remain protected from housing development.

Rebecca Pow:

Sites of Special Scientific Interest are afforded statutory protection through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Additionally, the National Planning Policy Framework clarifies that development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

■ Tree Felling

Catherine West:

[\[164575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data is collected on the number of trees felled each year as a result of claims of subsidence damage to nearby buildings.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is committed to seeing more trees planted and has a general policy against permanent loss of woodland cover.

Currently there is no assessment on the number of trees felled each year as result of claims of subsidence damage to nearby buildings. This information is held by local authorities as most felling is often done on a case by case basis.

The Forestry Commission does monitor felling to ensure that it is compliant with the felling licence regime and uses enforcement action against individuals who allow the felling of trees without the appropriate licence.

Catherine West:

[\[164576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of mature trees felled each year as a result of claims of subsidence damage to nearby buildings.

Rebecca Pow:

The irreplaceable nature of veteran trees and ancient woodlands is recognised in our 25 Year Environment Plan and further measures will be outlined in the Government's action plan on trees.

We have strengthened the protection of trees through the National Planning Policy Framework and guidance to planners. These outline that developments should be refused if they would lead to the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland and veteran trees, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and suitable compensation measures.

In addition, protection can be given to trees of particular significance by the local planning authority through a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Placing a TPO on a tree or group of trees means the landowner would require local planning authority consent before working on or felling the protected trees.

■ Tree Felling: Urban Areas

Catherine West:

[\[164573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of trees felled in urban areas where they obstruct building construction and development.

Catherine West:

[\[164574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of trees being felled in urban areas.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government has a general policy against permanent loss of woodland and tree cover, and the management and felling of trees is managed through the felling licence regime. We have developed the National Framework of Green infrastructure standard to help local authorities, developers and communities improve greening provisions in the area.

Through the Environment Bill we will introduce Forestry Enforcement Measures, strengthening Forestry Commission's ability to deter illegal tree felling across England. We will also introduce a duty for local authorities to consult and report the felling of street trees in their area.

We have strengthened the protection of trees through the National Planning Policy Framework and guidance to planners. These outline that developments should be refused if they would lead to the deterioration of ancient woodland and veteran trees, unless there are exceptional reasons and suitable compensation measures.

In addition, protection can be given to trees of particular significance by the local planning authority through a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Placing a TPO on a tree or group of trees means the landowner would require local planning authority consent before working on or felling the protected trees.

■ Tree Planting: Urban Areas

Catherine West:

[\[164577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department are taking to encourage tree planting in urban areas.

Rebecca Pow:

We are committed to increasing tree planting and are setting out policies to achieve this in the Government's action plan on trees, including planting and protecting trees in and around urban areas. We are already delivering on this through:

- £80 million of charity-led projects funded through the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, the first round of which supported a wide range of projects to protect, restore and connect people with nature, including a national street tree sponsorship scheme and tree planting around the NHS estate.
- The £10 million Urban Tree Challenge Fund, supporting planting of up to 134,000 trees, including 20,000 street trees.
- £12.1 million investment in England's ten Community Forests to create high quality, accessible woodlands around towns and cities.
- £2.5 million to pilot innovative means to grow trees outside woods, in partnership with Local Authorities.

This complements wider support for urban greening through:

- Creation of a Nature Recovery Network, connecting wildlife-rich places across our towns, cities and countryside.
- Development of a National Framework of Green Infrastructure Standards to help local authorities, developers and communities to improve greening provision.
- Designing and investing in healthy places to live and work through the forthcoming National Model Design Code, Towns Fund and new £4 billion Levelling Up Fund.

■ Zoo Animals Fund

Christian Matheson:

[\[164507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has plans to extend qualification for the Zoo Animals Fund to groups involved in zoos conservation and scientific work.

Victoria Prentis:

Organisations are eligible to apply for support under the Zoo Animals fund if they hold a zoo licence (full or section 14(2) dispensation) under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 or have been granted an exemption under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 and hold a licence under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) Regulations 2018.

The Zoo Animals Fund was set up in recognition of the fact that zoos need to continue caring for the animals during the pandemic. The fund supports zoos and aquariums with their animal welfare costs, as well as essential maintenance.

As announced in the recent Budget, the fund has been extended in response to the current lockdown, with applications open until 28 May and support provided until 30 June.

Christian Matheson:[\[164508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has plans to relax the qualification requirements for applicants to the Zoo Animals Fund.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra has already made the Zoo Animals Fund more accessible than the previous fund, the Zoo Support Fund. We have expanded the eligibility criteria so that grant payments to zoos begin when zoos reach their final 12 weeks of financial reserves, rather than 6 weeks. We also lifted the payment cap from £100k to £700k and then removed this cap at the end of the implementation period when we were no longer subject to EU state aid rules.

Defra has also expanded the range of costs that are eligible under the Zoo Animals Fund so zoos can now claim costs relating to pre-planned essential maintenance and repair works as well as animal care costs. The fund has also been extended in response to the current lockdown, with applications open until 28 May and support provided until 30 June.

We will continue to monitor the fund to ensure that it achieves its aims. We will continue to engage with the sector to fully understand the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the sector and provide updates as situations change.

Christian Matheson:[\[164509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the total amount of funding (a) allocated, (b) earmarked for disbursement and (c) disbursed by the Zoo Animals Fund was as of 7 March 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

The Zoo Animals Fund has been extended to continue to provide support until 30 June, with application open until 28 May. To date, just over £5.5 million has been paid to 45 applicants from the Zoo Animals Fund. The Zoo Support Fund awarded 56 grants to successful applicants.

Under both zoo support schemes we have so far awarded over £7.5 million to the zoo sector. This money has provided for animal care costs and essential maintenance costs for those zoos experiencing severe financial difficulties due to COVID-19.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Tim Loughton:

[\[164334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the announcement by the Prime Minister at the G7 leaders' meeting on 19 February 2021, whether the donation of the UK's surplus covid-19 vaccine doses to COVAX will result in the UK spending more than 0.5 per cent of GNI as Official Development Assistance in 2021.

Wendy Morton:

As noted, the Prime Minister announced on 19 February that the majority of any surplus COVID-19 vaccines would be shared with the COVAX international vaccine procurement pool. We cannot yet say when we will have a surplus, including because of uncertainty over how many doses will be needed to deal with new variants or to administer boosters. Funding mechanisms, including the implications for our commitment to spend 0.5% of GNI as Official Development Assistance in 2021, will be set out in more detail if and when a surplus has been identified.

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[164447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the donation of the UK's surplus covid-19 vaccine doses to COVAX will be funded by Official Development Assistance.

Wendy Morton:

The Prime Minister announced on 19 February that the UK would share majority of any surplus COVID-19 vaccines with COVAX. This is part of the significant support the UK is providing to COVAX, including £548 million to COVAX's Advance Market Commitment which is providing access to COVID-19 vaccines for the 92 most vulnerable countries. However, it remains too soon to say when we will have any surplus doses. We will set out more details on funding mechanisms in due course, including implications for Official Development Assistance, if and when a surplus has been identified.

■ **Georgia: Politics and Government**

Catherine West:

[\[164568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Georgian counterpart following the recent unrest in that country.

Wendy Morton:

I spoke to the Georgian Foreign Minister on 24 February, following the arrest of the leader of the main Georgian opposition party, Nika Melia. I expressed my concerns about recent developments and stressed the need for the judicial process following the arrest to be fair and transparent. I also underlined the need for Georgia to complete its ongoing programme of judicial reform, and offered continued UK technical support in this regard. It is crucial that all parties in Georgia engage in a constructive dialogue to resolve their differences. We are continuing to monitor events through our Embassy in Tbilisi.

■ Hong Kong: Electoral Systems**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[164378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with Chinese counterpart on proposed changes to the electoral system in Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

As the Foreign Secretary said in his statement on 13 March, the decision to impose these changes on Hong Kong is a further clear breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, and the third breach in nine months. The UK considers Beijing to be in a state of ongoing non-compliance with the Joint Declaration - a demonstration of the growing gulf between Beijing's promises and its actions.

On 12 March the Foreign Secretary issued a joint statement with his G7 counterparts expressing our grave concerns at the Chinese authorities' decision fundamentally to erode democratic elements of the electoral system in Hong Kong.

The UK has also raised our concerns with the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Hong Kong Special Autonomous Region (SAR) Government and the Chinese Embassy in London. The Chinese and Hong Kong authorities can be in no doubt about the seriousness of our concerns.

■ Israel: Palestinians**Neil Coyle:**[\[164497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December 2020 to Question 124857, what representations he has made to the Israeli authorities on the demolition of the home of Hatem Abu Riyala, a disabled Palestinian man, in Issawiya in East Jerusalem for the fourth time on 1 March 2021.

James Cleverly:

The UK is supporting communities in Area C, whose homes have been demolished, to remain on their land. When material assistance is provided, interventions are prioritised that address the needs of persons with disabilities, women and children including ensuring accessibility for people with mobility impairments. We continue to engage frequently with the Israelis on issues affecting Palestinians, including

demolitions. Our Ambassador in Tel Aviv has raised the issue of ongoing demolitions with the Israeli Authorities, most recently in a meeting alongside like-minded partners on 25 February. I [Minister Cleverly] 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 efforts to promote peace.

■ **Jerusalem: Palestinians**

Julie Elliott:

[\[167201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations the Government has made to the Israeli authorities on the demolition of 100 Palestinian homes in Silwan in East Jerusalem.

James Cleverly:

The UK is supporting communities in Area C, whose homes have been demolished, to remain on their land. We continue to engage frequently with the Israeli authorities on issues affecting Palestinians, including demolitions. Our Ambassador in Tel Aviv has raised ongoing demolitions with the Israeli Authorities, most recently in a meeting alongside like-minded partners on 25 February. I [Cleverly] called on Israel to stop demolitions on 5 February 2021 and raised my concerns about the 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 efforts to promote peace.

■ **Myanmar: Armed Conflict**

Chris Law:

[\[164506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the (a) Myanmar military and (b) Myanmar defence attaché in the UK on the military's escalating attacks on civilians in Karen state.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is very concerned about the worsening situation in Karen state and other ethnic regions. In particular we note the repeated breaches of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement by the Tatmadaw in Karen state. We raised these issues at the Special Session of the Human Rights Council, which we convened with the EU on 12 February.

■ Myanmar: Arms Trade

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[166334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to build international support for a global arms embargo on Myanmar.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is a longstanding supporter of an arms embargo on Myanmar. We are clear that countries should not sell arms to the Myanmar military. The UK autonomous Myanmar sanctions regulations prohibit the provision of military related services, including the provision of technical assistance, to or for the benefit of the Tatmadaw. We will work closely with partners to pressure those who sell arms to the military.

Alyn Smith:

[\[166568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the (a) African Union and (b) Organisation of Islamic Cooperation on joining the UK in imposing arms embargoes on Myanmar.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is a longstanding supporter of an arms embargo on Myanmar. We are clear that countries including those in the African Union and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation should not sell arms to the Myanmar military. The UK autonomous Myanmar sanctions regulations prohibit the provision of military related services, including the provision of technical assistance, to or for the benefit of the Tatmadaw. We will work closely with partners to pressure those who sell arms to the military.

■ Myanmar: Military Coups

Chris Law:

[\[164505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if, in response to the military coup in Myanmar and renewed attacks in ethnic areas, he will work with ethnic civil society organisations to find informal mechanisms to ensure aid reaches vulnerable populations, including cross border aid mechanisms.

Nigel Adams:

UK aid provides life-saving humanitarian assistance to around 460,000 conflict affected and displaced people in Myanmar and on the Thai border. We have reviewed our aid programme in Myanmar to ensure that we focus on the most vulnerable people. We are closely monitoring the ongoing impacts of the military coup with our partners, including ethnic civil society organisations, so that our support continues to reach those most in need and can respond to new needs.

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[166335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to prevent UK companies doing business with military-owned and controlled companies in Myanmar in response to the coup in that country.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary and the International Trade Secretary have written to British Companies active in Myanmar to make clear our expectation that they do nothing to support the military. We are clear that the military must pay the price for their actions, that is why we are exploring all options to put pressure on their economic interests, this includes sanctions.

We remain committed to the principle of 'do no harm' with sanctions, and therefore wish to ensure that any measures balance the risk of disproportionately affecting poor people in Myanmar and imposing a cost on the military. In addition, as set out in the written ministerial statement of 25 February, we are reviewing our approach to Trade and Investment in Myanmar, and while that review takes place have suspended all trade promotion activity.

■ **Myanmar: Overseas Trade****Alyn Smith:**[\[166567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what advice the UK government is providing to UK companies in Myanmar involved in (a) oil, (b) gas, (c) timber, (d) gems and (e) other extractive industries on the payment of revenue and royalties to the military-controlled government.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary and the International Trade Secretary have written to British Companies active in Myanmar to make clear our expectation that they do nothing to support the military. We are clear that the military must pay the price for their actions, that is why we are exploring all options to put pressure on their economic interests, this includes sanctions.

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■ **Nagorno Karabakh: Armed Conflict****Tim Loughton:**[\[164333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations his Department has made to the Government of Azerbaijan in respect of the treatment and continued detention of Armenian prisoners of war and civilians captured during the recent conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh; and if he will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is deeply concerned by all allegations that prisoners of war have been subjected to cruel, degrading or inhuman treatment. During my recent visits to Armenia and Azerbaijan, I urged both parties to ensure thorough investigations into

all allegations, and welcomed those Azerbaijani investigations already underway. I also underlined the importance of returning all prisoners of war and urged both parties to work closely with the ICRC to expedite the returns where relevant. I also encouraged both sides to abide by the 10 November trilateral peace deal and settle all outstanding matters through talks under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group. The UK Government welcomes the most recent exchange of prisoners of war on 10 February.

■ **Occupied Territories: Humanitarian Situation**

John Howell:

[\[167177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March 2021 to Question 162544 on Occupied Territories: Humanitarian Situation, if he will take diplomatic steps to seek a vote on Item 7 at sessions of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Nigel Adams:

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

■ **Pablo Hasel**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[164379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with their Spanish counterparts on the implications for human rights in Spain of the arrest of Pablo Hasel.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is aware of the arrest of Pablo Hasel and considers this a matter for Spain and its judicial system. The UK Government has not had discussions with Spain regarding the arrest.

■ **Palestinians: Disability**

Neil Coyle:

[\[164498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December 2020 to Question 124857, what assessment his Department has made of the specific needs of Palestinians with disabilities whose homes are demolished by Israeli authorities.

James Cleverly:

The UK is supporting communities in Area C, whose homes have been demolished, to remain on their land. When material assistance is provided, interventions are prioritised that address the needs of persons with disabilities, women and children including ensuring accessibility for people with mobility impairments. We continue to engage frequently with the Israelis on issues affecting Palestinians, including demolitions. Our Ambassador in Tel Aviv has raised the issue of ongoing demolitions with the Israeli Authorities, most recently 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 efforts to promote peace.

■ Paraguay: Demonstrations**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[166605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Paraguayan counterpart on the recent protests in that country.

Wendy Morton:

The British Embassy in Asuncion is in regular contact with the Paraguayan authorities covering a wide range of issues, including the recent protests.

■ Sri Lanka: Tamils**Chris Grayling:**[\[164367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the hunger strike by Mrs Ambihai Selvakumar in protest at the issues facing the Tamil community in Sri Lanka.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government is aware of the hunger strike being carried out by Mrs Ambihai Selvakumar, and recognises the concerns she has raised regarding the issues faced by the Tamil community in Sri Lanka. We have highlighted similar concerns about the lack of progress towards post-conflict accountability and the wider human rights situation, including in statements to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in February, June and September 2020. The Minister of State for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, also set out our serious concerns about human rights in Sri Lanka in a statement at the UNHRC on 25 February. He has raised the importance of accountability, justice and reconciliation on several occasions with the Sri Lankan High Commissioner and Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh

Gunawardena, most recently during calls on 12 February and 22 January respectively.

The UK, alongside Core Group partner countries, is leading a new resolution on Sri Lanka at the current UNHRC session. The draft resolution provides a framework for continued international engagement on human rights and post-conflict accountability. It calls on the government of Sri Lanka to investigate and prosecute all allegations of gross human rights violations and serious violations of international law, and highlights concerns about the human rights situation, including particular concerns about the protection of minorities.

We will continue to press for a strong role for the UNHRC to help advance accountability, reconciliation and human rights in Sri Lanka. Lord Ahmad has also responded by letter to the organiser of a petition related to Mrs Ambihai Selvakumar's hunger strike.

Chris Grayling:

[\[164368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make further representations for an international investigation into the ongoing issues faced by the Tamil community in Sri Lanka.

Nigel Adams:

In March 2014, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) adopted resolution 25/1, which was led by the UK and other members of the Core Group on Sri Lanka. This resolution established the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL), which reported in 2015. Since then, the UK has continued to lead efforts at the UNHRC to advance post-conflict accountability, reconciliation and human rights in successive UNHRC resolutions.

The UK government remains concerned about the human rights situation in Sri Lanka, including the issues faced by the Tamil community. The Minister for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, set out our concerns in a statement at the UNHRC on 25 February. The UK, again alongside Core Group partner countries, has presented a new draft resolution at the UNHRC which aims to provide a framework for continued international engagement on human rights and post-conflict accountability in Sri Lanka. The draft text requests enhanced monitoring and reporting by OHCHR on the human rights situation and requests the UN to collect, preserve and analyse evidence which could be used in future accountability processes.

■ **Syria: Coronavirus**

Anna McMorrin:

[\[166518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 21 January 2021 to Question 138856 on Syria: Coronavirus, what (a) assessment he has made of the role of cross-border aid mechanisms in the delivery of the covid-19 vaccine and (b) discussions he (i) has had and (ii) plans to have

with his international counterparts on the reauthorisation of cross-border aid mechanisms in July 2021 to enable the distribution of the covid-19 vaccine in Syria.

James Cleverly:

To date the UK has committed £548 million to COVAX, to ensure global access to vaccines, and has consistently called other donors to step up their support. Alongside this, the UK is clear that humanitarian partners must have unfettered access to distribute COVID-19 vaccines across the whole of Syria. Cross-border aid mechanisms are critical to ensuring the successful delivery of vaccines to hard-to-reach populations such as north-west Syria where over 2.7 million people remain displaced. Operations from Turkey will distribute over 330,000 vaccines to those most vulnerable.

The UK regularly raises the issue of UN-mandated cross-border access, including most recently on 02 March with Russian authorities, who have twice used their veto to unfairly reduce humanitarian aid access into Syria. The UK also continues to use its position at the UN Security Council and in bilateral discussions to push for greater aid access into Syria and to urge renewal of Resolution 2533. This approach is informed by regular Ministerial and Official consultation with International partners, UN agencies, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock, human rights and non-governmental organisations and others. We strongly support the renewal of UNSCR 2533 and are urging members of the UN Security Council to vote in favour of renewing the resolution to avoid further humanitarian disaster.

