



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 1 April 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:32 P.M., 01 April 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Africa: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[173012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of early career researchers across the continent of Africa who will lose funding due to changes to the Future Leaders - African Independent Research (FLAIR) programme.

Amanda Solloway:

The challenging financial situation we face due to the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a temporary reduction in the UK's aid spending target from 0.7% of GNI to 0.5%. This means making difficult decisions when it comes to prioritising how we spend aid money to deliver the most impactful outcomes.

BEIS is working with its ODA Delivery Partners to manage the implementation of the 21/22 ODA settlement for R&D; this includes the Royal Society who run the FLAIR programme.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Peter Aldous:

[\[173000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to (a) tackle Bounce Back Loan Scheme fraud and (b) help ensure that loans under that scheme are provided to businesses based on (i) need, (ii) long-term viability and (iii) potential repayment ability.

Paul Scully:

As part of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLS) application process, lenders undertake fraud checks, including Know Your Customer and Anti Money Laundering checks as required. In addition, the application form is clear – any individual who knowingly provides false information is at risk of criminal prosecution. We are working across Departments, along with lenders and law enforcement agencies to tackle fraudulent abuse of the scheme.

The borrower is required to self-declare that they meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme and are required to state whether they understand the costs associated with the repayment of the loan. They must also confirm that they are able, and intend to, complete timely repayments in future. Furthermore, the maximum facility size for any business borrowing under BBLS is subject to affordability limits specific to each business.

■ Clothing: Manufacturing Industries

Claudia Webbe:

[\[173210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps his Department has taken to enable and support overseas workers who are victims of corporate harm in the supply chain of UK fashion brands to access remedy via UK courts.

Paul Scully:

Whether an overseas worker would be able to access remedy against a UK company in the courts of England and Wales or an employment tribunal would depend on a number of different factors, including whether the court or tribunal has territorial jurisdiction, the nature of the employment relationship, and what right the claimant is asserting under UK law. This would be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The UK government has an extensive history of funding organisations such as the Ethical Trading Initiative who proactively support worker representation, freedom of association and collective bargaining. This support has led to direct remediation of labour rights violations for vulnerable workers, including dismissal for joining a union.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[173211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to establish a judge-led public inquiry into Leicester's garment industry.

Paul Scully:

We are engaging with the sector to understand the systemic issues that lead to non-compliance and what measures could be used to tackle them. I have met with the British Retail Consortium to discuss the issues in the sector and will be holding a roundtable with their members to further discuss potential solutions. We also look forward to seeing the outcomes of work between the enforcement agencies and retailers as part of the work of the Apparel and General Merchandise Public/Private Protocol, a partnership between the enforcement agencies and industry partners, including NGOs, sector bodies and brands, aimed at tackling labour exploitation in the garment industry.

■ Companies: Human Rights

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[172041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of creating a whitelist and blacklist of companies that do and do not meet their obligations to uphold human rights throughout their supply chains.

Paul Scully:

BEIS thanks the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee for its report on 'Uyghur forced labour in Xinjiang and UK value chains', published on 17 March 2021. The Government takes very seriously the concerns that the report

highlights. On Tuesday 22 March, the UK Government, alongside the EU, US and Canada, placed sanctions on four Chinese officials and one public entity that are responsible for the egregious human rights violations taking place in Xinjiang. We have backed up our international action by robust domestic measures that help ensure that British businesses are not complicit in human rights violations in Xinjiang. The Government will formally respond to the report and its recommendations by 17 May 2021.

■ Coronavirus: Research

Sir George Howarth:

[\[171513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of improving collaboration between Government, universities and the private sector on science and technology in the context of the experience of developing new covid-19 vaccines.

Amanda Solloway:

The Vaccines Taskforce has coordinated the collective efforts of government, academia, industry and healthcare to find successful and effective vaccines. The Government has secured early access to 457 million vaccines doses through agreements with eight separate vaccine developers.

As a result, the UK was the first country in the world to procure, authorise and start a vaccination programme using the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, and shortly followed with the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine. Due to our swift and decisive action, as of 18 March over 26.2 million individuals have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

In addition to this, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) works in close collaboration with others to build a thriving, inclusive research and innovation system that connects discovery to prosperity and public good. UKRI bring together nine organisations with great depth and breadth of expertise, allowing government to connect research communities, institutions, businesses and wider society, in the UK and around the world. This combination enables government to work across the whole research and innovation system, informed by our networks and expertise.