■ **Tanveer Ahmed Rafique**

Sarah Owen:

[\[167327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2021 to Question 156589, if he will publish an update on support provided to Tanveer Ahmed Rafique.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO continue regular contact with prison authorities in Pakistan to check on Mr Rafique's welfare and have sought assurances that medical staff will continue to monitor his health. His family are being kept informed of all developments and we continue to speak to Mr Rafique's friends and lawyers. Whilst prison visits are suspended due to the pandemic, we continue to arrange telephone calls with Mr Rafique to discuss any welfare and health issues. We regularly raise at a senior level our concerns about the human rights situation with the Government of Pakistan. On 20 February, Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, discussed our human rights concerns with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021

Catherine West:

[\[164571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the British Overseas Territories in preparation for the COP26 summit.

Nigel Adams:

The Overseas Territories (OTs), as small island states, are extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change and work in the OTs contributes to global understanding of climate science.

The UK Government is working closely with all OTs to ensure that their unique perspectives are accurately represented and is designing a specific package to support Territory Governments in the run up to COP26 and beyond. Whilst they are not part of the formal COP negotiating framework, COP26 provides an opportunity for the OTs to showcase their unique biodiversity, environments and marine protected areas and to highlight the importance of adaptation.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Antibiotics: Side-effects

Alex Norris:

[\[165654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of establishing fluoroquinolone toxicity as a diagnosis in response to the negative side effects attributed to fluoroquinolone usage by some patients.

Alex Norris:

[\[165655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure that healthcare professionals are fully aware of (a) the potentially serious side effects experienced by some patients as a result of fluoroquinolone usage and (b) the recommended restriction of fluoroquinolone usage in response to the reviews of that usage by the European Medicines Agency and Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 March 2021]: Serious side effects of fluoroquinolone antibiotics can be varied, potentially affecting several different parts of the body. The review of the safety of fluoroquinolone antibiotics by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) focussed on the potential for serious side effects and did not specifically assess the potential advantages or disadvantages of using a specific definition for fluoroquinolone toxicity. Regulatory actions taken as a result of this review have focussed on giving healthcare professionals and patients the information they need to identify any potential side effects for appropriate action and on encouraging the reporting of any

suspected side effects to the Yellow Card Scheme. A specific diagnosis is not required.

On 21 March 2019 the MHRA published a Drug Safety Update (DSU) bulletin on the potential serious side effects of fluoroquinolone antibiotics, which may be potentially long-lasting or irreversible. The DSU also emphasised the restrictions and precautions for use of these medicines that were introduced after the review of their safety by the EMA and the MHRA. The DSU bulletin includes a link to a patient sheet designed to help healthcare professionals and patients discuss potential side effects, patients' questions about these medicines and what patients should do if they experience a suspected side effect. The DSU also includes a link to guidance for managing common infections from Public Health England and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson: [\[160827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of care home (a) residents and (b) staff in Wandsworth have received a first covid-19 vaccine dose; and how many have refused the vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Information is not held in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Bradford

Judith Cummins: [\[114915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to publish the results of the asymptomatic covid-19 testing pilot carried out in Bradford, announced on 9 July 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 November 2020]: The full evaluation has now taken place and the Department intends to publish its findings later in the year.

■ Coronavirus: Children

Peter Kyle: [\[148846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the prevalence of long covid symptoms in children.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: No specific assessment has been made.

■ Coronavirus: Children's Centres and Nurseries

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[164605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on ensuring the safety of people who have been working in nurseries and children's centres throughout the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[164606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education to ensure that workers in nurseries and children's centres have adequate measures in place to prevent them from contracting covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care regularly meets with Cabinet colleagues to discuss a range of issues related to the pandemic.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Stuart Anderson:

[\[101317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the (a) accuracy and (b) speed of results to people through the test and trace system.

Helen Whately:

Turnaround times for most testing routes continue to fall, with 97.6% of in-person test results returned the next day after the test was taken. Of those people who took their tests in-person, at either a local or regional test centre, 97.6% received their results the following day, while the median turnaround time for home test kits was just 35 hours.

Helen Hayes:

[\[149295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the rate of funding provided to local authorities to carry out covid-19 contact tracing; and what plans his Department has to increase that funding.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: The Contain Outbreak Management Fund was expanded from the initial £400 million made available in May. To date, the fund has committed over £1 billion to English local authorities.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Chi Onwurah:

[\[109345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the in-app notifications sent to UK Facebook and Instagram users on the day the national covid-19 lockdown was announced to alert them to the new rules provided free of charge to the Government.

Helen Whately:

The NHS Covid-19 app sent no such notifications. Users of the NHS Covid-19 App are anonymous and it is not possible for the app to identify and send messages specifically to United Kingdom Facebook and Instagram users.

Stephen Morgan:[\[130824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department is planning to undertake a testing programme to identify cases of the newly identified strain of covid-19 (a) nationally, (b) in Hampshire and (c) in Portsmouth South constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We have found evidence that the new variant of COVID-19 first identified in South Africa has been identified in a small number of localities across England.

Working in partnership with local authorities we are targeting areas within specific postcodes where the variant has been found, including Hampshire County Council. At present Portsmouth is not included in surge testing. We are asking as many people as possible aged 16 years old and over within the target postcodes to get tested even if they are asymptomatic.

■ Coronavirus: Halton**Derek Twigg:**[\[128073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 vaccine doses have been allocated for Halton residents in December 2020.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 15 December 2020]: NHS England and NHS Improvement also publish weekly data for vaccinations in England. This provides data on vaccinations by local authority and constituency and is available at the following link:

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

■ Coronavirus: Laboratories**Justin Madders:**[\[124222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 12 November to Question 87567, whether his Department holds (a) information on the location of each laboratory engaged in processing tests for covid-19; and (b) data on how many tests were processed at each of those laboratories in each month since April 2020; and for what reason that information is not published.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: Laboratories at the following locations are engaged in processing of tests for COVID-19:

- Glasgow;
- Manchester;
- Cambridge;
- Milton Keynes;
- Charnwood (Loughborough);
- Newport;
- Queen Mary London; and
- Randox (Northern Ireland).

Data is published on the number of tests conducted by lower tier local authority, rather than by specific laboratory.

■ Coronavirus: Liverpool**Esther McVey:****[130053]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of (a) false positive and (b) false negative test results during Liverpool's mass testing programme from 6 November 2020.

Helen Whately:

Specificity relative to polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing was extremely high at around 99.9% or a false positive rate of around 0.1%. Many individuals detected with PCR were no longer infectious and the lateral flow device tests detected 91% of cases with higher viral loads. This means around 9% were not detected or false negatives.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**Philip Davies:****[166355]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the evidence base for wearing facemasks during the covid-19 outbreak is kept up to date.

Jo Churchill:

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and Public Health England (PHE) regularly monitor and review the international evidence on the effectiveness of face coverings. PHE has also undertaken rapid reviews of the evidence related to the effectiveness of face coverings in the community for reducing the transmission of COVID-19 with the latest update in January 2021.

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine

Jonathan Edwards: [\[148758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the required period for self-isolation as a result of new variants of covid-19.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: On the advice of the four United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers, the self-isolation period for all positive cases and contacts remains at 10 days. This decision is based on the scientific evidence. There is no evidence of a change in the incubation period or infectious period for any variant, therefore the advice regarding the isolation period remains unchanged.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Sir Mike Penning: [\[119198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that combined batch testing procedures for covid-19 do not lead to higher rates of false positive tests.

Helen Whately:

Pooled testing is an important part of the National Testing Programme allowing laboratories to test more samples. It is a safe and effective way of testing swab samples from several people at the same time providing quicker testing of asymptomatic people. However, pooled testing should only be used for samples from people who do not have COVID-19 symptoms. If an individual has COVID-19 symptoms, they should be tested individually. Samples from those who have tested positive in the past should not be used in pooled testing

Alberto Costa: [\[124230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to expand covid-19 testing to teachers and school staff, outside of exceptional circumstances, ahead of the 2020-21 Christmas term break.

Helen Whately:

Before Christmas, symptomatic testing was available for all staff through the citizen's portal, offering testing slots for regional and local testing sites and delivery of home test kits. Teachers had prioritised access to testing as they are classed as essential workers. This is alongside the polymerase contact reaction kits that were distributed to schools.

Mr Clive Betts: [\[124664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding he plans to allocate to local authorities to support them in carrying out mass covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 December 2020]: Funding available to local areas will be estimated based on the number of tests they aim to deliver. Total funding per test is set at a maximum of £14.00 for all local authorities participating in the community testing programme. However up to £6 of materials per test can be sourced from centrally procured arrangements in place. This funding per test is expected to cover all reasonable costs associated with the programme including site costs, workforce costs, personal protective equipment requirements, communication and marketing, logistic and other delivery costs.

Justin Madders:[\[134478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people tested positive for covid-19 following a lateral flow test in each week since 1 November 2020; and of those how many (a) took a subsequent PCR test and (b) tested positive for covid-19 in that PCR test in each week in that period.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 13 January 2021]: This information is not currently held in the format requested.

Maria Eagle:[\[138398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for the Government pilot of lateral flow testing at Jaguar Land Rover and other workplaces of the MHRA's refusal to authorise the daily use of that testing in schools.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 20 January 2021]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has not refused to authorise daily lateral flow testing in schools. The MHRA excluded daily testing of one type of lateral flow device which was not deployed in schools.

Sir Mark Hendrick:[\[142788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average length of time is for people to receive the results of a covid-19 test in (a) England, (b) the North West, (c) London, (d) Lancashire and (e) Preston.

Helen Whately:

The data is not published in the format requested.

Dan Jarvis:[\[147856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to make lateral flow testing available to (a) taxi and (b) public transport drivers.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: Testing is available to all public transport organisations through the National Worker Testing Programme, including public transport drivers and taxi drivers. The Government's offer of free test kits to

workplaces for staff who cannot work from home has been extended until the end of June 2021.

Dan Jarvis: [161770]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure all patients are tested for covid-19 before being discharged from hospital.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 March 2021]: Patients being discharged from hospital following an inpatient admission should be tested if they are being discharged to other care settings, such as care homes or hospices. Patients being discharged to their home are not routinely tested unless they are thought to have symptoms appropriate for testing.

Ellie Reeves: [163277]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Contact Tracing staff have recently been made redundant from the UK-wide symptomatic Covid Testing service; and what the reasons are for those redundancies.

Helen Whately:

Contact tracing staff are employed by commercial service providers and are separate to those involved with COVID-19 testing. We are not aware of any redundancies among contact tracing staff. Contact tracers are delivered through a number of provisional contracts that allow numbers of tracers to be scaled up and down according to demand.

Sir Alan Campbell: [164358]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will take steps to ensure that childminders have access to covid-19 home testing kits.

Helen Whately:

As part of the expansion of asymptomatic testing, childminders can order self-test kits to their home through the online ordering service and can collect self-test kits from NHS Test and Trace test sites around the country, as well as from community collection sites where these are being established by local authorities. Individuals can check if asymptomatic testing is offered in their local area at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/find-covid-19-lateral-flow-test-site>

Emma Hardy: [165661]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to offer free covid-19 test kits to workplaces with less than 50 members of staff to assist with the covid-19 secure reopening of businesses.

Helen Whately:

Businesses of all sizes, including those with fewer than 50 employees, can now register to order free lateral flow tests for their employees.

We have launched an online portal on GOV.UK for businesses to find out more about offering rapid workplace testing and order free tests. Businesses should register to order lateral flow tests if they have workers working in England who cannot work from home. Businesses will need to register by 31 March and free tests will currently be provided until the end of June. The online portal is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/get-workplace-coronavirus-tests>

All local authorities have also signed up to offer rapid lateral flow testing in the community through local asymptomatic test sites. Small businesses can direct workers to these test sites if rapid workplace testing is unavailable.

■ **Coronavirus: Sefton**

Bill Esterson:

[132888]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to begin covid-19 vaccinations for residents of Formby, Hightown and Ince Blundell.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: As of 11 March 2021, there have been 112,907 doses administered in Sefton, the local authority for Formby, Hightown and Ince Blundell.

■ **Coronavirus: Staffordshire**

Jonathan Gullis:

[133256]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on rolling out community testing for covid-19 in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Staffordshire commenced asymptomatic testing in November 2020 and moved to the community testing programme in mid-December. Stoke-on-Trent commenced testing at the end of October 2020.

■ **Coronavirus: Travel**

Henry Smith:

[113059]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on proposals by the Global Travel Taskforce set up in response to challenges posed by covid-19 on international travel; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care regularly discusses a range of issues related to COVID-19 with Cabinet colleagues.

■ Coronavirus: Undocumented Migrants

Barry Gardiner:

[\[142758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on ensuring illegal migrants and overstayers cooperate with public health services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has regular discussions with his counterparts across Government.

Vaccination against COVID-19 is a primary care service. It is therefore not within scope of the Charging Regulations and is available free of charge to anyone living in the United Kingdom, including those living here without permission. If an individual is registered with a general practitioner (GP) practice, they will be invited for the vaccine at the appropriate time based on the prioritisation set out by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. If an individual is not registered with a GP, National Health Service regional teams working with the appropriate local system will contact unregistered people to ensure they are offered the vaccine.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Munira Wilson:

[\[126141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy to immunise every adult who wants a covid-19 vaccination by the end of 2021.

Munira Wilson:

[\[126142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy to immunise every person aged from 18 to 49 who comes forward for a vaccine in phase 3 of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 10 December 2020]: The Government met its target of offering a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to everyone in the top four priority cohorts, as recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), by 15 February. The Government and the National Health Service are on course to meet the targets to offer a first dose of vaccination to the top nine priority cohorts by mid-April and all adults by the end of July 2021.

On 26 February, the JCVI published its interim advice for phase two of the COVID-19 vaccination programme covering adults aged 18-49 years old, setting out that the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise people by age. The Government is planning to follow the recommended approach, subject to the final advice given by the JCVI.

Naz Shah:

[\[127575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the 50 hospitals which are hubs for the initial covid-19 vaccine roll out are in areas of high deprivation according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: This information is not held in the format requested.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[129961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria his Department is using to assess the effectiveness of the NHS's roll out of the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Through Public Health England's (PHE) surveillance strategy, we are monitoring how effective the vaccines are at protecting against a range of outcomes including: infection; symptomatic disease; hospitalisations; mortality; and onwards transmission.

PHE is implementing this surveillance strategy in collaboration with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, NHS England and NHS Improvement, and academic partners. Initial results from this strategy were published on 1 March 2021 and show that both the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines are highly effective in reducing COVID-19 infections among people aged 70 years old and over.

Helen Hayes:

[\[131346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to improve IT systems to ensure accurate (a) data collection and (b) reporting of covid-19 vaccine take up.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Government has robust IT systems in place to ensure accurate data collection and reporting of COVID-19 vaccine take up. To record vaccinations, the National Immunisation Management System (NIMS) is being used as the national register for COVID-19 vaccinations. At the point that someone receives their COVID-19 vaccine, the vaccinating team will record this information onto the NIMS system and onto a patient's general practitioner record, which will include capturing data such as a patient's ethnicity.

Afzal Khan:

[\[131475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the polling from the Royal Society for Public Health, published 17 December 2020, which found 57 per cent of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people would likely accept the covid-19 vaccine, what additional steps his Department is taking to increase take up among the BAME community of the covid-19 vaccine; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The COVID-19 vaccine uptake plan is helping improve uptake including across black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities by removing barriers to access, providing comprehensive data and information and engaging people locally. The Plan takes a community-led approach, with support provided from the Government, NHS England and NHS Improvement and local authorities to coordinate and enable action.

A new Vaccination Equalities Committee, led by NHS England and NHS Improvement, will bring together Government departments with national representatives from the Association of Directors of Public Health, local authorities, Fire and Police services and third sector organisations to advise and guide the vaccine deployment programme on addressing inequalities and helping improve uptake rates including in BAME communities.

Sir Christopher Chope:[\[133632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it the policy of the Government to set a target date by which people aged over 80 in England will have been vaccinated against covid-19; and if he will ensure that vaccination of people in younger age groups does not commence until everyone over 80 who wishes to be vaccinated has been.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The National Health Service met its target of offering the COVID-19 vaccine to everyone in the top four priority cohorts, including people aged 70 years and over, on 14 February 2021. 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.

Rachael Maskell:[\[133954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that everyone will be able to access their second covid-19 vaccine within the specified time limit for that vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Government will ensure everyone will be able to access their second COVID-19 vaccine within the specified time limit as outlined in the United Kingdom COVID-19 vaccine delivery plan.

Local National Health Service delivery plans are ensuring second doses are given in line with timescales set out by the independent regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, and advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Helen Hayes:[\[134009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the average number of daily covid-19 vaccinations currently administered in (a) Lambeth,

(b) Southwark and (c) London, and what steps is he taking to increase the number of appointments available at vaccination clinics.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: In each borough in London, including Lambeth and Southwark we are vaccinating, on average 650 people a day and for in London, the daily average vaccination rate is approximately 41,375

We have developed robust vaccination strategies to increase the availability of vaccinations and up take of them for our populations. These integrated strategies have been developed with system partners, including local authorities, and have contributed to an increase in vaccination availability and an increase in the uptake of the vaccine across our boroughs since the campaign started.

Jamie Stone:

[134053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on the rollout of vaccinations for people aged over 80.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The National Health Service met its target of offering the COVID-19 vaccine to everyone in the top four priority cohorts, including those aged 70 years and over, on 14 February 2021.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[134255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have received two separate doses of a covid-19 vaccine to date.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government publishes daily data on vaccination totals at the following link:

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

Alex Cunningham:

[135920]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will publish a daily total of the number and proportion of people vaccinated in each of the priority groups identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: Currently daily and weekly data for those who have received a first and second dose is available for each of the four nations with daily data for vaccinations in England by region. NHS England and NHS Improvement also publish weekly data for vaccinations with data on vaccinations by more granular localities, some patient groups and by ethnicity. Each month further data will be provided on vaccinations by patient subgroup. This is available at the following link:

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

Sarah Olney:

[136029]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government is taking steps to help ensure that foreign nationals in the UK on a visa who are over 80 can access covid-19 vaccinations.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: If someone is living in the United Kingdom (UK), they will be entitled to the vaccine regardless of their immigration status. If they are registered with a general practitioner (GP), then they will be invited to receive the vaccine free of charge in line with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation cohorts in order of priority. Most people already resident in the UK will be contacted by their GP to book their vaccine via an online or telephony system however if they are not registered with a GP, NHS Regional teams (working with various appropriate local systems) will reach out to unregistered people to ensure they are offered the vaccine.

Gill Furniss:

[138477]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 vaccines have been discarded as a result of logistical or storage issues.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 20 January 2021]: This information is not currently held centrally.

Luke Pollard:

[138515]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will allow individual NHS trusts to publish data on how many covid-19 vaccinations they have conducted.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Hospital trust vaccinations are published as part of the weekly NHS England data at the following link:

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

Alberto Costa:

[139049]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the provision of the second dose of the covid-19 vaccine for hospital patients.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We have sufficient doses to maintain the vaccination programme and to provide second doses to hospital patients and in other settings.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[139972]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the risk to public health in England of transmission of covid-19 by those who have been vaccinated against it.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: Public Health England (PHE) has undertaken their first analysis of the early effects of COVID-19 vaccination using routine testing and vaccination data across England. Early data has shown that both the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines are having a significant effect on the reduction of COVID-19 infection, hospitalisations, and deaths in those aged over 70 years old. The data suggests the vaccine may also help to interrupt virus transmission.

Through their surveillance strategy, PHE will continue to monitor how effective the vaccine is at protecting against a range of outcomes, including infection, symptomatic disease, hospitalisations, mortality, and onwards transmission.

Theresa Villiers:[\[142828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, by what date he plans to have made the covid-19 vaccine available to all home carers.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: Frontline social care workers, who provide care in people's homes, are prioritised for vaccination in group two. In addition, unpaid carers are included in 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 falls ill.

Dr Rupa Huq:[\[143019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether internal NHS guidelines permit foreign NHS workers treating covid-19 patients to receive the covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: Vaccination against COVID-19 is offered to every adult living in the United Kingdom free of charge, regardless of immigration status. National Health Service frontline health and social care workers have been prioritised in the first phase of the vaccination programme. This includes foreign NHS frontline healthcare workers.

Alex Davies-Jones:[\[143168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of covid-19 vaccinations that have been allocated to (a) England, (b) Wales, (c) Scotland and (d) Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: Vaccination deployment programmes are led by the health and social care services in each nation - NHS England and NHS Improvement, NHS Wales, NHS Scotland and Health and Social Care Northern Ireland.

The Government is working closely with the devolved administrations to ensure an aligned approach to COVID-19 vaccine deployment across the United Kingdom. We have procured vaccines on behalf of all parts of the country and the Government is working with the devolved administrations to ensure they are deployed efficiently and equitably across the UK.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[147757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his Commonwealth counterparts on sharing knowledge and expertise on covid-19 vaccination programmes.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government is regularly in discussion with other countries, including those in the Commonwealth, on a wide range of COVID-19 issues to share learning and collaborate internationally on the vaccination programme.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[154909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of (a) directly employed prison staff, (b) non-directly employed people who work within prisons, (c) probation staff who have direct contact with service users, (d) prisoners over the age of 80, (e) prisoners over the age of 75, (f) prisoners over the age of 70 and (g) clinically extremely vulnerable prisoners have received a first dose of a covid-19 vaccine as at 19 February 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: The information is not currently centrally held in the format requested.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[155155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department is collecting on people who refuse covid-19 vaccinations.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department does not collect data on people who refuse COVID-19 vaccinations.

Hilary Benn:

[\[157009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the UK Government has promised to send surplus covid-19 vaccine doses to Vietnam.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The United Kingdom has contributed £548 million towards the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, which provides the 92 most vulnerable economies access to COVID-19 vaccines. Vietnam has been allocated over 4.8 million doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine under this mechanism and delivery can be expected in the second quarter of 2021.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[160650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, by what date all teaching staff will have been vaccinated for covid-19 in England; and how many and proportion of those staff will have been vaccinated by 8 March 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Data is not collected on vaccinations delivered by occupation.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[161703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that NHS England shares data with local Primary Care Networks to avoid duplication and confusion relating to invitations for the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 March 2021]: To record vaccinations, a National Immunisation Management System (NIMS) is being used as the national register for COVID-19 vaccinations. At the point that someone receives their vaccine, this information will be recorded on the NIMS system and onto a patient's general practitioner record. National letters include information for individuals booked or received a first vaccination and options of booking via the national booking service or waiting to be contacted locally.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[167165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of prisoners had received a covid-19 vaccination prior to their release in each of the last three months.

Nadhim Zahawi:

This information is not held centrally.

■ **Coronavirus: Yorkshire and the Humber**

Mr David Davis:

[\[102667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Pillar 1 covid-19 tests have been carried out in (a) Yorkshire and the Humber and (b) Haltemprice and Howden constituency in each month since February 2020.

Helen Whately:

We do not hold data in the format requested.

Mr David Davis:

[\[102669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Pillar 3 covid-19 tests have been carried out in (a) Yorkshire and the Humber and (b) Haltemprice and Howden constituency in each month since February 2020.

Helen Whately:

We do not hold data in the format requested.

■ Cutaneous T-cell Lymphoma: Diagnosis

Henry Smith:

[\[158005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a national campaign on differential diagnosis between common skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis and Cutaneous T-Cell Lymphoma, a very rare type of blood cancer.

Edward Argar:

No such assessment has been made.

■ Cystic Fibrosis: Medical Treatments

James Murray:

[\[145887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to make more people with cystic fibrosis eligible for keftrio treatment; and what the timescale is for that work.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 February 2021]: Keftrio is available to National Health Service patients in line with its marketing authorisation through an interim access deal negotiated between NHS England and NHS Improvement and Vertex, the drug manufacturer. This deal will last for four years and means that eligible NHS patients are among the first in Europe to benefit from access to Keftrio. The deal has been structured to allow patients access if the license is updated during the term of the agreement.

■ Dementia: Carers

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[93717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of designating family carers of people with dementia as key workers.

Helen Whately:

As set out in the Adult Social Care Winter Plan, the Government recognises the very important role of all types of unpaid, or family, carers supporting those they care for, including those with dementia.

The role of unpaid carers has been considered in the development of policies throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and they have been prioritised for a range of support. For example, they are included in the priority list for a vaccine, have access to personal protective equipment and have been exempted from interhouse mixing rules when providing the vital care and support they offer.

We will continue to work closely with stakeholders, care organisations and the wider sector and will keep support for family carers under review.

■ Dementia: Health Services

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[163155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that there is not a backlog of treatment for dementia as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to monitor the dementia diagnosis rates at a regional and local sustainability and transformation partnership level to aid targeted efforts to support recovery of referrals, diagnosis, and, where appropriate, support access to post diagnostic support.

NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to encourage memory assessment services to provide safe and person-centred assessment and diagnosis via remote methods or in face-to-face consultations as appropriate during the pandemic.

Webinars and guidance have been provided to support evolving best practice and a person-centred approach to diagnosis and NHS England and Improvement have undertaken work to raise general practice awareness of the continued availability of remote and face-to-face assessments in Memory Assessment Services.

NHS England and NHS Improvement's personalised care team has also worked with the Dementia Change Action Network, Alzheimer's Society to better define and improve access to pre-diagnostic support for people waiting longer for a memory assessment and diagnosis as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Dental Services: Staff

Rachael Maskell:

[\[99040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans for covid-19 antibody testing to be made available to NHS employees working in the dental profession.

Helen Whately:

Since the end of May 2020, laboratory-based antibody tests were available to all NHS staff, with patients and care residents eligible at their clinician's request.

This included staff working on NHS premises but not directly employed by the NHS, those working for the NHS but not on NHS premises and those in primary, community, and mental health care including community pharmacists, dentists and dental staff.

■ Disability: Coronavirus

Cat Smith:

[\[123624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that home covid-19 testing is accessible for (a) people who are blind or partially sighted and (b) other people with a disability.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: NHS Test and Trace has worked with and sought feedback from a number of charities, including the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), the Macular Society, Thomas Pocklington Trust and Visionary. We have worked particularly closely with the RNIB to introduce a range of service improvements including alternative formats of instructions in Braille; audio CD; large print; and an RNIB information line to hear a recorded version of the instructions. 'Be My Eyes' live video assistance will also be launched shortly.

The 119 booking service now enables people without access to the internet or an active email address, to book a polymerase chain reaction test and receive their results by phone. Hearing-impaired people can use their computer and webcam, or the 'InterpreterNow' app on a smartphone or tablet to make a three-way video call to a British Sign Language interpreter. COVID-19 test kit instructions can be accessed via GOV.UK in easy read, plain text, large print and accessible format for use via assistive technology. By the end of February translated versions of the easy read instructions in the 12 most common foreign languages used in the United Kingdom will also be available.

■ Eating Disorders: Young People**Alexander Stafford:**[\[164685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to specialist in-patient services for young people with eating disorders in (a) Rotherham and (b) England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Specialist children and young people's mental health in-patient services, including for those with eating disorders, are available for people living in Rotherham from mental health providers within the Yorkshire and Humber region, including Sheffield Children's Hospital, Riverdale Grange in Sheffield and the recently opened Inspire facility at Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust. Additional in-patient beds are due to open in West Yorkshire in December 2021.

We have announced extra funding for eating disorder services in 2021/22 to enable an additional 2,000 children and young people nationally to receive the support they need in the community. We recognise that it is preferable for a young person to stay in the community and at home to receive their support and treatment via the local community team rather than an in-patient admission, wherever possible.

Munira Wilson:[\[165675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on young people with eating disorders of making calorie counts mandatory on restaurant menus.

Jo Churchill:

We recognise concerns people with eating disorders may have on measures to reduce obesity and are committed to striking a careful balance between enabling

people to make healthier food and drink choices whilst not negatively impacting on those with or recovering from an eating disorder. Obesity represents a huge cost to the health and wellbeing of the individual, the National Health Service and the wider economy. With over six in 10 adults and more than one in three children aged 10 to 11 years old overweight or obese, it is right we take action.

In response to feedback to our consultation on out-of-home calorie labelling, we will introduce legislation to require large out-of-home sector businesses with 250 or more employees to calorie label the food they sell. An equalities assessment and impact assessment were published alongside the consultation response and can be viewed at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/calorie-labelling-for-food-and-drink-served-outside-of-the-home

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Public Places**

John Spellar:

[149159]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to issue guidance on vaping in public places.

Jo Churchill:

There are no current plans to issue further guidance on vaping in public places.

■ **Epilepsy: Children**

Cat Smith:

[161800]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that children with epilepsy have mental health support integrated into their care.

Edward Argar:

The 2019 Clinical Audit on Paediatric Epilepsy recommended that integrated services should be designed around paediatric epilepsy patients, so their physical and mental health needs are diagnosed and treated together in a holistic approach. NHS England and NHS Improvement are supporting the Organisation of Paediatric Epilepsy Networks and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health in the implementation of these recommendations.

■ **Gardasil**

Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:

[164359]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what studies have been undertaken on the (a) side effects of Gardasil used in the HPV Vaccination programme and (b) the long term effect of Gardasil on the health of girls and young women.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 March 2021]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), with advice from the Commission on Human Medicines, has closely evaluated the safety of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine since

the vaccination programme was first introduced in the United Kingdom in 2008 and since Gardasil has been in routine use from 2012. Extensive reviews of Gardasil vaccine safety have also been undertaken by other independent health bodies/authorities worldwide, including the European Medicines Agency, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization. This continuous surveillance has found no evidence of serious harm or chronic illness caused by any HPV vaccine and is supported by published epidemiological studies from health authorities, including the MHRA and other independent academic researchers.

■ Health Professions: Resignations

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[166435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) nurses and health visitors, and (b) Hospital and Community Health Services doctors left NHS in England in (i) 2018-19 and (ii) 2019-20, by reason for leaving.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups, but not staff working in primary care or in general practice surgeries, local authorities or other providers. A table showing the number of nurses and health visitors and HCHS doctors who have left the National Health Service in England in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 by reason for leaving is attached.

Attachments:

1. Leaver by Staff Group and Reason [FOR MINISTERIAL CLEARANCE Leaver by Staff Group and Reason - Copy (1).xlsx]

■ Health Services: EU Countries

Luke Pollard:

[\[166554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what healthcare rights are available to UK residents holidaying in European countries after the end of the transition period.

Edward Argar:

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union includes reciprocal healthcare arrangements. These include necessary healthcare provisions under which the United Kingdom Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) is issued. UK-issued European Health Insurance Cards (EHIC) also continue to be valid until their expiry.

Those eligible under the Withdrawal Agreement (WA) are also entitled to a Citizens' Rights EHIC for use in EU states, the European Economic Area (EEA)/European Free Trade Association (EFTA) states (Liechtenstein, Norway, Iceland) and Switzerland. For those who are not covered by the WA, we have agreed a bilateral reciprocal arrangement with Norway which means UK nationals are covered for

necessary healthcare whilst on a temporary stay in Norway. The UK is also seeking to conclude new, comprehensive agreements on social security coordination, including reciprocal healthcare, with the EEA/EFTA States and with Switzerland.

The Government advises that anyone travelling overseas, whether to the EU or elsewhere in the world, should take out comprehensive travel insurance.

■ HIV Infection

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[165590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to (a) implement and (b) publish a timetable for the implementation of the recommendations of the HIV Commission's report entitled How England will end new cases of HIV, published in 2020.

Jo Churchill:

We will be considering the recommendations set out in the HIV Commission to help shape our upcoming Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and HIV Action Plan on reaching the zero new transmissions by 2030 target, which we plan to publish in 2021.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[165592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to implement a new public health campaign to support ending HIV-related stigma.

Jo Churchill:

HIV Prevention England (HPE) is the national HIV prevention campaign funded by Public Health England and currently delivered by the Terrence Higgins Trust. One of HPE's core aims is to reduce levels of HIV related stigma within black African communities for both men and women, men who have sex with men and in the community more widely. As part of the Government's commitment to end new HIV transmissions in England by 2030, we will be developing a Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and HIV Action Plan, which we plan to publish in 2021. We will consider issues related to HIV stigma as part of this process.

■ Human Papillomavirus: Vaccination

Caroline Nokes:

[\[164438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of teenagers who missed their HPV vaccine in (a) 2020 and (b) 2021.

Jo Churchill:

This data is not available in the format requested. National human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine coverage data for the academic year 2020/21 will be published in winter 2021.

NHS England and NHS Improvement-commissioned school-age providers were asked to implement HPV vaccination restoration and recovery plans. All vaccinations missed will be delivered as soon as possible and no later than August 2021.

■ Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review

Justin Madders: [\[166465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government plans to publish its response to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review Report, published on 8 July 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

My Written Ministerial Statement of 11 January ([HCWS692](#)) provided an update on the Government's response to the Review.

We currently plan to respond further during 2021.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper: [\[167176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he expects Sir Simon Stevens, Chief Executive at NHS England, to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for West Lancashire dated 20 November, reference za54586, on electronic prescriptions.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement responded to the hon. Member on 12 March.

■ Mental Health Services

Alexander Stafford: [\[166619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the process is for determining (a) the seriousness of the condition of a mental health patient and (b) whether to provide a mental health patient with support. .

Ms Nadine Dorries:

These are matters for clinicians to decide in consultation with their patients, based on the patient's individual clinical presentation and needs. Clinicians should take into account the latest available evidence, including any National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines and any local referral criteria.

Alexander Stafford: [\[166620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the types of therapy provided to people with mental health issues by the NHS tackle deep-seated or long-term issues in addition to treating the symptoms.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There are a number of different evidence-based therapies and treatments available through National Health Service mental health services. It is for clinicians to decide, in consultation with their patients, whether they are clinically appropriate interventions based on the patient's individual clinical needs at that time.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[166623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people unable to access mental health services as a result of the cost those services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

National Health Service mental health services are provided free of charge at point of delivery.

■ **Mental Health Services: Children**

Tim Loughton:

[\[166295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's press release, £79 million to boost mental health support for children and young people, published on 5 March 2021, what proportion of that funding will be allocated to fund community mental health support for children aged under three years old.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: No funding has been specifically allocated to this age group.

■ **Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[165486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the allocation of an additional £79 million to children and young people's mental health services in 2021-22, how many areas will get Mental Health Support Team help; and what proportion of those areas are planned to have that help in place by April 2023.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We plan to establish a further 112 mental health support teams in 2021/22 and we will announce the areas in which they will be located in due course. Once established, this will bring the total number of mental health support teams to around 400, which we estimate will be available to three million children and young people or around 35% of pupils in England by 2023.

■ **Neuromuscular Disorders: Medical Treatments**

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[144584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing specialised commissioning for therapeutic plasma exchange for neurological conditions.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[144586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with healthcare experts on the merits of commissioning therapeutic plasma exchange (PLEX) for neurological conditions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: Any decision to commission specialised interventions such as therapeutic plasma exchange (PLEX) for neurological conditions is a matter for NHS England. All decisions on treatment are made by clinical experts, informed by a patient's individual clinical needs. Wherever clinically appropriate, use of alternative therapies to immunoglobulin treatment for patients with neurological conditions, including PLEX, is stated in the current commissioning guidance which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/PSS9-Immunoglobulin-Commissioning-Guidance-CQUIN-1920.pdf>

■ NHS Test and Trace**Justin Madders:****[129039]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many complaints have been raised relating to NHS Test and Trace failures to contact trace which were found to be caused by system problems.

Helen Whately:

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

■ NHS: Incentives**Julian Knight:****[164510]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a one-off bonus for NHS frontline staff who have worked during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: The Government has confirmed it will provide a pay increase to National Health Service staff, while uplifts in the wider public sector have been paused. In doing so, the Government is acknowledging the extraordinary work of NHS staff through the pandemic.

The Government has submitted its written evidence to the independent pay review bodies and has asked them to report in the late spring. We will carefully consider their recommendations.

■ NHS: Medical Records**Gareth Thomas:****[146757]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the six recommendations for best practice set out in the report entitled Foundations of Fairness, Where next for NHS health data partnerships, published in March 2020.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[146758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the two recommendations for best practice by the NHSX set out in the report entitled Foundations of Fairness, Where next for NHS health data partnerships, published in March 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Centre for Improving Data Collaboration is working with Understanding Patient Data to operationalise the findings from the Foundations of Fairness report, working with a range of other partners in the data-driven innovation space to best understand how these recommendations can be put into practice.

It will also lead the drive for transparency by reporting annually on the partnerships it has supported, and the research enabled through its work - detailing the impact on patients, the National Health Service and the taxpayer. In addition, the Centre will ensure equity across the innovation ecosystem by making sure partnerships do not exacerbate health inequalities, and where possible mitigate them, through building capability, facilitating collaborative working and determining approaches for fair value distribution.

NHSX has also produced clear information governance guidance to empower health and care professionals to share information to support the pandemic which is available on a dedicated online portal.

Apsana Begum:

[\[148033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people there are without an NHS number who are (a) over 65 and (b) over 50 in England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS Digital does not have a mechanism for recording people who are not on National Health Service systems.

■ **Obesity: Coronavirus**

Alex Norris:

[\[166521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to Answer of 30 November 2020 to Question 116622 on Health: Coronavirus, whether his Department plans to assess the effect of long covid on patients with obesity; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: COVID-19 is a new disease and therefore it is not yet clear what the physical, psychological and rehabilitation needs will be for those experiencing long-term effects of the virus. There is some evidence to suggest that 'long' COVID-19 may be more prevalent as body mass index increases but further research is needed.

The National Institute for Health Research and UK Research and Innovation have invested £8.4 million in the Post-HOSPitalisation COVID-19 study and have awarded

an additional £18.5 million funding across four new research studies to help better understand the causes, symptoms and treatment options for 'long' COVID-19 in non-hospitalised patients.

■ **Prisons: Coronavirus**

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[136058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Secretary of State for Justice's oral answer of 8 December 2020, Official Report, column 710, how many and what proportion of (a) prison staff and (b) prisoners have been vaccinated against covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: This information is not held centrally.

■ **Social Services: Means-tested Benefits**

Stuart Anderson:

[\[163725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing changes to the means test for adult social care to allow for the (a) effects of inflation and (b) current interest rates.

Helen Whately:

The means test threshold is reviewed on an annual basis. The next review is due in January 2022.