■ Debt Relief Orders

Paul Maynard:

[\[172963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many Debt Relief Order applications have been (a) accepted and (b) rejected by the Insolvency Service in each year since 2015.

Paul Scully:

The table below provides a summary of Debt Relief Order (DRO) applications that have been accepted and rejected in each financial year since 2015/16, as of 23rd March 2021.

Accepted DRO applications can later be revoked. Revocation of a DRO occurs where information subsequently comes to light that the individual:

- did not qualify for a DRO at the time the order was made.
- no longer qualified for a DRO during the one-year moratorium period.

DRO applications, rejections and revocations

1st April 2015 to 23rd March 2021

YEAR	DRO APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED	DRO APPLICATIONS REJECTED	DRO APPLICATIONS REVOKED
2015/16	24,922	96	301
2016/17	25,593	82	275
2017/18	24,969	66	212
2018/19	28,085	86	251
2019/20	27,434	62	290
2020/21 to date	17,265	49	266

Revoked DROs are presented in the table based on their revocation date which may not be the same period in which the application was accepted.

The Insolvency Service's published DRO statistics exclude all accepted DROs that have later been revoked. The Insolvency Service's latest National Statistics publication on DROs can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individual-insolvency-statistics-october-to-december-2020>.

Paul Maynard:

[172964]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the unit cost incurred by the Insolvency Service is to process an application for a Debt Relief Order.

Paul Scully:

The unit cost for processing Debt Relief Order applications varies according to case volumes in any given financial year due to the costs being a mix of fixed and variable costs.

Using the costs for the financial year 2019/2020 and the costs for the current financial year to the end of February, the average unit cost of a Debt Relief Order application is £88.81

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Iron and Steel**Lucy Powell:**[\[173037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the level of UK-produced steel procured by his Department and associated departmental public bodies and agencies in 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government is working with the steel industry, the unions and devolved administrations to support the UK steel sector to develop a long-term sustainable future. We are working hard to make sure that UK producers of steel have the best possible chance of competing for and winning contracts across all Government procurement.

BEIS collates and publishes annually information on how much steel is purchased for Government's major infrastructure projects in the previous financial year, including what proportion is UK-produced.

We have collated the 2019/20 data and expect to publish later this year. We will start collating the data on UK steel procured in 2020/21 in due course.

■ Employment: Domestic Abuse**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[173193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to encourage businesses in (a) Wakefield constituency and (b) West Yorkshire to sign the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse.

Paul Scully:

As recognised in our report from January this year, employers can play a key role in supporting their employees if they are victims of Domestic Abuse, including working with other employers to break the silence on domestic abuse. I am proud to promote membership of the Employers Initiative on Domestic Abuse to employers in Wakefield, West Yorkshire and all across the country. I have recently done this through an open letter to employers. I welcome the support and interest from my Hon. Friend on this important agenda, and hope that he will continue to encourage businesses in his local area to take action.

■ Energy Supply**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[173202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that utility companies have provided support to people on the Priority Services Register during the covid-19 outbreak.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) works closely with electricity and gas companies, the regulator Ofgem and other stakeholders to

ensure that the appropriate measures are in place to protect customers, especially the most vulnerable.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, electricity and gas network operators reviewed and modified their working practices to comply with the Safer Working Guidance published by the Government. They also carried out targeted engagement with their most vulnerable customers to update them on changes to processes, and provide assurance that essential services remain available.

Additionally, the Department secured a voluntary agreement with energy companies in March 2020 to support all households impacted by Covid-19, requiring suppliers to support those struggling with their energy bills and to take action to keep them on supply. This is available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-agrees-measures-with-energy-industry-to-support-vulnerable-people-through-covid-19>.

■ **Energy Supply: Wakefield**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[173201]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people are registered on the Priority Services Register in Wakefield constituency.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Electricity network operators are obliged to maintain a Priority Services Register (PSR) to ensure the correct support is given to the most vulnerable customers. Each network operator maintains its own register and shares this information with energy suppliers.

Northern Power Grid, the network operator responsible for operating and maintaining the electricity distribution network in North East England, has 27,709 properties on the PSR within the postcodes covered by the Wakefield constituency.