■ **Surgery: Medical Equipment**

Emma Hardy:

[\[167296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to (a) collect data on surgical implants and devices from (i) mesh-related and (ii) other procedures from (A) the NHS and (B) private provider organisations and (b) progress the roll-out of the Medical Device Information System (MDIS).

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS Digital has started a programme of work under the Surgical Devices and Implants Direction to collect information on surgical implants and devices from healthcare providers in England, currently focussed on pelvic floor, or mesh and related procedures, as a priority.

Section 19 of the Medicines and Medical Devices Act 2021 will enable NHS Digital to establish a medical device information system (MDIS) which will collect and store relevant information on implantable devices from all National Health Service and private healthcare providers across the United Kingdom. This could include linking unique device identifiers to patients, clinicians, and the specific surgical procedure that implanted the device. Formal public consultation on the MDIS regulations will begin later this year with the aim of laying the regulations in 2022.

■ Test and Trace Support Payment

Richard Burgon:

[\[158125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 February 2021 to Question 110872 on the Test and Trace Support Payment, by what date the Government plans to have published the data on how many people have (a) applied for and (b) received the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment.

Helen Whately:

The Government has not yet confirmed a publication date for this data.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[164526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been declined for the self isolation payment in (a) York, (b) Yorkshire and the Humber Region and (c) the UK since the payment was introduced.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[164527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have received the self isolation payment in (a) York, (b) Yorkshire and the Humber Region and (c) the UK since that payment was introduced.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not currently available. We are working closely with all 314 lower tier and unitary local authorities to collate information on how the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is progressing and will release information on the number of applications, number of successful applications and amounts paid out in due course.

■ Vaccination: Local Press

Chi Onwurah:

[\[128955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what engagement the Minister for Vaccines has had with local news publishers on vaccine communication and rollout strategy.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 17 December 2020]: The Department of Health and Social Care, the National Health Service and Public Health England are providing advice and information at every possible opportunity to support those getting the vaccine and to anyone who might have questions about the vaccination process.

Engagement with local newspapers is one part of our communications plan alongside other outlets such as TV, radio and online platforms. Through our press partnerships programme we sponsor articles and interviews in more than 600 national, regional and local newspapers to provide advice and information about the COVID-19 vaccine and how it will be made available across the country.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Hotels****Thangam Debbonaire:****[165588]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the timescale is for the closure of initial asylum hotel accommodation; and what the timescale of the notice period will be for residents and local authorities to be notified of such closures.

Chris Philp:

Increased asylum intake, alongside measures taken to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, has meant that the Home Office has had to deal with growing demand for asylum support and accommodation services.

We recognise that hotel accommodation, as a method to deal with increased intake and temporary COVID measures can only ever be a short-term solution to meet our immediate statutory need.

We have set up a recovery programme to work with our accommodation providers to procure sufficient dispersed accommodation so that we can eliminate the use of hotel contingency accommodation. Our accommodation providers are also working to maximise procurement opportunities throughout the UK. However, we can only do that where Local Authorities agree to us procuring accommodation.

We remain committed to working collaboratively with communities and stakeholders and are doing our utmost to ensure those affected by decisions regarding asylum accommodation are properly consulted, despite the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic.

■ Asylum: Military Bases**Ben Lake:****[167289]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the publication of site inspection findings by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of waiving the 1 per cent threshold requirement for special grant funding for policing costs relating to the temporary asylum accommodation sites at Penally training camp and Napier barracks.

Chris Philp:

All police forces should have reasonable contingency within their budgets for unplanned or unexpected events, but in some cases we recognise that these events may place force finances under additional pressure, and in those instances the Police and Crime Commissioner may apply for additional funding through the Police Special Grant. Any force applying for Special Grant funding must meet the criteria set out in the published guidance.

We continue to work closely with the local police forces at Penally training camp and Napier barracks, and have provided £2.5m of funding to Dyfed Powys and £1m to Kent police for costs incurred to date.

The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration announced an inspection of contingency asylum accommodation on 25 January 2021. The department acknowledges the ICIBI's decision to publish on 8 March the initial findings from site visits to Napier Barracks and Penally. The ICIBI's inspection continues and a full inspection report will follow. The duration of the inspection is a matter for the ICIBI and upon its conclusion, following standard procedure set out in the UK Borders Act 2007, the Department will issue a formal response alongside the inspection report as it is laid before Parliament and published on Gov.UK.

■ Domestic Abuse: Children

Zarah Sultana:

[164655]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of investigating the levels of child to parent abuse in the UK.

Victoria Atkins:

Child to parent abuse is a relatively hidden but increasingly recognised form of domestic abuse. The Government is committed to protecting all victims of domestic abuse.

We have included child to parent abuse in the draft statutory guidance on domestic abuse published on 1 July 2020, and we will continue to work with stakeholders to finalise the guidance.

Additionally, this year the government will be publishing a new Domestic Abuse Strategy which will consider this important issue.

■ Immigration

Taiwo Owatemi:

[167330]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Leave to Remain private life applications were processed within six months in (a) 2019 and (b) 2020.

Kevin Foster:

Private life is an element within Family and Private Life applications, which is collectively captured as part of the data referred to as "HR Complex" here;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-protection-data-february-2021>

Private Life is not recorded as a discrete category of application and therefore it is not possible to separate this element out.

We are unable to provide the number of Private Life applications processed within six months during 2019 and 2020 because to do so would result in publication of unassured data.

■ Immigration: Married People

Drew Hendry: [167262]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of reducing the income threshold for spousal visa applications where one of the spouses has worked for the NHS during the covid-19 outbreak.

Drew Hendry: [167263]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of whether the spouse visa income threshold should be reduced in the event that one of the spouses works in the NHS.

Drew Hendry: [167264]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the ability of families to earn enough to meet the increased income threshold requirements for a spouse visa following the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

The Minimum Income Requirement is set at the level which prevents burdens on the taxpayer and promotes integration. We remain committed to those aims but have made relevant adjustments to support those affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes those who have worked for the NHS during the pandemic. Further details are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents#>.

Many NHS workers and their dependants are also eligible for free visa extensions as set out on GOV.UK here: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-health-worker-visa-extension>.

The minimum income requirement has not increased since it was first introduced in July 2012 and there are no plans to reduce it.

■ Metropolitan Police Service's Handling of Non-recent Sexual Offence Investigations Alleged against Persons of Public Prominence Independent Review

Mr Kevan Jones: [167166]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to instruct all police forces in England to implement in full the recommendations of the Henriques Report, The Independent Review of the Metropolitan Police Service's handling of non-recent sexual offence investigations alleged against persons of public prominence, published in October 2019.

Kit Malthouse:

In 2016, as part of his Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) commissioned-review into the handling of a number of non-recent sexual offence investigations alleged against persons of public prominence, Sir Richard Henriques made a number of

recommendations to the MPS. In October 2019, the Home Secretary asked Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to assess the MPS' progress in learning the lessons from Operation Midland, taking into account Sir Richard's recommendations. HMICFRS reported in March 2020 and wrote to all Chief Constables to make them aware of their findings and recommendations where relevant to policing more widely. The Home Office will continue to seek assurances from the MPS, and all forces in England and Wales, that improvements are being made to ensure that the mistakes of Operation Midland cannot be repeated.

■ Migrants: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[165589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 10 February 2021 to Question 148830, on Immigrants: Coronavirus, whether in-person reporting requirements at Patchway Police Centre in Bristol have been changed in response to public health considerations relating to the outbreak of the Brazilian variant of covid-19 in South Gloucestershire.

Chris Philp:

Initially, there was a temporary suspension on in-person reporting for those who would otherwise be required to report, which was applied from 17 March 2020. Following the introduction of large-scale testing and a reduction in the rates of transmission, and in light of the scientific advice as to the measures that could be implemented to enhance public safety, reporting centres then re-opened, initially through two pilot schemes commencing on 20 July 2020, and then through other centres. COVID-19 risk assessments and safe systems of working were introduced, together with other safety measures, including, where appropriate, an adjustment of the time slots for reporting.

As a result of further national restrictions in January 2021 and November, the Home Office's approach was reviewed and revised, as reflected in the latest COVID-19 interim guidance, "Reporting and offender management – interim guidance" (Version 2.0, 25 January 2021).

Significant changes have been made to bail conditions, and in particular to reporting requirements, in light of the evolution of the current pandemic. We continue to monitor closely and react accordingly to the government's response to COVID-19 variants and any future local or national restrictions implemented as a result. At present we remain in a state of national lockdown, and our current approach to in-person reporting remains appropriate for this level of restriction on movement.

Currently only individuals within four priority cohorts are expected to report in-person at reporting centres, or in some locations Police stations, these groups are categorised as:

- foreign national offenders (FNOs)/High Harm/Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) or other security cases. Persons who are on Restricted Leave.

- those who have shown a willingness to return home voluntarily and where reporting will aid the process of return.
- those who have not returned home and who have not engaged with our Voluntary Return programme – including delivery of a Detention on Reporting (DOR).
- those identified for removal.

The position is kept under on-going review, having regard to public health considerations as well as the public interest in the maintenance of immigration control.

■ **Pets: Theft**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[164381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of providing additional resources to local police forces to prevent pet thefts.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[164382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the resources available to local police forces to ensure the prosecution of people responsible for dog theft.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is committed to recruiting an extra 20,000 police officers by March 2023, with a third of that target (6,620 officers) having already been recruited. It is for operationally independent Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables to determine how officers are deployed.

■ **Police: Cambridgeshire**

Daniel Zeichner: [\[164500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police staff in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have received a covid-19 vaccine.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not hold the number of police officers and staff who have received a Covid-19 vaccine, including in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

For Phase 1 of the vaccine roll-out, the Government has rightly prioritised the elderly, given the disproportionate impact of the virus by age range. The clinically vulnerable, and front-line Health and Social Care staff who care for them, are also being prioritised. Phase 1 also includes police officers and staff who fall into these categories.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice for Phase 2 of the vaccination programme sets 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 the speed of delivery is crucial, prioritising people by age enables us to operationally vaccinate more people, providing them with protection from Covid-19.

■ **Rape: Criminal Proceedings**

Sarah Champion:

[\[164486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to publish the end-to-end review of the criminal justice response to rape.

Victoria Atkins:

Rape and sexual assault are devastating crimes. We want all victims to have the confidence to report them, knowing that every investigation will be conducted thoroughly, and everything will be done to bring offenders to justice. That is why we commissioned an end-to-end review of the criminal justice system response to rape.

As indicated in my answer of 27 January, we expect the review to report with actions for cross-system improvement this spring. We want to ensure the review, when published, is as well evidenced as possible, so that it delivers meaningful and long-lasting change.

■ **Terrorism: Birmingham**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[164582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of a public inquiry on the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings.

Kevin Foster:

The 1974 attacks on the Mulberry Bush and Tavern In The Town were appalling events and acts of violence. I recognise the desire to see those responsible brought to justice.

There is an ongoing investigation by West Midlands Police into the bombings, and it would be inappropriate to make a decision on whether to establish an inquiry while this is proceeding.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ **Building Safety Fund**

Neil Coyle:

[\[164499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department is planning a further tranche of funding for applicants unable to meet the Building Safety Fund June 2021 deadline.

Christopher Pincher:

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

■ Burlington House

Tim Loughton:

[\[166296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Guide for the Disposal of Surplus Land, published by the Cabinet Office in 2017, whether the principle of (a) best value or (b) best consideration has been applied to the management of New Burlington House.

Eddie Hughes:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: MHCLG holds the freehold for New Burlington House (NBH) in Piccadilly. We have 5 Learned Societies who occupy NBH and have been our tenants for over 100 years. The current lease which was agreed with the Learned Societies was put in place in 2005 and grants the Learned Societies an 80 year term lease. The Guide for the Disposal of Surplus Land has therefore not been applied in the management of NBH as the government has no plans to dispose of NBH.

■ Business Premises: Insulation

Olivia Blake:

[\[167376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect of state aid de minimis rule limits on businesses in commercial premises that are affected by cladding issues.

Christopher Pincher:

The EU State aid rules no longer apply in the UK, except for aid in scope of the Northern Ireland Protocol. Subsidies must instead comply with our international commitments on subsidies in the UK-EU Trade and Co-operation agreement (TCA), and other trade agreements, as well as the World Trade Organisation rules on subsidies. However, where the award of funding for cladding remediation funding was made prior to 1 January 2021 on the basis of the De Minimis rules there is still need to comply with those rules, including a maximum threshold of €200,000 that a business could receive in funding over a three year period. We are aware of instances where state aid rules have resulted in deductions to the funding provided through the remediation funds, and are working closely with applicants to ensure unsafe cladding is remediated as quickly as possible.

■ Business Premises: Rents

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[163649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department has taken to help ensure that commercial landlords continue to receive their rent from commercial tenants, notwithstanding the eviction moratorium.

Eddie Hughes:

Government has been clear throughout the pandemic that the eviction moratorium does not amount to a rent holiday. The Code of Practice published last year sets out that tenants that can pay all or part of their rent should do so while landlords should

grant forbearance to tenants that are struggling to pay their rent due to Covid-19 where they are able to do so.

The Government has also announced a call for evidence from the commercial property industry to help monitor the overall progress of negotiations between tenants and landlords.

Through the Budget, the Government continues to provide an unprecedented package of financial support to protect jobs, and support businesses and tenants through the Coronavirus crisis, including extending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until September and new 'Restart Grants' of up to £18,000 for highly impacted businesses. To protect jobs further, the Government has decided that commercial tenants business owners affected by the pandemic will therefore now be protected from eviction until 30 June due to the continuing national lockdown.

■ **Business: Finance**

Olivia Blake:

[\[167377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what additional funding he will make available to businesses affected by a shortfall in funding as a result of the effect of state aid de minimis rules.

Eddie Hughes:

The Covid-19 business grant schemes form part of unprecedented package to assist those business who are mandated to close and are severely impacted by restrictions, supporting businesses to reopen as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted in the coming months. From the 4 March, subsidy allowances for the Covid-19 business grant schemes have been increased, so more businesses can access grants during this challenging time.

■ **Camping Sites and Caravan Sites**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[167156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make it his policy to increase the number of caravans and tents permitted at site and locations certified for self-catering holidays during 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

Local authorities are responsible for regulating the number of caravan and tent pitches on caravan sites through the planning and caravan site licensing regimes. We want to see them taking a flexible approach to requests for temporary increases in the number of pitches this summer where it is appropriate to do so.

■ Community Development: Finance

Neil Coyle:

[\[166456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to release further rounds of funding for the Community Champions scheme open to bids from all local authorities.

Eddie Hughes:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: On 25 January we announced £23.75 million funding through the Community Champions Scheme to 60 councils and voluntary groups across England - to expand work to support those most at risk from COVID-19.

Participating local authorities will provide monthly reporting from March 2021, which will be used to assess the scope and reach of the Community Champions programme.

We will learn from the current scheme and assess the case for any further funding

■ Council Tax

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[166499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to review the banding system applied to properties for the purpose of collecting council tax in England; and if he will make a statement.

Eddie Hughes:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: The Government has no plans to review council tax banding of properties in England, which would require a revaluation to be implemented effectively. A revaluation would be expensive to undertake, and could result in increases in bills for many households, as happened following the council tax revaluation in Wales when 33% of all homes there were placed in a higher band compared to 8% of homes that were placed in a lower band.

■ Domestic Abuse: Housing

Zarah Sultana:

[\[164654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of giving local authorities the option to place victims of domestic abuse and their children in close proximity to where they have been living.

Eddie Hughes:

It is critical that victims of domestic abuse get support and especially when they are in housing need.

When a housing authority makes inquiries to determine whether a victim of domestic abuse is eligible for homelessness assistance and owed a duty under Part 7 of the

Housing Act 1996, it may also make inquiries under section 184(2) to establish if an applicant has a local connection to the area.

An applicant can have a local connection to an area if; they are normally resident there, have been resident there in the past, are employed there, have family associations living there or due to any special circumstances. Therefore, victims of domestic abuse, who are homeless and eligible can approach the local authority in an area in which they have been living for homelessness assistance.

The Homelessness Code of Guidance is clear that a housing authority cannot refer an applicant to a housing authority if they or anyone who might reasonably be expected to reside with them would be at risk of violence and abuse. Therefore, it may be the case that a victim of domestic abuse is accommodated in a different local authority in order to ensure their safety.

■ Evictions

Olivia Blake:

[\[167375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will extend the section 21 notice period extension beyond 31 March 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

We are continuing to require landlords to provide tenants with six months' notice before eviction in all but the most serious cases until the end of May 2021. This includes Section 21 notices. This means that most renters served notice during April and May will be able to stay in their homes until October and November, except in the most serious cases such as anti-social behaviour and serious rent arrears

The Government will consider the best approach to tapering down notice periods after 1 June, taking into account public health requirements and progress with the roadmap out of lockdown.

■ Evictions: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[164376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that landlords receive the rent owed while the eviction moratorium is in place.

Christopher Pincher:

Housing possession cases were suspended in the courts from 27 March until 20 September but landlords are now once again able to progress their claims. This is an important step towards enabling landlords to regain their properties when needed.

The Government is extending the requirement for landlords to provide 6-months' notice except in the most serious cases such as anti-social behaviour, fraud and egregious rent arrears, for a further two months. The Government is also extending existing legislation to ensure bailiffs do not serve eviction notices or carry out evictions until 31 May but there are exemptions for the most serious circumstances

that present the most strain on landlords, including cases where there are serious rent arrears of six months' rent or more.

We are clear that tenants are still liable for the rent during this period and where they can pay the rent as normal, they should do. Tenants should also abide by all other terms of their tenancy agreement to the best of their ability. Tenants who are unable to do so should speak to their landlord at the earliest opportunity.

The Government has put in place an unprecedented support package, which supports renters and helps them to afford their housing costs. This includes support for business to pay staff salaries through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme which has now been extended until September 2021. The Government has also invested an extra £1 billion to increase Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates so that they cover the lowest 30% of market rents. In 2021/22 LHA rates will be maintained at their increased level at cash terms, meaning claimants renting in the private rented sector will continue to benefit from the significant increase in the rates applied in April 2020. The Government is also extending the £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit for a further 6 months and providing a one-off payment of £500 to eligible Working Tax Credit claimants.

This strikes the right balance between prioritising public health and supporting the most vulnerable renters, whilst ensuring landlords can exercise their right to justice.

■ Homelessness: LGBT People

Nickie Aiken:

[164624]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's Rough Sleeping Strategy, published in 2018, what progress the Government has made on (a) improving understanding of LGBT homelessness and the experiences of LGBT homeless people and (b) improving interventions for LGBT homeless people.

Eddie Hughes:

We are committed to tackling all forms of homelessness and recognise that LGBT people who find themselves homeless may have a different experience of homelessness due to their protected characteristics. We are working with the Government Equalities Office to undertake research into the nature of LGBT homelessness. This will be published in due course.

When delivering their homelessness duties and designing their services, local authorities must consider the needs of LGBT service users. The Government has worked with Stonewall Housing to provide training to staff working with LGBT individuals across various housing services about the issues they may face and how best to support LGBT people.