■ **Fossil Fuels: Exploration**

Sammy Wilson:

[172954]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has plans to ban the issue new oil and gas exploration licences; and what impact assessment he has carried out on the potential merits of a ban on the issuance of new licences.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Department has conducted a review into the future of offshore oil and gas licensing, which has concluded that a new climate compatibility checkpoint will be introduced into the regime. This will help ensure that any future licenses are only awarded on the basis that they are aligned with the government's broad climate change ambitions, including the UK's target of reaching net zero by 2050. I refer the Hon. Member to the Written Ministerial Statement made by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 24th March 2021 ([Official Report, HCWS879](#)), announcing the implementation of a new checkpoint into the licensing round process.

As we move towards net-zero, oil and gas will play a smaller role in meeting UK energy demand. However, it will continue to play an important one. The independent Climate Change Committee has recognised the ongoing demand for oil and natural gas, including it in all scenarios it proposed for how the UK meets its target for achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

A climate compatibility checkpoint will allow for an orderly transition, underpinned by oil and gas, while the sector continues to bear down on its production emissions, and pivots to support the energy transition.

■ Free Zones

Margaret Ferrier: [\[174146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the British Ceramic Confederation on the effect of Government policy on freeports on UK ceramic manufacturing.

Nadhim Zahawi:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has met with the British Ceramics Confederation (BCC) on a number of occasions and discussed a range of issues relevant to the ceramics sector.

My Noble Friend Lord Grimstone has met with the BCC on 3 occasions since January. The most recent meeting was an Industry Roundtable on 8 March where EU Exit, COVID-19 and Net Zero were all discussed.

Freeports were not raised in these meetings. The Government continues to engage on topics the industry deems to be of interest.

■ Greensill: Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme

Pat McFadden: [\[172948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will list the amount and recipient of each loan made by Greensill Capital under the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

Details of facilities made available under the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme will be published where required via the European Commission's Transparency Aid Module.

Pat McFadden: [\[172950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when Greensill Capital became an accredited lender under the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

Greensill Capital was approved by the British Business Bank in June last year to provide finance through the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Pat McFadden:

[\[172951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether Greensill Capital is still an accredited lender under the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

While the British Business Bank looks into Greensill's position, it is not able to originate new lending that benefits from a Government guarantee.

■ Hallmarking

Sir John Hayes:

[\[172877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to develop a UK hallmark.

Paul Scully:

The UK already has four unique and internationally-recognised hallmarks representing the four UK Assay Offices: London, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Sheffield.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Alexander Stafford:

[\[174346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reasons there will be a requirement when hospitality businesses reopen as covid-19 lockdown measures are eased that food and drinks must be ordered when seated in licensed premises serving alcohol in indoor and outdoor settings whereas in premises not serving alcohol customers will be able to order at the counter.

Paul Scully:

As set out in 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021', the step-by-step plan to ease restrictions in England published on 22 February, customers in hospitality premises serving alcohol permitted to open at steps 1-3 will be required to order, eat and drink when seated ('table service'). This is to reduce the risk of transmission. Social distancing restrictions, including those affecting the hospitality sector, will be reviewed ahead of step 4.

■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Caroline Lucas:

[\[174077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support demonstration trials of hydrogen-based steelmaking as part of the commitment to near-zero steelmaking by 2035.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government recognises the importance of research and development in helping to transform the steel sector so that it can play a vital role in developing a cleaner, greener economy in the UK.

The Government has announced the £250m Clean Steel Fund to help the sector transition to lower carbon iron and steel production, and this could potentially include supporting hydrogen-based steelmaking. It is also providing up to £66m as part of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, to help key foundation industries, such as steel, develop innovative technology to reduce energy and resource use.

The Government also plans to establish a Net Zero Hydrogen Fund (previously Low Carbon Hydrogen Production Fund): with £240m of capital co-investment out to 2024/25. This will support at-scale hydrogen production projects, allowing steel producers the potential to access to secure supplies of lower cost hydrogen.

More broadly the £1bn Net Zero Innovation Portfolio provides funding for low carbon technologies and systems to support decarbonising our power, homes and industry as set out in the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution.

■ Lime: EU Emissions Trading Scheme**Andrew Percy:**[\[172969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of (a) the impact on the UK lime industry of adopting the EU ETS Phase IV benchmark for lime, (b) the applicability and effectiveness of that EU benchmark for the UK lime industry, and (c) whether carbon reduction to meet that benchmark is achievable with currently available technology.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As stated in the Government Response to the Consultation on The Future of UK Carbon Pricing, initially the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS) will use Phase IV EU ETS benchmarks. This ensures continuity for participants for the 2021 launch, ensures that benchmarks are based on sufficiently broad sets of data, and ensures free allocation is awarded on a comparable basis to EU counterparts.

As part of the Free Allocation Review, we will be looking at possible future changes to benchmarks used within the UK ETS. The Review will consider which benchmarks could be best suited for the UK ETS.

A call for evidence was launched on 17 March as part of the review and is currently live.

■ Lime: UK Emissions Trading Scheme**Andrew Percy:**[\[172970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will (a) bring forward the review of the UK ETS benchmark for lime production and (b) instruct that the benchmark be based on plants in the UK.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As stated in the Government Response to the Consultation on The Future of UK Carbon Pricing, as part of the Free Allocation Review, we will be looking at possible future changes to benchmarks used within the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS). The review will consider which benchmarks could be best suited for the UK ETS. A call for evidence was launched on 17 March as part of the review and is currently live.

Members: Correspondence**Ms Harriet Harman:**[\[172848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to reply to the joint letter from the Rt hon. Members for Camberwell and Peckham, and Romsey and Southampton North, sent electronically on 4 February 2021, on a timetable for the Government's proposed Employment Bill.

Paul Scully:

I wrote to the Rt. Hon. Members on 10 March outlining the Government's position on the Employment Bill, which will be brought forward when Parliamentary time allows.

Overseas Workers: EU Countries**Sir George Howarth:**[\[172892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress has been made on agreeing to new visa arrangements, whether bilaterally or with individual EU states, for UK residents who carry out short-term contracts in the EU.

Paul Scully:

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) is the basis of our trading relations with the EU, and this is not going to be re-negotiated. Commitments in the TCA provide certainty and clarity for those who travel to another country temporarily to do business. For example, the TCA guarantees market access to key economic sectors, and eases some burdens on business travellers, such as: removing the need for work permits for some short-term trips and reducing the number of economic needs tests a country could impose to block access to exporters. They also ensure that the UK and EU Member States have a minimum standard for how business travellers and service providers should be treated when working abroad through non-discrimination clauses.

The end of freedom of movement between the UK and the EU will inevitably have some consequences for cross-border business travel, and we are engaging regularly with businesses to help them understand the new requirements for travel to the EU. We have published guidance on GOV.UK to help those intending to travel to the EU, EEA and Switzerland for work or other business purposes. The Government will continue to enhance this guidance and to engage with our embassies to better understand the requirements in Member States, on behalf of UK businesses.

We respect the right of individual Member States to determine their own immigration policies. Here in the UK, we have adopted a global immigration system that treats EU and non-EU citizens equally.

■ **Products: Internet**

Mike Amesbury: [174255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of strengthening consumer protections in respect of purchases on online marketplaces that are dispatched from within the UK but are serviced by overseas sellers that operate outside of UK law.

Paul Scully:

The UK has a robust legislative framework to protect consumers. All businesses targeting UK consumers, wherever they may be located, must comply with this legislative framework.

Consumers should report any problems to the Citizens Advice consumer service on 0808 223 1133, www.citizensadvice.org/. The helpline offers free advice to consumers on their rights and can refer on complaints to Trading Standards for appropriate enforcement action.

■ **Redundancy**

Stuart C McDonald: [174149]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the number of redundancies made from a pool of one; and what assessment he has made of whether such procedures are being operated fairly.

Paul Scully:

Employers are only required to notify my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State if they are proposing making more than 20 people redundant. However, the Office for National Statistics produce detailed statistics on redundancies by industry and individual characteristics.

There are laws in place to ensure that any redundancy process should be fair and reasonable with appropriate equalities considerations. Employees with the necessary qualifying service who believe that they have been unfairly selected for redundancy, or that the redundancy was unfair in some other way, can complain to an employment tribunal who will make an assessment. The Government publishes quarterly tribunal statistics, including on unfair dismissal and discrimination claims.

■ Regional Planning and Development

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[173059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which sectors (a) his Department and (b) HM Treasury plan to consider in the development of Sector Visions as outlined in the Plan for Growth.

Nadhim Zahawi:

As set out in 'Build Back Better: our plan for growth', over the next 12 months the Government will work to develop visions for high growth sectors that will help shape the UK's future and build on our existing competitive advantage and strengths in innovation. The specific sectors will be set out in the coming months.

■ Restart Grant Scheme: West Yorkshire

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[173195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to promote the Coronavirus Restart Grant to eligible businesses based in (a) Wakefield and (b) West Yorkshire.

Paul Scully:

Guidance for the Restart Grant scheme was published on the 17th March for both Local Authorities and businesses. This guidance sets out the funding and eligibility criteria for businesses.