■ Housing: Construction

Kelly Tolhurst:

[164537]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to support the construction of new homes and related infrastructure.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government continues to work closely with the construction sector to ensure that it is in a position to support the economic recovery. This support includes the work of the Construction Leadership Council's Coronavirus Task Force, which monitors the supply of products and is working to address disruption to supply chains.

Last year, the Government worked with the industry to produce a clear and simple [Charter](#) for Safe Working Practice, and updated [Site Operating Procedures](#) have been published by the Construction Leadership Council.

MHCLG's Secretary of State, alongside the Executive Chairman of the Home Builders Federation and the Chief Executive of the Federation of Masters Builders, previously wrote to the housing industry to make it clear that housebuilding, and the supply chains that support it, can continue, and that remains the case under every level of restriction

We have introduced a range of measures, such as allowing builders to seek more flexible construction site working hours with their local councils and extended certain planning permissions that would otherwise have lapsed, in order to keep the sector moving.

For infrastructure, the 2020 Spending Review confirmed an initial funding of £7.1 billion for the National Home Building Fund (NHBF) over the next four years to unlock up to 860,000 homes. The Government has also allocated £900 million through the Getting Building Fund, which will unlock up to 41,500 homes, and £1.1 billion in Local Growth Funding, which will support the unlocking of up to 89,000 homes.

Further funding for the NHBF will be confirmed at the next multi-year Spending Review, delivering on the Government's commitment to provide £10 billion to unlock homes through provision of infrastructure.

■ Housing: Insulation

Daniel Zeichner:

[164501]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of leaseholders that also part own the freehold of their buildings with ACM, MCM or HPL cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

This information is not held.

■ Leasehold: Fees and Charges

Peter Kyle:

[\[166495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress his Department has made in bringing forward legislative proposals to protect leaseholders from unreasonable charges when they seek to extend the lease on their property.

Eddie Hughes:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service. We are taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market.

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

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

Peter Kyle:

[\[166496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress he has made on removing onerous ground rents for existing leaseholders.

Eddie Hughes:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: The Government has set out a package of measures to tackle unfair practices in the leasehold market and promote transparency and fairness for both leaseholders and freeholders. We will bring forward legislation in the upcoming session to set future ground rents to zero.

We understand the difficulties and frustrations for existing leaseholders who are unhappy with the ground rent they are required to pay and feel their leases should be changed. We are pleased that the CMA is taking enforcement action in relation to two key issues. First, to tackle certain instances of mis-selling of leasehold property. Second, to address the problems faced by homeowners from high and increasing ground rents. The Government is keeping a close eye on this issue and will consider any next steps once the CMA have progressed their enforcement action.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Steve Reed:

[\[164489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether bids submitted to the Levelling Up Fund by local authorities require the support of the local Member of Parliament in order to be considered.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government recognises the important role of Members of Parliament in championing the interests of their constituents. We expect bidding authorities to consult local Members of Parliament as part of their bid, though such support from local Members of Parliament is not a necessary condition for a successful bid. Members of Parliament can have a positive role in prioritising bids and helping broker local consensus.

Steve Reed:[\[166438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what consultation was conducted with local authorities in respect of the Levelling Up Fund; and if he will publish those responses.

Eddie Hughes:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: The Levelling Up Fund will invest in local infrastructure that will have a visible impact on people and their communities.. The Government regularly engages with a wide range of stakeholders as part of ongoing work to support local economic growth as we recover from Covid-19.

■ Levelling Up Fund and Towns Fund**Steve Reed:**[\[166439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much money from the Towns Fund is being diverted into the Levelling Up Fund.

Eddie Hughes:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: Towns will be able to benefit from the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund (LUF), which will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets. The LUF prospectus published at Budget provides guidance for local areas on how to submit bids for the first round of funding for projects starting in 2021-22.

As set out in the prospectus, proposals can be submitted for town centre and regeneration projects from individual or groups of smaller towns that did not receive investment from the Towns Fund.

■ Levelling Up Fund and UK Community Renewal Fund**Sam Tarry:**[\[167343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including measures of (a) crime, (b) barriers to housing and services, (c) living environment deprivation and (d) inequalities within a local authority area when developing the index of economic resilience for the (i) UK Community Renewal Fund and (ii) Levelling Up Fund.

Eddie Hughes:

Methodological notes for both the UK Community Renewal Fund and the Levelling Up Fund explaining the two indices have been published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus/uk-community-renewal-fund-prioritisation-of-places-methodology-note>.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-fund-additional-documents/levelling-up-fund-prioritisation-of-places-methodology-note>

■ Levelling Up Fund and UK Community Renewal Fund: Halton**Derek Twigg:****[166329]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reasons Halton did not meet the criteria to be a (a) category one area for the purposes of the Levelling Up Fund or (b) priority area for the Community Renewal Fund.

Eddie Hughes:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: As set out in the prospectus published last week, the index used for the Levelling Up Fund places areas into category one, two or three based on the local area's need for economic recovery and growth, improved transport connectivity, and regeneration.

As set out in the UK Community Renewal Fund 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 each Fund.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-fund-additional-documents/levelling-up-fund-prioritisation-of-places-methodology-note>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus/uk-community-renewal-fund-prioritisation-of-places-methodology-note>

■ Levelling Up Fund and UK Community Renewal Fund: Wales**Ben Lake:****[167294]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the design of the (a) Levelling Up Fund and (b) the Community Renewal Fund.

Eddie Hughes:

The UK Government is providing an additional £220 million funding through the UK Community Renewal Fund to help local areas prepare for the launch of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 2022. The Fund aims to support people and communities most in need across the UK to pilot programmes and new approaches and will invest

in skills, community and place, local business, and supporting people into employment.

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets.

The UK Government intends to continue to work with the devolved administrations to ensure that funding is used to best effect and supports citizens across the UK. For both funds, where appropriate, the UK Government will seek advice from the devolved administrations on bids to ensure that they are deliverable and complementary to other provision.

UK Government officials regularly engage their counterparts in the devolved administrations to discuss any updates, concerns or queries. UK Government ministers recently met with ministers in the Welsh Government to discuss the UK Community Renewal Fund, the Levelling Up Fund and the UK Community Ownership Fund.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[167157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Christchurch of 18 December 2020 on behalf of a constituent concerned about his inability to obtain an EWS1 Certificate for a flat in a three storey block; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

My noble Friend, Lord Greenhalgh, responded to the letter on 15 March 2021.

■ **Planning Permission: Newbury**

Steve Reed:

[\[167211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what representations he has received on the ministerial determination of the application for development at Sandleford Park.

Christopher Pincher:

No representations have been received concerning this appeal.

■ **Public Lavatories: Gender Recognition**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[164658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's call for evidence, Toilet provision for men and women, updated 29 January 2021, what the evidential basis was for (a) his decision to extend the deadline into the consultation of gender neutral toilets and (b) the statement in that call for evidence that the replacement of male-only and female-only spaces with gender neutral toilets places women at a significant disadvantage.

Christopher Pincher:

Toilets, both in municipal and private sector locations, are an important facility for members of the public, in particular women, those with children, older people and disabled people.

A) In January we identified a majority of personal views amongst the responses and so we extended until 26 February to gather more technical guidance relating to toilet provision.

B) Media coverage, personal accounts and parliamentary scrutiny described inequality in the use and provision of toilets, particularly for women. In recent years, we have seen examples of the removal of well-established male-only/female-only spaces when premises are built or refurbished, and they have often been replaced with gender-neutral toilets. This places women at a significant disadvantage. While men can then use both cubicles and urinals, women can only use the former, and women also need safe spaces given their particular health and sanitary needs (for example, women who are menstruating, pregnant or at menopause, may need to use the toilet more often). Women are also likely to feel less comfortable using mixed sex facilities, and require more space.

Regional Planning and Development**Steve Reed:**[\[167212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government has developed metrics to assess the progress of its levelling up agenda in each (a) local authority area and (b) region.

Eddie Hughes:

As reaffirmed at the Spending Review, the Government is levelling up opportunity across the UK so that people feel that they can succeed in their local area. The Spending Review established a set of provisional priority outcomes and metrics across all departments and policy areas which have been published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents>

These outcomes are now being embedded by departments into Outcome Delivery Plans, which will set out strategy and planning information for delivering the priority outcomes and for delivering on strategic “enabling” activities that are crucial to successful delivery.

Rented Housing: Coronavirus**Thangam Debbonaire:**[\[164519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 155147 on in-person house viewings and guidance to ensure the safety of tenants, how tenants are able to enforce that guidance to agents and prevent unwanted in-person home viewings during covid-19 lockdown.

Christopher Pincher:

It is important that people who need to move can do so and home viewings are an essential part of the home moving process. We have been clear in published guidance that agents should not conduct viewings in properties where tenants are symptomatic or self-isolating. Where viewings proceed, tenant's safety should be letting agents' first priority.

Where tenants have concerns about the conduct of their agent, they should raise their complaint with the agent to give them an opportunity to rectify the issue. If an agent does not respond adequately or in a timely manner, a tenant may be able to escalate their complaint to the agents' redress scheme, which can investigate and make an adjudication which is binding on the agent.

■ Rented Housing: Pets**Rachael Maskell:**[\[164529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government plans to take to assess the efficacy of its revised Model Tenancy Agreement in supporting pet ownership in rental properties.

Rachael Maskell:[\[164530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the changes outlined in the recently revised Model Tenancy Agreement, what constitutes a good reason for landlords to decline a pet ownership request from a tenant.

Christopher Pincher:

The latest revision to the Model Tenancy Agreement is based on making it easier for tenants with pets to find private landlords who will accept them. The key change is to remove restrictions on responsible tenants with pets, encouraging landlords who use the Model Tenancy Agreement to offer greater flexibility in their approach to pet ownership. The revision aims to strike the balance between protecting private landlords from situations where their properties are damaged by badly behaved pets whilst ensuring responsible pet owning tenants are not unfairly penalised.

The revised Model Tenancy Agreement provides that a private landlord who chooses to use the agreement should accept a request from a tenant to keep pets where they are satisfied the tenant is a responsible pet owner and the pet is of a kind that is suitable in relation to the nature of the premises at which it will be kept. As such, a good reason for a landlord to decline a pet ownership request would be where a pet is demonstrably poorly behaved, or unsuited for the premises in question, for example, a large dog in a small flat, or where other tenants have allergies to animals.

We will continue to keep the Model Tenancy Agreement under review.

■ Towns Fund

Steve Reed:

[166437]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he plans to take to assess the value for money of Town Deals.

Eddie Hughes:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: Every Town Investment Plan we receive is robustly assessed against a range of criteria, with value for money a central consideration. Full details of our assessment are set out in the Towns Fund Further Guidance, which can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/926422/Towns_Fund_further_guidance.pdf

Funding is distributed through local authorities who are the accountable body. Local authorities have their own comprehensive processes in place for managing public money. Funding for projects will only be released when full, green book compliant, business cases have been approved.

The Department will publish its monitoring and evaluation strategy for the Towns Fund in due course.

■ UK Community Renewal Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Steve Reed:

[166443]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to section 4.4 of his Department's policy paper, UK Community Renewal Fund: prospectus 2021-22, published on 3 March 2021, how the amount of funding available to lead authorities listed in the UK Community Renewal Fund Prospectus of up to £14 million will be (a) determined and (b) made available for supporting preparation ahead of the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Eddie Hughes:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: The UK Government is providing an additional £220 million funding through the UK Community Renewal Fund to help local areas prepare for the launch of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This 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.

We are reserving up to £14 million of the Fund as capacity funding to support local places to prepare for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. As set out in the prospectus, we will set out details on how this capacity funding will be distributed later this year. The allocation of capacity funding under the UK Community Renewal Fund does not pre-determine the allocation approach for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Local Enterprise Partnerships

Steve Reed:

[\[164493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether Local Enterprise Partnerships are planned to be involved in the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Eddie Hughes:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be a flagship policy in delivering this Government's commitment to level up the country and will target the people and places most in need across the UK. It will be focused on our domestic priorities and seize the opportunities that come from our departure from the EU and the bureaucracy of EU structural funds.

Spending Review 2020 set out the main strategic elements of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in the Heads of Terms. We will publish further details about the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in a UK-wide Investment Framework later in 2021 and its funding profile will be set out at the next Spending Review.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Tradeshow Access Programme

Emily Thornberry:

[\[166351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when her Department plans to make an announcement on the future of the Trade Show Access Programme.

Graham Stuart:

Announcements in respect of grant allocations, and the 2021-22 programme for trade show support, will be dependent on how business planning discussions are concluded, as part of the overall Spending Review priorities process.

JUSTICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Chris Bryant:

[\[913481\]](#)

What recent estimate he has made of the number of magistrate vacancies.

Chris Philp:

The Government announced on 8 March its intention to bring forward legislation to change the mandatory retirement age for all judicial office holders, including magistrates, to 75 – a step which I know has been welcomed by many magistrates

We will also be legislating to allow retired magistrates to apply to return to the bench where there is a business need.

On 1 April 2020, there were 13,177 magistrates. We are currently updating our modelling to assess the impact of a change to the retirement age on our recruitment requirements in each region for 2021/22 and beyond.

John Spellar:

[913483]

What recent estimate he has made of the number of cases scheduled to commence in 2022.

Chris Philp:

We have not made any forecast listings for the Judiciary. We expect almost 100% of Magistrate Courts cases are to be heard this year and over half of Crown Court custody cases to be heard in 6 months.

Neil O'Brien:

[913490]

What recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of sentencing for dog theft.

Chris Philp:

We recognise the deep distress the theft of a much-loved pet can cause which is why robust laws are already in place to firmly deal with offenders who commit such abhorrent crimes.

Sentencing is a matter for our independent courts. Sentencing guidelines acknowledge that theft which causes emotional distress, or where the items stolen were of substantial value to the loser, regardless of monetary worth, will indicate a higher level of seriousness and the offender should be sentenced accordingly.

Discussions are underway between myself, the Environment Secretary and the Home Secretary to consider further action on the issue of pet theft.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Jonathan Edwards:

[167183]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential for legal cases to be brought under the Equality Act 2010 as a result of people being denied access to businesses due to non-compliance with covid-19 related restrictions.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice has not made an assessment of the potential for legal cases to be brought under the Equality Act 2010 as a result of people being denied access to businesses due to non-compliance with covid-19 related restrictions.

The Government's equality assessment of the Coronavirus Act 2020 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-act-2020-equality-impact-assessment/coronavirus-act-2020-the-public-sector-equalities-duty-impact-assessment>

Jonathan Edwards:

[167184]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether any legal cases have been brought under the Equality Act 2010 as a result of people being denied access to businesses due to non-compliance with covid-19 related restrictions; and how many of those cases have been upheld.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice is not aware of any legal cases having been brought under the Equality Act 2010 as a result of people being denied access to businesses due to non-compliance with covid-19 related restrictions.

■ Courts: Coronavirus

Ellie Reeves:

[164586]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Nightingale Courts are being used for criminal trials.

Chris Philp:

HMCTS has opened 27 Nightingale courts comprising 54 courtrooms. Of these courtrooms, 30 are directly hearing Crown and Magistrates' Court work with the rest being used to free up capacity for crime hearings within the existing HMCTS estate.

Crime recovery work is moving at pace – our focus is on increasing capacity and maximising use of the capacity we already have. The Criminal Courts Recovery Plan can be accessed on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/court-and-tribunal-recovery-update-in-response-to-coronavirus>. This provides a comprehensive update on recovery plans and includes details about Nightingale courts.

Ellie Reeves:

[164588]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of whether social distancing will be required in courts after June 2021.

Chris Philp:

The access to justice provided by courts and tribunals is of critical importance. It is of the top priority of HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to ensure that essential public service is delivered safely.

We will keep this under careful review in light of PHE guidance at the time we will reform Courts to normal operation as quickly and safely as possible.

■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Agency Workers

Ellie Reeves:

[164589]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of HM Courts and Tribunals staff are agency staff.

Chris Philp:

The proportion of HMCTS Courts and Tribunal Full-time Equivalent staff that are agency staff as at the end of Jan 21 is 15%. This is based on an overall FTE figure of 17,439.39 which includes all HMCTS staff and agency staff.

	FTE	
HMCTS	14878.52	85%
Agency	2560.87	15%
Total	17439.39	

■ **Prison Officers: Pay****Catherine West:**[\[164578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 2 March 2021 to Question 158908, Prison Officers: Pay, what legal issues the advice contained in the Equality Impact Assessment relates to.

Catherine West:[\[164579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 2 March 2021 to Question 158908, Prison Officers: Pay, what matters identified in that Equality Impact Assessment were relied upon when considering the impact of rejecting the recommendation on (a) unlawful discrimination and (b) advancing equality of opportunity.

Alex Chalk:

The 20/21 Prison Service Pay Review Body report was received on 5 June 2020 and included a recommendation, recommendation 3, to uplift the pay of Band 3 prison staff on modernised terms and conditions by £3,000. This recommendation was not accepted by the Government. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was conducted and considered in reaching the decision to reject recommendation 3.

In line with the practice of successive administrations, the Government does not routinely publish Equality Impact Assessments (EIA). The scope of the legal issues in the EIA were regarding options that the Department was considering as part of its decision-making regarding prison officer pay and allowances. These options were ultimately not pursued as they were not cost viable.

The EIA recognised that rejecting recommendation 3 from the PSPRB 20/21 report would adversely impact staff on Fair & Sustainable (F&S) terms and conditions, who (as per the data published on 2 March) are a more diverse staffing group than their counterparts on closed grade terms.

The Government's consideration of recommendation 3 took this into account, alongside other factors such as the exceptional costs associated with implementing this recommendation, the impact on the overall pay structure, and the changing

labour market conditions due to the exceptional economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department identified as part of the EIA that the adverse impact of rejecting recommendation 3 would be addressed by efforts to close the pay differential between staff on closed-grades terms and those on F&S terms. While this cannot be progressed in the context of the current pay pause, this remains a key component of the Department's longer-term pay strategy.

■ Prison Service: Training

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[164426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many officials in the Prison Service have completed a military-style leadership course while in employment.

Alex Chalk:

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) would not characterise any of its leadership offer as 'military-style' and so the answer is none.

Since 2016 HMPPS has, however, built a successful partnership with the Ministry of Defence Academy, Shrivenham. Fifty-two leaders from across all parts of HMPPS, including the Prison Service, National Probation Service and Youth Custody Service have attended the Command, Leadership and Management course at Shrivenham. This is a one-week stand-alone leadership course which, for the military attendees, is part of a one-year programme.

Breakdown of numbers of HMPPS delegates by year is given below.

YEAR	NUMBER OF HMPPS LEADERS IN ATTENDANCE.
2016	1
2017	10
2018	25
2019	16
2020	0

This has been targeted for those in senior roles (i.e. Prison Governors) or those with the potential to move to this level.

■ Prisoners' Release: Housing

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[167164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prisoners are released into (a) homelessness, (b) temporary accommodation and (c) hostels in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Alex Chalk:

We recognise that accommodation is a key priority as it is often the first step in an individual's resettlement journey. We continue to work with councils and charities to secure suitable accommodation, while investigating long-term solutions to prevent homelessness and help offenders turn their backs on crime.