The Government is working closely with Local Authorities to ensure that Restart Grant schemes are set up and operational for April.

■ Tidal Power

Bob Seely:

[\[172115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the planned timescale is for the auction process for tidal wave energy; and when the parameters for that auction process will be published.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced through the 10 Point Plan, the next Contracts for Difference (CfD) allocation round will open in late 2021. This is set to be our biggest auction yet, with the aim of securing up to double the renewable electricity capacity of previous rounds.

We remain on course with this timetable and plan to publish draft auction parameters roughly five months ahead of round opening, with final parameters set just before round opening. These parameters will cover all technologies eligible to compete in this auction, including wave and tidal energy.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus**Caroline Lucas:****[172966]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of restricting wedding ceremonies to places of places of worship and some public buildings during the covid-19 outbreak from 12 April 2021 on (a) cancellation and postponement rates and (b) jobs throughout the supply chain.

Paul Scully:

Wedding or civil partnership ceremonies can take place in licensed venues that are not expressly required to close under the COVID-19 Regulations. From Step 2, which will be no earlier than 12 April, ceremonies may also take place in venues which are permitted to open for the purposes of providing unrestricted services. This includes any purpose-built wedding venue where that is its sole purpose, and it is not also a hospitality venue or visitor attraction.

Further information can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships.

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

Dr Lisa Cameron:**[173068]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with representatives of the UK Weddings Taskforce on the potential (a) job losses in the wedding industry and (b) effect on women working in that industry of its operation at a restricted capacity until 21 June 2021 following the Government's announcement of the covid-19 roadmap.

Paul Scully:

I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce, established to represent all parts of the UK Weddings sector, to understand the impact on jobs and businesses. We regularly discuss the sector's financial position and the companies' preparations for reopening, in line with the Government's "Covid-19 Response – Spring 2021" roadmap.

■ Weddings: Females**Dr Lisa Cameron:****[173069]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions officials in his Department have had with women working in the wedding sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce, established to represent all parts of the UK Weddings sector, to understand the impact on jobs and businesses, including on women who work in the sector.

CABINET OFFICE**■ 10 Downing Street: Iron and Steel****Jessica Morden:****[169810]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what records his Department holds on the use of UK-produced steel in the construction of the briefing room in 10 Downing Street.

Julia Lopez:

A briefing room has not been constructed in 10 Downing Street, therefore we do not hold the information requested. The Government is establishing facilities within 9 Downing Street which will be used for daily broadcasting by a number of news organisations, therefore I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to [PQ 169917](#) on 22 March 2021.

■ Cabinet Office: Iron and Steel**Lucy Powell:****[173038]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the level of UK-produced steel procured by his Department and associated departmental public bodies and agencies in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Lucy Powell:**[173050]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the level of UK-produced steel procured by the Prime Minister's office and associated departmental public bodies and agencies in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Julia Lopez:

There have been no estimates made of the level of UK produced steel procured by GPA on behalf of the Cabinet Office Estates in 2019-20 or 2020-21. At present most steel GPA sources is part of the construction base build of properties under leases and outside of the scope of the procurement rules.

■ Caravan Sites and Holiday Accommodation: Coronavirus**Sir Christopher Chope:****[171492]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to Step two of the Government's guidance, Covid-19 Response-Spring 2021, published on 22 February 2021, whether touring caravans and motor homes will be allowed to access supplies of fresh water and waste disposal facilities at camp sites

during that stage; whether self-contained holiday accommodation with more than one bedroom can be occupied by members of two households during that stage; and what assessment he made of the relative risk posed to public health arising from those different options.

Penny Mordaunt:

Self contained accommodation is defined as accommodation in which facilities (kitchens, sleeping areas, and indoor lobbies, lifts, staircases, and internal corridors for entry and exit), are exclusive to a single households/support bubbles.

Self-contained accommodation can open at Step 2, not before 12 April. Campsites and caravan parks may also open at Step 2 provided that the only shared facilities used by guests are washing facilities, toilets, water points and waste disposal points. Where it is reasonably possible to do so, access to bathing facilities and water points should be operated on a rota basis as was previously the case last summer.

The scientific evidence shows that opening too early or too quickly risks a further lockdown. Therefore, we committed to a phased reopening of accommodation prioritising settings that are self contained to allow individual households (including support bubbles where eligible) to visit these settings at Step 2 whilst reducing the risk of household mixing.