We provided data on accommodation on release last summer given the uncertainty around early releases from prison and other factors during the first Covid peak, and the public interest in this area at the time. In response to Written Parliamentary Question 76656 on 28 July 2020 we supplied data ahead of the official statistics publication schedule.

We are now reverting back to publishing this data in a more orderly and transparent way in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics, which allows sufficient time for analysts to fully assure and quality check the data. Future statistics on accommodation on release from will be published in due course, in line with the official statistics publication schedule. The next release will be published as part of the Community Performance Series. Previously the release schedule for the series had been quarterly, it has now moved to an annual cycle, with the 29 July 2021 edition reporting full-year outcomes for 2020/21.

■ Prisons: Crimes of Violence**Dr Matthew Offord:****[164425]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many violent incidents were recorded in August (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020 in the following prisons (i) Hull, (ii) Humber, (iii) Leeds, (iv) Lindholme, (v) Moorland, Hatfield Woodhouse, South Yorkshire, (vi) Wealstun, near Wetherby, West Yorkshire, (vii) Nottingham, (viii) Ranby, Nottinghamshire, (ix) Wormwood Scrubs, and (x) Isis, south-east London.

Alex Chalk:

The number of assaults in each of the prisons listed for the months requested can be found in the Safety in Custody summary tables available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-september-2020>.

Despite the progress made, the level of violence in prisons remains too high. We are continuing work to address this by giving all staff the tools and training needed to help them reduce violence.

We are spending £100 million across the estate to bolster prison security, clamping down on the weapons, drugs and mobile phones that fuel violence and crime behind bars.

We are also giving officers tools like PAVA pepper spray and body-worn cameras to make their jobs safer.

Violence in prison is a crime and will never be tolerated. Any prisoner who commits an act of violence should expect to have action taken against them, including being imprisoned for far longer.

■ Prisons: Drugs

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[164427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of illegal drugs tests were positive in August (a) 2018, (b) 2019, (c) 2020 in the following prisons (i) Hull, (ii) Humber, (iii) Leeds, (iv) Lindholme, (v) Moorland, Hatfield Woodhouse, South Yorkshire, (vi) Wealstun, near Wetherby, West Yorkshire, (vii) Nottingham, (viii) Ranby, Nottinghamshire, (ix) Wormwood Scrubs and (x) Isis, south-east London.

Alex Chalk:

Provided below is the number of random mandatory drug testing (MDT) tests, which includes both illegal drugs and misused legal drugs, that were positive, and the proportion of total MDT tests administered in the prisons listed across August of 2018 and 2019:

	AUG-18					AUG-19				
Reporting Unit	Total number of samples tested	No of positives (all drugs)	% of positives (all drugs)	No of positives (traditional drugs only)	% of positives (traditional drugs only)	Total number of samples tested	No of positives (all drugs)	% of positives (all drugs)	No of positives (traditional drugs only)	% of positives (traditional drugs only)
Hull	48	7	15%	5	10%	49	3	6%	3	6%
Humber	50	13	26%	7	14%	52	1	2%	1	2%
Isis	31	7	23%	4	13%	32	8	25%	8	25%
Leeds	52	6	12%	4	8%	54	4	7%	4	7%
Lindholme	46	18	39%	7	15%	48	5	10%	5	10%
Moorland	48	13	27%	4	8%	48	4	8%	4	8%
Nottingham	6	1	17%	1	17%	41	0	0%	0	0%
Ranby	48	16	33%	3	6%	51	7	14%	7	14%
Wealstun	41	13	32%	6	15%	44	6	14%	6	14%

	AUG-18				AUG-19					
Wormwood Scrubs	60	20	33%	17	28%	54	4	7%	4	7%

MDT in prisons and young offender institutions seeks to inform HMPPS on the prevalence of drug use through random testing. The key objective of MDT is to provide a means of identifying prisoners with ongoing drug problems and ensure they are offered the appropriate treatment, as well as providing evidence that can be used in prisons disciplinary procedures. MDT is continually reviewed to determine its effectiveness.

Data for the year up to March 2021, including August 2020, will not be quality assured, finalised and published until July 2021, so has not been included in this response. Caution should be taken in drawing conclusions about trends over the requested time period from the outcomes stated above since they are based on a relatively small number of tests in each prison each month, and will be subject to monthly variation.

We have included data on positive tests for traditional drugs only as well as for all drugs, which includes tests for Psychoactive Substances (PS), since the former is more reliable for making comparisons over this time period. This is because positive test results decreased in the 12 months ending March 2020, and to a lesser extent in previous year, and it is highly likely these decreases resulted from new compounds of PS entering into circulation in prisons which HMPPS did not have a legal basis to test for at that time. There were a small number of PS positive results in August 2019 but, because all of these were in samples that also tested positive for one or more traditional drugs, the numbers for 'all drugs' and 'traditional drugs only' are identical.

We are working with law enforcement and health partners across government to restrict the supply and reduce demand for illicit substances.

In April 2019, we published the National Prison Drugs Strategy and have gone further by investing £100 million to boost security to help stop drugs getting into jails. We continue to progress this work during the Covid-19 pandemic

The Government fully supports the Rt. Hon. Dame Cheryl Gillan's Prisons (Substance Testing) Bill, which seeks to futureproof drug testing programs in prisons and young offender institutions by adopting a broad definition of PS so that the drug testing framework can quickly respond to new drugs emerging on the market.

■ Prosecutions

Ellie Reeves:

[\[164587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cracked trials there were in each of the last six months.

Chris Philp:

We have different data sources for the number of cracked trials in the Crown Courts and magistrates' courts.

The table below shows the latest published data on the number of cracked trials in the Crown Courts. This data can be found on the [HMCTS management information page](#).

CRACKED TRIALS IN THE CROWN COURTS

August 20	September 20	October 20	November 20	December 20	January 21
177	168	271	386	267	349

The latest published data we have on the number of cracked trials in the magistrates' courts is set out in the table below. This data can be found on our [quarterly national statistics page](#).

CRACKED TRIALS IN THE MAGISTRATES' COURTS

Jan-March 20	April – June 20	July – Sept 20
8,807	615	4,315

■ Remote Hearings

Alex Cunningham:

[\[167197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he has taken to consult judges on the potential effect of proposals to expand the use of video court hearings in the Police, Crime, Courts and Sentencing Bill.

Chris Philp:

Live links were extended in the criminal courts under temporary provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 and have been used extensively during the pandemic. The feedback we have received from judges and other court users has helped inform the drafting of these replacement provisions in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Bill.

The use of live links in criminal courts is subject to judicial discretion and will only be used where the court is satisfied that it is in the interests of justice, having considered any representations from parties to the proceedings.

The process for considering live link applications in the criminal courts is set out in the Criminal Procedure Rules, Criminal Practice Directions, and any guidance from the Lord Chief Justice.

In non-criminal courts, and tribunals, the use of audio and video technology is not prescribed in legislation, but provision for those courts and tribunals, as well as for criminal courts, for ensuring open justice in cases conducted using such technology, is made in the Coronavirus Act 2020 and will be made permanent in the PCSC Bill.

■ Reoffenders: Sentencing

Alex Cunningham:

[\[167198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of cases offenders received less than the minimum sentence for (a) third-time convictions for domestic burglary and (b) second-time convictions for possession of a knife or offensive weapon in each of the last five years broken down by the age range of offenders.

Chris Philp:

Obtaining the necessary information to answer these questions involves accessing the secure Police National Computer (PNC) system, which my relevant officials are unable to do at this time due to the current national lockdown and the need to minimise non-essential travel.

I will write to the Hon Member in due course with the information requested, once my officials are able to safely access the PNC system, and will place a copy of my letter in the Library.

■ Sexual Offences: Criminal Proceedings

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[167218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that victims of rape, sexual abuse and sexual assault in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England receive support from an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor to help them navigate the criminal justice system.

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[167219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the (a) provision of and (b) access to (i) rape and sexual abuse and (ii) domestic violence support services in (A) Coventry, (B) the West Midlands and (C) England.

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[167220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what fiscal steps he is taking to support rape and sexual abuse support services in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[167221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the average waiting times for rape and sexual assault victims to access rape and sexual abuse support services in Coventry; and what (a) fiscal and (b) other steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for those services in Coventry.

Kit Malthouse:

Supporting victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse is an absolute priority for this Government. All survivors are entitled to support to help them cope and recover from their experiences.

The Ministry of Justice is only one of many funding sources for rape support services. The Ministry of Justice provide funding to 91 rape support services across England and Wales to provide independent, specialist support to female and male victims of sexual violence, including victims of child sexual abuse.

In 2020/21 rape support services received £12m (an uplift of 50% per funded centre from 2019/20) in recognition of the extra demand placed upon them and to reduce waiting lists. This is part of the £32m provided to these services for 2019/2022.

£871,054 has been provided in 2020/21 by the Ministry of Justice to four rape support services in West Midlands (Black Country Women's Aid, Birmingham Rape & Sexual Violence Project, Coventry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre and Freedom of Torture) including an extra **£269,614** provided during the pandemic. For 2019/22 these four centres will receive **£2,060,770** in total.

This is in addition to the **£4,485,802** provided to the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner as part of **£68m** allocated in 2020/21 to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) across England & Wales, to locally commission emotional and practical support services for victims of crime, including victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse.

In response to the pandemic the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner was provided with **£911,066** in 2020/21 to support local sexual violence and domestic abuse services.

This provided funding to 14 local domestic abuse and 3 sexual violence support services across the West Midlands. This included 3 services in Coventry.

In recognition of increased demand, we have extended the rape and sexual abuse fund for a further year (end March 2023) to provide the sector with greater stability and continue to work closely with them to monitor demand.

Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) have an important role to play in helping victims feel informed and supported at every stage of their recovery journey

and provide an important link between police, support services and criminal justice agencies. As part of their role ISVAs may also support victims when attending court and giving evidence. In 2020/21, **£3,709,253** has been invested by the Ministry of Justice for the recruitment of 123 additional ISVAs across England and Wales. Of this, **£165,561** was allocated to West Midlands to recruit an additional 7 ISVAs.

In recognition of the extra demand placed on services the Ministry of Justice also announced in February an extra £40m in 2021/22 to support victims:

- £20.7 million for local, community-based sexual violence and domestic abuse services, helping to reduce the amount of time survivors have to wait for support. Male specific services will see a 60% funding increase following a significant increase in demand for support from men and boys.
- £16 million to recruit more independent sexual violence and domestic abuse advisers – increasing their numbers by around 400 meaning more victims of all ages can access this vital support.
- £2 million for smaller specialist organisations helping BAME, LGBTQ+ or disabled victims.
- £1.3 million for remote and online services – allowing more victims to access support while at home. £800k of this will go to Finding Legal Options for Women Survivors (FLOWS), a digital tool that helps victims of domestic abuse to apply for emergency protection from the courts.

■ Women's Prisons: Costs

Sarah Champion:

[164487]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will publish the estimated cost of delivering the 500 new prison places for women announced on 23 January 2020.

Alex Chalk:

We have committed over £150 million to deliver 500 additional prison places across the women's estate. The design of the new accommodation is being developed to be trauma-informed and gender specific with improved outcomes for women. Our design principles include requirements around ensuring suitable visiting spaces are provided, greater in-cell communication options informed by the COVID learning, and in open designs, the potential inclusion of rooms to support overnight visits for mothers and their children (currently already delivered in two prisons within the women's estate). This substantial investment will also increase the number of single cells and availability of in-cell showers. In addition, these places will also allow more women to be held in open conditions, consequently providing greater opportunities for employment and education while completing their sentence.

This is not an 'either-or-approach' as we are also investing approximately £80 million in community drug treatment, £70 million in accommodation services, £2 million for women's centres and a further £2 million to support 38 grassroots organisations doing incredible work steering women away from the criminal justice system.

■ Young Offenders: Criminal Proceedings

Alex Cunningham:

[166404]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of trials for young adult defendants aged 18 to 25 years have taken place in (a) Magistrates courts and (b) Crown courts in each of the last five years.

Chris Philp:

The number of effective¹ trials in the Crown Court for young adult defendants aged 18-25 in the last five years is set out below. The information requested in relation to magistrates' courts trials for young adult defendants could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. This is because whilst the data held on the HMCTS management information systems contains manually collated data on trial volumes for adult and youth cases, it does not collect data for the specific banding of those aged between 18-25.

For trials in the Crown Court, where the main defendant is in the age group 18-25, the number of effective trials has consistently fallen over the time period from 4,804 trials between October 2015 and September 2016 down 71% to 1,380 trials in the year ending September 2020. This is in line with national figures for all age groups in the same time period where the number of effective trials fell 70% from 18,967 to 5,726.

As it is not possible to provide numbers of young adult trials for the magistrates' courts, it is therefore not possible to provide the proportion of Crown Court trials as a proportion of all effective trials for 18-25 year olds.

For the 18-25 age range, we would need to extract data on every hearing or disposal and calculate the age by using the date of birth and compare against the date of offence. This would allow us to manually calculate the number of 18-25 year olds as there is not a specific band for this .

EFFECTIVE CROWN COURT TRIALS ¹

Year	18 - 25 years old ³
Oct 2015 - Sep 2016	4,804
Oct 2016 - Sep 2017	4,498
Oct 2017 - Sep 2018	3,914
Oct 2018 - Sep 2019	3,143
Oct 2019 - Sep 2020	1,380 ²

1. A breakdown of the total number of trials listed during the reporting period indicated. Not all cases will go to trial, for the purposes of trial effectiveness we consider a 'trial' at the point of initial listing. A trial which goes ahead on the planned

date and occurs is then considered as 'effective'. A trial that is listed but does not go ahead is considered either cracked, ineffective or vacated as detailed in the supporting guidance document which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-court-statistics>.

2. Estimates for Oct 2019 - Sep 2020 exclude a small number of cases which have transitioned to the Common Platform system in the early adopter site (Derby Crown Court).
3. Age is calculated as the age of the main defendant at trial when the case was initially received.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ UK Trade with EU: Northern Ireland

Hilary Benn:

[\[166328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to his oral contributions of 10 March 2021, if he will set out the temporary operational measures that the Irish Government took in January 2021 in respect of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Mr Robin Walker:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: In January of this year, the Irish Government implemented a temporary easement for businesses experiencing difficulties in lodging entry summary declarations for roll on roll off goods movements.

The UK Government remains committed to meeting our obligations in the Protocol in the pragmatic and proportionate way intended - taking account of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in all its dimensions, North-South and East-West. It is common trade practice - adopted by countries internationally - to temporarily delay the implementation of certain obligations for sensible practical and operational reasons. The steps taken by the Government on 3 March were about taking additional time to adapt to new requirements.

TRANSPORT

■ Airports: Coronavirus

Zarah Sultana:

[\[166577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reduce person-to-person contact in airports to reduce the risk of covid-19 transmission.

Robert Courts:

The government has introduced a range of measures to help reduce the risk of transmission at airports as well as issuing clear guidance for both passengers and operators. Only essential travel that is permitted should be undertaken and passengers need to comply with all inbound and outbound passenger requirements.

When travelling, passengers should abide by current social distancing measures, wear masks and follow instructions where indicated, as per the Safer Transport guidance. Additionally, operators have been encouraged to introduce clear signage and one-way passenger flows where appropriate, to help passengers abide by the rules.

■ **Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Medical Examinations**

Drew Hendry:

[\[167265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the average waiting period for DVLA medical testing in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Rachel Maclean:

The length of time taken to deal with an application depends on the medical condition and if further information is required from medical professionals. Most decisions on whether a driving licence can be issued are made without the need for a medical examination. However, where an examination is necessary, waiting times are currently longer due to the current pressures on the NHS.

The number of driving licence applicants awaiting a medical examination fluctuates and is dependent on the availability of NHS appointments.

■ **Ferries: Freight**

Karl Turner:

[\[165512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Budget 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of freeports on the delivery of contracts with ferry operators recognised under the Freight Capacity Framework Agreement.

Robert Courts:

In the Budget speech on 3 March, the Chancellor announced that 8 Freeports would be created in 8 regions of England, as selected by the Secretary of State for the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government. Subject to agreeing the governance arrangements and successfully completing the business cases, these Freeports will begin operations from late 2021. The introduction of Freeports in late 2021 will not have an impact on GSFC routes as the current GSFC contracts run until 30 June 2021.

■ **Free Zones: Plymouth**

Luke Pollard:

[\[166552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential effect of the Plymouth Freeport on existing (a) road, (b) rail and (c) ports infrastructure.

Robert Courts:

I would like to congratulate the Plymouth and South Devon on its successful Freeport bid. My Department recognises that appropriate links will be vital to ensure the

success of the UK's newly established Freeports. My Department will consider the implications of the Freeport business cases for our transport networks and future infrastructure investment decisions.

Luke Pollard:

[\[166553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency on the practicalities of discharging Port State Control responsibilities within Plymouth Freeport.

Robert Courts:

The MCA does not envisage any difficulties in fulfilling their Port State Control responsibilities in the area.

■ **Free Zones: Yorkshire and the Humber**

Karl Turner:

[\[165508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Humber Freeport on the employment conditions of seafarers employed by P&O Ferries on ferry routes between Hull and the Netherlands.

Robert Courts:

The UK's eight newly established Freeports will be national hubs for international trade, innovation and commerce, regenerating communities across the UK.

Government will ensure that the UK's high standards with respect to workers' rights will not be compromised – like any other business in the UK.

Karl Turner:

[\[165509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Humber Freeport on seafarer jobs in (a) Hull and (b) the Humber region.

Karl Turner:

[\[165513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the introduction of freeports on seafarer employment in the roll-on roll-off ferries sector.

Robert Courts:

Freeports will bring together ports, local authorities, businesses and other key local stakeholders to achieve a common goal of shared prosperity and opportunity for their regions. This is likely to increase jobs in the Humber region, including seafarer jobs due to greater shipping activity.

Emma Hardy:

[\[165657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential effect of the Humber Freeport on existing (a) road, (b) rail and (b) ports infrastructure.

Robert Courts:

I would like to congratulate the Humber Freeport on its successful bid. My Department recognises that appropriate links will be vital to ensure the success of the UK's newly established Freeports. My Department will consider the implications of the Freeport business cases for our transport networks and future infrastructure investment decisions.

Motor Vehicles: Noise**Mark Pritchard:****[164406]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce noise pollution from motorised delivery vehicles in urban areas.

Rachel Maclean:

In 2015 the Department for Transport worked with other Government departments, the Freight Transport Association (now Logistics UK), and the Noise Abatement Society to produce guidance on good practice for quiet deliveries. The published guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/quiet-deliveries-demonstration-scheme>.

Regulations governing the maximum sound level of goods vehicles are harmonised at an international level and require new vehicles to demonstrate compliance before being placed on the market. Reductions in the maximum sound limit will apply to new vehicles being registered from July 2022 with a further reduction planned for July 2026.

Travel: Coronavirus**Chi Onwurah:****[167200]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2021 to Question 164471 on Travel: Coronavirus, whether foreign nationals visiting the UK are permitted to return home during the covid-19 outbreak; and whether that is an acceptable reason for travel for the purposes of travel declarations under covid-19 restrictions.

Robert Courts:

Under the domestic stay at home regulations, everyone in England must have a legally permitted reason for being outside the place they are living or staying whilst in England. Travelling to a home abroad is not necessarily a legally permitted reason, but there are circumstances (where it might be, these are set out on gov.uk).

Anyone departing from England to return to a home outside the Common Travel Area, must complete a travel declaration form, outlining the reason for being outside the place where they are living.

■ Wigan North Western Station**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[164602]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of proposals to reduce rail services to Wigan North Western.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Manchester Recovery Task Force, a cross-industry group comprising both the train operators and Network Rail, is consulting on its proposals aimed at solving, in the short-term, the performance problems of Manchester's complex railway network by amending the timetable structure.

The Task Force is made up of industry experts and appraises the work and provides direction in preparation for a decision by the Rail North Partnership following public consultation. Among the members of this taskforce is a representative from Transport for Greater Manchester who, alongside other members including Transport for the North, has contributed their local expertise to the development of the options. This work has also been supported by rail officers from across the north.

The merits of each of the options are continuing to be assessed and will be considered alongside the responses to the consultation before any decisions are made. Each of the options has been assessed using two established quantitative methods:

- a rail passenger demand model, which calculates the effects on passenger numbers of changes in proposed timetables; and
- a rail simulation model that calculates the expected amount of delay for any given timetable.

Further details about this are explained in the public consultation document below:

www.gov.uk/government/news/consultation-launched-to-improve-manchesters-railways

TREASURY**■ Beer: Excise Duties****Meg Hillier:****[164392]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what impact assessment he has undertaken on the proposed changes to Small Brewers' Relief.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Treasury keeps the effect of the relief, and potential reforms to it, under regular review. A technical consultation was launched in January to help inform the Government's review of the relief, and the consultation document provides further information on the Government's assessment of changes.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Julian Sturdy:

[\[165518\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department had made of the potential merits of extending the zero interest period for Bounce Back Loans from 12 months to 18 months to allow for all covid-19 lockdown restrictions to have been lifted before the first businesses must begin paying interest.

John Glen:

Under the Bounce Back Loan scheme, no repayments are due from the borrower for the first 12 months of the loan, giving businesses the breathing space they need during this difficult time. In addition, the Government covers the first 12 months of interest payments charged to the business by the lender.

In order to give businesses further support and flexibility in making their repayments, the Chancellor has announced “Pay as You Grow” (PAYG) options. Under Pay as You Grow, following the end of the 12-month payment-free period, businesses can pause their repayments for six months – the interest in this case will accrue to the borrower, for payment later. This means that businesses can opt not to make any repayments on their Bounce Back loan for up to 18 months after they received the loan. Borrowers will also have the option to move temporarily to interest-only payments for periods of up to six months (an option which they can use up to three times), and to extend the term of their loan from six to ten years, reducing their monthly payments by almost half.

Together, the 12-month payment holiday and interest-free period for borrowers, along with the PAYG options, form part of the Government’s unprecedented support package for businesses to protect jobs - including paying wages through the furlough schemes and self-employed support payments, generous grants, tax deferrals.

■ Business Banking Resolution Service

Christine Jardine:

[\[167295\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Business Banking Resolution Service (BBRS), if he will take steps to (a) encourage the adoption of the BBRS by banks to ensure accessibility, (b) resolve the outstanding terms of reference including eligibility and insolvency, (c) finalise and publish the BBRS process to deliver the service specified by the terms of reference, (d) demonstrate the independence of the BBRS and (e) enable the BBRS to resolve historical complaints.

John Glen:

The Government welcomes the Business Banking Resolution Service (BBRS), which launched on the 15th February 2021. The BBRS offers a free, independent service which is designed to settle unresolved complaints from larger SMEs with the seven participating banks, who make up the majority of the business banking market.

The former Chancellor, Philip Hammond wrote to the BBRS in 2018 to make clear that it is right the BBRS does not seek to re-open complaints that have already been

settled under a previous independent redress scheme, but instead offers an opportunity for resolution to SMEs who have not had anywhere independent to take their complaint.

Beyond that high-level guidance, I would like to stress the BBRS has been setup as an independent non-governmental body, and this independence is vital to its role. Its credibility, authority and value to SMEs would be undermined if it were possible for the Government to intervene in such matters.

■ Business: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[167222\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to support businesses affected by the covid-19 outbreak in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

Kemi Badenoch:

In response to the unparalleled economic shock created by COVID-19, the government quickly provided one of the most comprehensive and generous packages of economic support globally, adapting the help offered as the situation evolved. This has provided timely and targeted temporary support to individuals, families and businesses up and down the UK. At the Budget, the Chancellor announced an additional £65 billion of further measures to support the economy this year and next year, taking the total cumulative cost of the COVID-19 rescue package since the start of the pandemic to £352 billion.

Businesses in Coventry which are forced to close have been able to claim grants of up to £3,000 per month, based on their rateable value, through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed). They can also claim a one-off grant of up to £9,000, in addition to the monthly grant. Businesses which are not able to receive these grants for closed businesses may be able to benefit from the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). At Budget we announced an additional £425 million of ARG funding, taking the total to over £2 billion. It is up to each local authority to determine eligibility for this scheme based on their assessment of local economic need; however, we encourage local authorities to support businesses which have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, but which are ineligible for the other grant schemes. As of 17 January, the LRSG (Closed) had provided £573 million worth of grants and the ARG has provided £143 million worth of grants.

To support businesses through the next stage of the pandemic, the government is providing a Restart Grant of up to £18,000 to over 680,000 business premises, giving them the certainty that they need to plan ahead and safely relaunch trading over the coming months. To replace the Bounce Back Loans and Business Interruption Loans, the government is introducing a new Recovery Loan Scheme.

Businesses are also able to access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which was introduced to help employers whose operations have been affected by COVID-19 retain their employees and protect the UK economy. All businesses across

the UK can access the scheme, which will run until the end of September 2021, with employees currently receiving 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to £2,500 per month. As at 31 January, provisional statistics show that there were about 7,300 employments furloughed in the Coventry North East constituency and 20,200 in Coventry.

■ Capital Allowances

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[167193\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether investment in plant and machinery intended to be subsequently leased is eligible for the new 130 per cent super deduction capital allowance.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[167199\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether investment in technology and digital transformation is eligible for super-deduction.

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[167301\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the corporation tax super deduction on levels of fraud, abuse and tax avoidance relating to corporation tax.

Jesse Norman:

Expenditure on the provision of plant and machinery for leasing is not eligible for the new 130% super-deduction capital allowance, as is the case with other first year allowances such as Enhanced Capital Allowances in Enterprise Zones.

The super-deduction applies to investment on qualifying plant and machinery, including where that plant and machinery is for the purposes of digital transformation.

The Government takes fraud, abuse and tax avoidance very seriously, which is why the Government has taken repeated action at fiscal events to tackle fraud, abuse and avoidance in the tax system.

The super-deduction has been designed to safeguard against those risks. The legislation includes an anti-avoidance provision that applies to counteract arrangements which are contrived, abnormal or lacking a genuine commercial purpose. Further, there are existing rules that exclude connected party transactions from first-year allowances.

■ Child Benefit

Martyn Day:

[\[164540\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 155212, on Child Benefit, what estimate his Department has made of the number of basic rate taxpayers that will be affected by the High Income Child Benefit Charge in the 2021-22 tax year.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested could only be made available at disproportionate cost.

■ Corporation Tax

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[167194\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect the £50,000 threshold for the new small profits rate of corporation tax will have on incentives for corporations with profits just below that level to expand their worth.

Jesse Norman:

From April 2023 companies with small profits, those companies with profits of £50,000 or less, will continue to pay 19%. That means that c.70% of actively trading companies will be protected from a rate increase.

Marginal relief will be available for companies with profits between £50,000 and £250,000 ensuring that the effective rate of Corporation Tax increases gradually for companies with profits over £50,000, and that only about 10% of companies will pay the full main rate.

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[167298\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on economic activity and investment of the corporation tax taper from 2023-24 on profits between £50,000 and £250,000.

Jesse Norman:

The taper on profits between £50,000 and £250,000 is designed to ensure that the benefit of the small profits rate is targeted at the smallest businesses, while at the same time minimising economic distortions for those to which it applies.

Companies with profits within the taper will continue to be subject to an effective tax rate on profit that is below the main rate.

The economic impacts of the Corporation Tax rate increase are forecast by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility and contained within its Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[167300\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to prevent larger businesses dividing into several smaller businesses in order to be eligible for the new small profits rate of corporation tax from 2023-24.

Jesse Norman:

The lower profit limit, below which companies will be eligible for the small profits rate, will be reduced in proportion to the number of associated companies a company has. This is designed to prevent companies with profits over the small profits thresholds from being divided up in an attempt to take advantage of the lower rate. The upper profit limit will also be subject to this rule. Associated companies rules also applied under the previous small profits rate.

■ Corporation Tax: Coronavirus

Zarah Sultana:

[\[164652\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing corporation tax now for those companies with a higher profit margin during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

It is right that businesses share in the burden of restoring the public finances to a sustainable footing; that is why the Government announced an increase in the rate of Corporation Tax at Budget. The rate increase will not come into force until April 2023, by which time GDP is forecast to have recovered to its pre-pandemic level.

Companies that have made profits during the pandemic have continued to pay Corporation Tax on those profits as normal. Corporation Tax is charged in line with the level of a company's profits, so more profitable companies will have contributed more.

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[167299\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to offer a retention incentive to businesses who continue to employ furloughed workers following the withdrawal of the Job Retention Bonus.

Jesse Norman:

The objective of the Job Retention Bonus (JRB) was to incentivise employers to retain employees between November, when the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was due to end, and the end of January through a £1,000 bonus paid to the employer. However, the subsequent extension of the CJRS to April (now September) allowed employers to retain their staff during that period by covering 80% of the furloughed employees' wages. Given this further extension to the end of September, the policy intent of the JRB falls away.

The Government remains committed to redeploying a retention incentive at the appropriate time.

■ Events Industry: Insurance

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[166478\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a government-backed insurance scheme for festivals and events.

John Glen:

On 22nd February, the Prime Minister announced the Government's roadmap to cautiously ease lockdown restrictions in England, including an ambition to lift restrictions on large events in Step 4, subject to the outcome of the Events Research Programme.

Officials are considering the most appropriate way to support the events sector to safely reopen, informed by the findings of the research programme in the Spring.

■ Financial Conduct Authority: Disclosure of Information

David Mundell:

[\[165461\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to ensure that the (a) Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and (b) Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) (i) make consumers aware of FCA Comp rule 7.4.1, (ii) do not financially disadvantage consumers by not disclosing that rule and (iii) compensate consumers in the event that they are financially disadvantaged as a result of not disclosing that rule.

John Glen:

The Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) seeks to recover some or all of the cost of compensation from financial firms that have failed. This benefits both the levy payers that fund the FSCS, and claimants who have been already been paid compensation by the FSCS but still have uncompensated losses. Since the start of the 2015-16 financial year, the FSCS has recovered more than £280mn from failed firms.

The Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) Compensation Manual, which sets out the rules regarding the FSCS's duty to seek recoveries, is published and accessible to consumers on the FCA's website. The FSCS also publishes information for consumers about its approach to recoveries on its website.

■ Free Zones

Andy McDonald:

[\[167215\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will list the participants in each freeport announced in the Budget statement on 3 March 2021; and if he will publish the bid document for each.

Andy McDonald:

[\[167216\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will list the publicly-owned sea ports which are included within the eight freeports announced as part of Budget 2021.

Steve Barclay:

At Budget, the Chancellor announced 8 Freeports from 8 regions of England, as selected by the Secretary of State for the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government – this followed the fair, open and transparent assessment process outlined in the Bidding Prospectus. The locations are:

1. East Midlands Airport,
2. Felixstowe & Harwich (Freeport East),
3. Humber,
4. Liverpool City Region,
5. Plymouth and South Devon,

6. Solent,
7. Teesside,
8. Thames

The Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government will shortly publish more information on the selection of these Freeport locations according to the process laid out in the Prospectus.

■ Free Zones: National Insurance Contributions

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[164435\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment the Government has made of the potential effect on the distribution of wages in the labour market in freeports or their surrounding areas of having a relief on employer National Insurance Contributions for salaries up to £25,000.

Steve Barclay:

The National Insurance contribution relief will be key in supporting the government's objectives for the Freeports programme, which includes regeneration through job creation. However, the extent to which the relief will affect the distribution of wages will depend on employers and will vary depending on a number of circumstances, including the location of the Freeport tax site.

The Government will publish an assessment of the broader impact of this relief in a Tax Information and Impact Note when legislation is introduced.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[164436\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the proposed National Insurance Contributions relief for employers in freeports employing people on salaries below £25,000, what steps the Government will take to ensure it has the power to prevent access to that support for any firms found to be abusing that relief by manipulating their employment practices, for example by dismissing staff specifically to benefit from it; which enforcement body will exercise those oversight powers; and what resources and powers will be allocated to that body to ensure it is able to discharge that function adequately.

Steve Barclay:

The Government's commitment to combatting abusive tax practices, such as avoidance and evasion, has been a key consideration throughout the design of the Freeports tax offer.

On top of existing HMRC powers to detect and pursue those who abuse the system, the Government intends to legislate for anti-avoidance provisions where employers are found to abuse this relief.

■ Free Zones: Public Expenditure

Jonathan Edwards: [\[167182\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether there will be a 100 per cent Barnett consequential in respect of the £175 million provided for freeports in England.

Steve Barclay:

The Barnett formula will apply in the usual way in relation to funding provided to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to introduce Freeports in England.

There are ongoing discussions with the devolved administrations to establish at least one Freeport in each of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as soon as possible.

■ Free Zones: Wales

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[167273\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has undertaken an economic impact assessment of establishing a freeport in Wales.

Steve Barclay:

There is significant interest from the port sector in Wales, the UK Government stands ready to continue discussions with the Welsh Government to ensure the economic and regeneration opportunities Freeports can bring to Wales can be fully realised.

■ In Vitro Fertilisation: Import Duties

Marsha De Cordova: [\[164618\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of removing import tax on sperm and egg donations coming from the EU.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is currently reviewing a number of questions raised about the correct VAT treatment of the import of sperm and eggs into the UK.

■ National Infrastructure Bank

Ben Lake: [\[167288\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with the Development Bank of Wales ahead of the launch of the UK Infrastructure Bank.

Kemi Badenoch:

The new UK Infrastructure Bank will operate across the whole of the UK, working closely with public and private sectors to support infrastructure investment in every nation. Building strategic relationships with the devolved administrations, local authorities across the UK and relevant institutions such as the Development Bank of Wales, will be a priority for the new Bank. The UK Government will be engaging further with representatives from the devolved administrations and relevant

institutions in the next phase of the Bank's design, before the Bank is launched and begins operations later in the spring.

■ **National Infrastructure Bank: Staff**

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[167192\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the planned (a) FTE and (b) headcount staffing numbers will be for the new National Infrastructure Bank; and what share of that number will be based in Leeds.

Kemi Badenoch:

The UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB) is a new institution and will be headquartered in Leeds. The UKIB will be launched in interim form later in the Spring with the recruitment of the Bank's Chair currently underway. Recruitment for further roles and details of overall staffing levels will follow in due course.

■ **National Savings and Investments: Complaints**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[164666\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to investigate the level of customer complaints received by the NS&I in respect of attempting to withdraw funds in the financial year 2020-2021.

John Glen:

NS&I has seen exceptionally high customer demand since the Covid-19 outbreak, and this was amplified by a requirement for NS&I to raise additional funding from savers to support the Government's response to the pandemic.

In order to return customer service levels to the high standards NS&I is accustomed to, they have put a number of measures in place to improve its operational performance. These include expanding its UK contact centres by opening additional sites and recruiting additional staff to process customer enquiries. NS&I is working hard to return to delivering its usual high standard of customer service.

In January 2021, the Economic Secretary to the Treasury (EST), as the Minister responsible for NS&I, met with NS&I senior managers and its outsourced provider, to discuss their operational recovery plans and progress against their targets. The Treasury continues to support NS&I's recovery programme.

■ **National Savings and Investments: Interest Rates**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[164665\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on savers of NS&I's reduction in interest rates for savings.

John Glen:

NS&I must balance the interests of savers, taxpayers and the broader financial services sector. And decisions on interest rates will heavily depend on how NS&I is fairing against its Net Financing target for that financial year.

In July 2020, NS&I's Net Financing target for 2020-21 was revised from £6 billion (+/- £3 billion) to £35 billion (+/- £5 billion) to reflect the Government's funding requirements during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the first six months of 2020-21, NS&I had raised a total of £38.3 billion of Net Financing for the Government, so it was necessary to revise the interest rates offered on its products to reduce inflows.

It is important that HM Treasury takes into account taxpayer value considerations when making financing decisions. With gilt yields currently at low levels, government financing raised through NS&I is more expensive than that raised through gilt issuance.

■ National Savings and Investments: Standards

Navendu Mishra:

[164667]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the average time taken by NS&I to facilitate customer requests to transfer funds away from the NS&I; and what proportion of those requests fell outside NS&I's policy.

John Glen:

Approximately 90% of customer withdrawals from NS&I are made online or by telephone. The payments normally reach the customer's nominated bank account within two banking days after the day that NS&I has received the customer's instruction. This service performance is within NS&I's usual service level of two working days. Approximately 10% of customer withdrawals from NS&I are made by post. The payments normally reach the customer's nominated bank account within three banking days after the day that NS&I has received the customer's instruction.

Postal withdrawals from NS&I are currently taking longer to process than their normal timescale due to operational constraints caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. As of 9 March 2021, the proportion of customer withdrawals that fell outside NS&I's usual service level of two working days was approximately 10%. However, NS&I has prioritised these withdrawals and is currently processing straightforward cases by the fourth working day from receipt.

■ Off-payroll Working

Rob Roberts:

[167339]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on the potential merits of establishing an exemption process for freelance workers who will be subject to forthcoming IR35 legislation.

Jesse Norman:

The changes to the off-payroll working rules come into effect on 6 April 2021. The changes do not introduce a new tax liability. They ensure that the current rules, which have been in place since 2000, are applied correctly and complied with as originally intended.

The rules only apply to individuals who are working like employees under the current employment status tests, and do not apply to the self-employed. It is fair that two

individuals working in a similar way pay broadly the same tax and NICs, even if one of them works through their own company.

Establishing exemptions for a certain group of taxpayers, regardless of whether they are working like employees under existing employment status law, would undermine the key principle of the rules that individuals working in a similar way should pay a similar amount of tax.

■ Packaging: Taxation

Zarah Sultana:

[\[164650\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of publishing an exhaustive list of the items to be included in the Plastic Packaging Tax that will take effect from April 2022.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is currently in the early stages of implementing the tax via the primary legislation, which by its nature, only provides relatively high-level definitions as a foundation for the tax. As the Government moves to the next stage of implementing the tax, it will work with industry to develop regulations and guidance to provide clarity on how businesses determine the types of product that will be taxable.

■ Public Sector: Pay

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[164603\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of a pay freeze on the (a) retention and (b) recruitment of public sector workers.

Steve Barclay:

Covid-19 has had an unprecedented impact on the private sector labour market, with unemployment and redundancies rising, and those on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme seeing a significant fall in earnings. The public sector has been shielded from these effects.

Later this year, the independent Pay Review Bodies (PRB's) will publish evidence and commentary on recruitment and retention for ten of the largest public sector workforces including: armed forces, teachers, police officers, the National Crime Agency, prison officers, doctors and dentists, Agenda for Change NHS non-medical staff, the Judiciary, senior civil servants and senior military personnel.

The Government will reassess public sector pay policy ahead of the 2022/23 Annual Pay Round when the impact of Covid-19 on the wider labour market will be clearer.

Latest data shows that recruitment and retention in some of our largest workforces remains strong. We have recruited over 41,000 new trainee teachers this year – 23% more than last year – and postgraduate recruitment is at its highest level since 2010/11.

In the NHS joiner rates are higher than last year at 13.8%, and leaver rates have fallen since 2017/18. UCAS end of cycle data shows 25,100 student nurses enrolled

on courses in 2020/2, a 27% increase at English providers compared to the previous year.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Andrew Rosindell:

[164380]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme to include people who did not return a self-assessment form before 3 March 2021.

Jesse Norman:

At the Budget on 3 March, the Government announced the details of two further rounds of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). Alongside this, the Government announced that HMRC will now use 2019-20 tax returns to determine the eligibility and award for the SEISS, provided these returns were submitted by 2 March.

This means that more than 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 3.7 million.

The Government has already given self-employed people more than a month after the statutory deadline to submit their returns without penalty. HMRC waived late filing penalties until 28 February. Self-employed individuals who did not file by 31 January will, where possible, have received a notification from HMRC that their return was late.

Allowing returns submitted on or after the terms and criteria of the SEISS grants were announced on 3 March would create a significant incentive for fraud.

Drew Hendry:

[167261]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of an advance payment system for people who are (a) facing financial hardship and (b) struggling financially following payment of self-assessment tax returns prior to the issuing of the fourth grant under that scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The fourth Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant will be available to claim from late April and HMRC will contact potential claimants from mid-April. This is because HMRC will need to process the data received in millions of 2019/20 Self-Assessment returns prior to making payments.

In recognition of the immense pressures that many people are facing due the pandemic, the Government sought to provide a breathing space by waiving the penalty for the late filing of tax returns received after the 31 January statutory deadline and by 28 February. Self-Assessment returns filed by 2 March can now be taken into account for the fourth and fifth SEISS grant.

For those requiring further support, the SEISS continues to be just one element of a 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. In addition to this, they may also have access to other elements of the package, including Restart Grants, the Recovery Loan scheme, business rates relief, and other business support schemes.

■ Treasury: Publications

Chi Onwurah:

[\[164466\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on what date the erroneous graph on page 19 of the Build Back Better budget document was corrected to show the UK has a higher than average employment rate than the EU, G7 and OECD.

John Glen:

On 3rd March 2021, HMT published *Build Back Better: our plan for growth*, a publication setting out the government's plans to support economic growth through significant investment in infrastructure, skills and innovation.

Due to a technical error when creating the web accessible document, some of the charts generated for the original web accessible version either contained an error or did not match the layout of the charts in the main print version. The web accessible version was corrected on 4th March 2021 to ensure consistency with the print version.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Ethnic Groups: Equality

Sam Tarry:

[\[167342\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what progress the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities has made, including on their call for evidence on ethnic disparities and inequality in October 2020.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities' call for evidence closed on 30 November 2020 and the Commission aims to provide its full report to the Prime Minister shortly. The Commission also intends to publish the results of that call for evidence on gov.uk, following submission of its report.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Compensation****Navendu Mishra:****[164664]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what amount has been paid to claimants for compensation for distress in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Guy Opperman:

The Department makes consolatory payments, to acknowledge the non-financial impact of Department maladministration. Data is not differentiated by type. For example, payments can be made for: gross inconvenience, hardship, severe distress or gross embarrassment. The total number of consolatory payments, for maladministration, made to benefit claimants

are published in the [Department's Annual Report and Accounts](#). The information here shows only consolatory payments for maladministration. It also excludes payments to Child Maintenance Group customers as these are not benefit claimants.

Equivalent data for 2020/21 will be finalised at the end of the current reporting year.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Staff**Jonathan Reynolds:****[167195]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many additional staff her Department has employed during the covid-19 outbreak.

Guy Opperman:

As of Friday 5 March 2021, the Department of Work and Pensions has recruited 21,709 staff on permanent, temporary, fixed term and agency contracts and also people loaned from other Government Departments

Jonathan Reynolds:**[167196]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many additional staff her Department has employed on fixed-term contracts during the covid-19 outbreak; and if she will list when each of those contracts will end.

Guy Opperman:

Since 1 April 2020 we have recruited 11,400 people on fixed term contracts. Of those who have started since 1 April 2020, we have 10,642 employees who remain in the business. Their contract end dates are set out in the following table reflecting, the position as at 28 February 2021, which is a continuously changing picture, given that people are actively being extended and recruited, and we will also lose people naturally through turnover before their end dates are due.

Contract end dates	
Mar-21	2102*
Apr-21	417*
May-21	264*
Jun-21	130*
Jul-21	348*
Aug-21	82*
Sep-21	234
Oct-21	135
Nov-21	1523
Dec-21	766
Jan-22	1204
Feb-22	1327
Mar-22	16
Apr-22	1063
May-22	728
Jun-22	81
Jul-22	142
Aug-22	55
Sep-22	1
Oct-22	6
Nov-22	7
Dec-22	5
Jan-23	6
Total	10642

*Some contract end dates for people due to leave in these months are in the process of being extended.

■ Employment: Surveys

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[166493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department plans to publish in full the survey entitled, Sickness absence and health in the workplace: understanding employer behaviour and practice employers relating to workplace health following the publication of the interim report of that title in June 2019.

Justin Tomlinson:

In 2019, the Government consulted on ways to support and encourage employers to minimise the risk of ill-health related job loss among their employees in Health is Everyone's Business: proposals to reduce ill-health related job loss. The Government is considering the timing of the response in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic; we anticipate that a response will be available shortly. The response draws on evidence in the 'Sickness absence and health in the workplace' report; it is therefore our intention for the report to be published alongside the consultation response.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Seema Malhotra: [\[167207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many employers were participating in the kickstart scheme in each (a) constituency, (b) local authority and (c) each region and nation of the UK as at 8 March 2021.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to the answer given for PQ [165550](#)

■ National Insurance Contributions: Republic of Ireland

Marsha De Cordova: [\[164619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when the digital service for issuing National Insurance numbers will be able to be used by Irish nationals.

Guy Opperman:

The digital service to apply for National Insurance numbers (NINOs) requires a manual identity check, either by DWP or another Government Department. The service is currently available to applicants who have already been through an identity verification process by another Government Department, primarily the Home Office or the UK Passport Agency.

Residents of the Common Travel Area, such as Irish Nationals, are not required to seek permission to live and work in the UK, and therefore do not have their identity verified by another Government Department. This means that DWP need to confirm their identity at a face to face interview, prior to allocating a NINO.

This service is currently suspended, due to Covid19 restrictions. It will be made available when DWP face to face services resume, in line with the easing of Covid19 restrictions.

It is still possible to take up employment without a NINo. Irish nationals can evidence their [right to work](#) in the UK by providing their passport or National Identity card and right to work checks carried out by all employers do not include the provision of a NINo.

Marsha De Cordova:

[164620]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether there is an alternative arrangement in place for Irish nationals to obtain National Insurance numbers while face-to-face interviews are paused.

Guy Opperman:

It is still possible to take up employment without a NINo. Irish nationals can evidence their [right to work](#) in the UK by providing their passport or National Identity card and right to work checks carried out by all employers do not include the provision of a NINo.

■ Pension Credit: Hackney South and Shoreditch

Meg Hillier:

[167174]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make a comparative assessment of the level of pension credit uptake in Hackney South and Shoreditch in the financial years (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Guy Opperman:

It is not feasible to undertake this comparative assessment.

The latest estimates of Pension Credit take-up relate to the financial year 2018/19 and are representative of the GB population.

Estimates of take up of income related benefits can be found in the following publication: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-2018-to-2019>

■ Pension Credit: Publicity

Daisy Cooper:

[164625]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2021 to Question 157304 on Pension Credit: Publicity, how much the Government spent on promoting the uptake of pension credit in (a) 2017-18, (b) 2018-19 and (c) 2019-20.

Guy Opperman:

The Department uses a wide range of channels to reach potential recipients; this includes some 11 million uprating letters currently being sent to State Pension recipients, alongside work with the BBC on their mailings and support with and from a

range of other organisations. It is not feasible to undertake such an assessment with precision.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft:

[166490]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the level of digital exclusion experienced by disabled people accessing (a) universal credit, (b) personal independence payments, (c) attendance allowance, (d) disability living allowance for children and (e) new employment support allowance.

Justin Tomlinson:

DWP is continually reviewing and improving services and many of these are now 'digital-first', ensuring we make best use of technology to deliver a modern and effective welfare system which enables citizens to access services quickly and flexibly. This allows our colleagues to concentrate on those people who require additional support.

Although the Department offers support for claimants to use our digital services, we recognise that there are occasions where people are unable to access services online, for a range of reasons. As a result, we ensure that they can do so through alternative channels, such as by telephone or face-to-face in offices as well as providing documents in accessible format when requested. Throughout the pandemic, Jobcentre Plus offices have also remained open to support the most vulnerable claimants.

■ Social Security Benefits: Endometriosis

Daisy Cooper:

[166573]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the accessibility of (a) personal independence payment and (b) universal credit for people with endometriosis.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the Member to the answer I gave on 30 November 2020 to Question [UIN 120949](#).

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Charlotte Nichols:

[165689]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to provide a £20 per week uplift to legacy benefits in line with the £20 per week uplift provided to universal credit.

Will Quince:

There are no plans to extend the temporary Universal Credit uplift to legacy benefits, and Parliament has voted to bring an end to legacy benefits in Great Britain. Natural

migration to Universal Credit (UC) is required when a person needs to claim new support because of a change of circumstances.

Claimants on legacy benefits can voluntarily make a claim for UC if they believe that they will be better off. Claimants considering making a claim should check carefully their eligibility and entitlements under UC before applying, as legacy benefits will end when claimants submit their UC claim and they will not be able to return to them in the future. For this reason, prospective claimants are signposted to independent benefits calculators on GOV.UK. They can also get help through the government funded Help to Claim scheme as well as the Citizens Advice Bureau and Citizens Advice Scotland.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Coronavirus: Disability

Dame Diana Johnson:

[153163]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to finding by the Office of National Statistics that 60 per cent of deaths involving covid-19 between 24 January and 20 November 2020 were disabled people, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that disabled people are protected from covid-19 in the future.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 24 February 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Helen Whately:

We are protecting disabled people through a range of actions. We are advising people with specific health conditions, who are deemed to be clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19, to shield and providing direct support to the shielded population. Local councils are also providing support to people shielding. We are prioritising vaccinations for those who are most at risk and those who care for them, following the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Many disabled people received social care. The Adult Social Care Winter Plan sets out our support to social care through the winter, so people can continue to receive care and be protected whilst protecting people from COVID-19. This includes providing free personal protective equipment to care homes and domiciliary care providers.

~~The most recent monthly data from Skills for Care indicates that the vacancy rate of directly employed staff in social care has reduced to 6.9% in January 2021 from 8.0% in February 2020.~~

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ 2021-22 Ring Fenced Public Health Grant to Local Authorities

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care) (Jo Churchill): [\[HCWS850\]](#)

Today I am publishing the public health allocations to local authorities in England for 2021-22.

Funding for local government's health responsibilities is an essential complement to our plans to invest strongly in both the NHS and social care, and an important element of our commitment to focus on prevention of ill health.

Through the public health grant and the pilot of 100% retained business rate funding for local authorities in Greater Manchester, we are spending £3.324 billion on local authority public health in 2021-22. This includes baselining of local government funding for pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV.

The 2021-22 grant will continue to be subject to conditions, including a ring-fence requiring local authorities to use the grant exclusively for public health activity. This may include public health challenges arising directly or indirectly from Covid-19.

In addition to this baseline funding for public health, we have already announced £80m for local government funding of drug treatment as part of a wider crime package announced in January 2021, and over £70 million for weight management services through the NHS and local government.

Further, we are providing in total around £10 billion of support for local government in responding to COVID-19.

Full details of the public health grants to local authorities can be found on gov.uk and are attached. This information will be communicated to local authorities in a Local Authority Circular.

Attachments:

1. DHSC Allocations Circular 2021-22 [DHSC allocations circular 2021-22 (002).pdf]

HOME OFFICE

■ Concluding Part One of the Police and Crime Commissioner Review

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): [\[HCWS849\]](#)

I am pleased to set out to the House findings from the first part of our two-part Review into the role of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs).

The Government's manifesto committed to strengthening the accountability of PCCs and expanding their role. The public want to see a reduction in crime and PCCs are elected to

deliver on the people's priorities. Eight years on from their introduction, it is the right time to step back and consider how we can better ensure that the public can hold PCCs to account for the performance of their force.

In delivering the recommendations from Part One of the Review, we will make it easier for the public to make an informed decision about the record of their PCC at the ballot box by strengthening accountability and improving transparency. The recommendations set out below apply to PCCs and mayors with PCC functions.

Part One of our internal Review began in late July and collated views and evidence from stakeholders across policing, fire and local government as well as voluntary and community organisations. Through polling and focus groups the Review also took account of public views and opinions. We focussed on changes required to sharpen the model which, where possible, can be delivered ahead of the 2021 PCC elections.

On policing, the Home Office will bring forward a range of measures which will: strengthen PCC accountability; improve their transparency to the public; clarify the relationship between PCCs and Chief Constables; bring more consistency to the PCC role; raise professional standards; and improve the checks and balances currently in place.

The Review concluded there was more to be done to explain the role of PCCs and make their record on crime more transparent to the voting public, thus enhancing their accountability. To help achieve this:

- The Home Office will amend the Specified Information Order to require PCCs to provide a narrative on their force's performance against the Government's crime measures, and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) force performance reports. The Specified Information Order currently places a duty on PCCs to publish certain information within specified timeframes, to ensure the public have the information they need to hold their Commissioner to account at the ballot box.
- In line with the Government's manifesto position in favour of First Past the Post, which provides for strong and clear local accountability, and reflects that transferable voting systems were rejected by the British people in the 2011 nationwide referendum, the Home Office will work with the Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to change the voting system for all Combined Authority Mayors, the Mayor of London and PCCs to First Past the Post. This change will require primary legislation, which we will bring forward when Parliamentary time allows.

We concluded there are clear steps we can take to sharpen local accountability and ensure the framework guiding the relationship with Chief Constables is clarified:

- The Home Office will work with the College of Policing, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and National Police Chiefs' Council to build on the Accountability Guidance already in place, including in relation to the performance

management of Chief Constables, to help to promote and embed a positive relationship between Chief Constables and PCCs.

- The Home Office will consult on potential changes to the Policing Protocol Order 2011 to provide a 'brighter-line' on the boundaries of operational independence and reflect changes in the relationship between the parties to the Protocol which have taken place over time. The Protocol sets out how the policing governance relationships should work, including that of the Home Secretary, and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of PCCs, Chief Constables and Police and Crime Panels.
- The Home Office will also legislate to amend Section 38 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, to make the Chief Constable dismissal process more rigorous and transparent, by requiring a PCC to give the Chief Constable written notice (including grounds), as the first stage of the dismissal process; allowing for the Chief to provide HMCIC a response to those grounds; and introducing some form of time limit or review interval on a Chief Constable's suspension from office. The Home Office will also work with the College of Policing, NPCC and APCC to develop a framework for the use of independent mediation in appropriate circumstances.
- We will also seek to address the HMICFRS recommendations included in its 'Leading Lights' (September 2019) report, looking into the role of the College of Policing in the senior recruitment process. We will work with stakeholders to address the issues raised through this review in relation to fixed term appointments.
- To improve scrutiny, the Home Office will work with the Local Government Association (LGA) to develop a good governance training package for Police and Crime Panels.
- Part Two of the Review will also allow us to consider the role of the Independent Office of Police Complaints (IOPC) with respect to their handling of complaints made about the conduct of PCCs and their deputies.

The Review concluded more should be done to ensure that all PCCs adopt best practice and, given our later recommendations on fire, there is now a need to improve the resilience of the Office of the PCC:

- We recommend that the APCC works with the College of Policing to build on the policing Knowledge Hub to develop a 'what works' compendium for PCCs.
- The Home Office and APCC will jointly develop a comprehensive set of non-statutory guidance on the core elements of the PCC role. In conjunction, the APCC should deliver a formal programme of induction for new and returning PCCs post-elections in May 2021.
- To enhance resilience and capacity of PCCs, given our intention to expand the role into fire, the Home Office will bring forward legislation to mandate that each PCC must appoint a Deputy (of the same political party where the PCC represents a political party). In the interim, we will issue guidance to PCCs' offices requesting

that a formal succession plan is put into place to deal with vacancy and incapacitation, involving the Police and Crime Panel in those discussions as necessary. This will not apply to mayors with PCC functions, where legislation already mandates that a Deputy Mayor must be in place.

- To ensure PCCs have the levers they need to tackle crime, in Part Two of the Review, the Home Office will consult on giving a General Power of Competence (as afforded to Local Authorities) to all PCCs, to potentially help PCCs with the role they play in the wider crime and criminal justice landscape, and will consider partnership arrangements more fully.

On fire, the Government is clear that further reform of fire and rescue is required in order to respond to the recommendations from Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, the Kerslake Review and to build on the findings from Sir Thomas Winsor's State of Fire and Rescue Report. Our reform agenda will focus on three key areas: people; professionalism; and governance. Taken together, improvements in these areas will help deliver higher standards and greater consistency across fire and rescue services.

The Review kick-started our work on fire service governance and the findings signalled strong support for a directly elected individual taking on fire functions to help simplify and strengthen the governance of fire and rescue services across England. The Home Office will be launching a consultative White Paper on fire reform later this year. The White Paper will be used to set out our reform agenda in further detail and explore the Review proposals on fire governance which include:

- Consulting on whether to mandate the transfer of fire and rescue functions to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner model across England where boundaries are coterminous, unless there is an option to transfer fire governance directly to an elected Mayor.
- Consulting on how to address coterminosity challenges, including in the South West.
- Legislating to create operational independence for Chief Fire Officers and to clearly separate and delineate strategic and operational planning for fire and rescue.
- Considering options to clarify the legal entities within the PFCC model.

With regard to **mayoral devolution**, this Review has cemented our view that the join up of public safety functions under a combined authority mayor has the potential to offer wider levers to prevent crime. We will take steps to remove barriers to more mayors taking on these functions and will work with MHCLG to develop the forthcoming Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper with that longer-term trajectory in mind.

Part Two of the Review will begin after the 2021 elections and will allow us to consider further ways to strengthen and expand efforts to help cut crime. It will focus on longer-term reforms and the potential for wider efficiencies to be made, with a view to implementation ahead of the 2024 elections. Terms of reference for Part Two of the Review will be published in this House at the appropriate time.

I would like to put on record my thanks to our Advisory Group which supported the first part of this Review, comprising senior external stakeholders with expertise in the policing and fire sectors.