■ **Coronavirus: Death**

Bill Esterson: [\[165515\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Prime Minister's oral contribution on 15 July 2020, Official Report, column 1514, what progress has been made to establish the format of a potential inquiry into the Government's handling of the covid-19 outbreak.

Bill Esterson: [\[165516\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Prime Minister's oral contribution on 15 July 2020, Official Report, column 1514, what progress has been made to identify the leadership of the inquiry into the Government's handling of the covid-19 outbreak.

Bill Esterson: [\[165517\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Prime Minister's oral contribution on 15 July 2020, Official Report, column 1514, what progress has been made to establish a start date for an inquiry into the Government's handling of the covid-19 outbreak.

Julia Lopez:

COVID-19 is the biggest challenge the UK, together with nations around the world, has faced in decades. Throughout the pandemic, we have consistently adapted our response as we have learnt more about the virus and how best to tackle it. As [stated](#) by the Prime Minister on 15 July 2020 'we will seek to learn the lessons of the

pandemic in the future, and certainly we will have an independent inquiry into what happened.' Any further updates will be announced in the usual way.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Martyn Day:

[\[173093\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's timescale is for introducing a covid-19 vaccine certificate scheme.

Martyn Day:

[\[173094\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Government has for a covid-19 vaccine certificate scheme that will be accessible in (a) online and (b) offline formats.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the hon. Member to the previous response provided in [PQ171522](#).

■ **Elections: Proof of Identity**

Cat Smith:

[\[174154\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the results of the research carried out by Ipsos Mori for the Cabinet Office under the contract entitled Provision of Research for ID Pilots Survey, that had a start date of 5 March 2019.

Chloe Smith:

The results of the Ipsos Mori research conducted in 2019 were published alongside the Cabinet Office evaluation of the 2019 pilots:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-voter-id-pilots-2019>

■ **Free Zones**

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[172072\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to make further funds available through the Ports Infrastructure Fund in the context of the completion of Freeport designation in England.

Julia Lopez:

The allocation of the Port Infrastructure Fund was announced on 15 December 2020. This funding provides assistance to the building of infrastructure to better facilitate the flow of trade into the UK from the EU. It is separate funding from the new Freeports which will create new national hubs for trade, innovation and commerce.

■ Gender Based Violence: Victim Support Schemes

Caroline Lucas:

[\[172053\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department is taking steps to remove specialist Violence Against Women and Girls services from procurement rules; and if he will make a statement.

Julia Lopez:

The overarching principle in all public procurement is to secure the best value for money for the taxpayer. The Green Paper proposals rightly put value for money at the heart of the new approach for services that are put out to tender. However there is no requirement in the procurement rules for public services to be outsourced.

Where grants are appropriately used to fund these types of specialist provision, procurement rules do not apply: grants are subject to public law and internal government standards, to ensure that the provision is effective and value for money is achieved.

■ Government Departments: Procurement

Fleur Anderson:

[\[174286\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to incorporate workplace rights and protections into Government procurement policy.

Julia Lopez:

Regulation 32 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 sets out the grounds in which contracting authorities can procure goods, services and works with extreme urgency in exceptional circumstances. In our recently published Green Paper, we have set out our proposals to clarify these rules, learning from the experience in the pandemic.

The process of implementing the Boardman recommendations began immediately, and the programme is being assured by the Cabinet Office Audit and Risk Committee. We committed to provide an update on implementation six months after publication.

All G-Cloud suppliers must publicly show their security certifications, standards and approach to personnel security on the Digital Marketplace. Suppliers must also maintain physical and IT security that follows good industry practice to ensure there is no unauthorised access to any confidential information and data. Along with this, suppliers must inform Crown Commercial Service of any data breaches within 48 hours and Crown Commercial Service has the power to undertake security audits of suppliers.

Transforming Government Procurement will make it easier to take into account issues relating to workplace rights and protections through aligning the value for money definition with that of the Green Book, and removing in certain circumstances the need for wider policy considerations to be linked to the subject matter of the contract.

■ Heart Diseases: Death**Alexander Stafford:**[\[174342\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people under the age of 39 died from sudden cardiac death in England in (a) 2019 and (b) 2020.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to PQ174342 [UKSA's final response to PQ174342.pdf]

■ Local Government: Elections**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[173203\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Written Statement of 8 February 2021, Local Elections, HCWS773, how much of the £92 million of government grant funding that will be provided to local authorities for the local elections in 2021 will be allocated to (a) Wakefield Council and (b) other local authorities in West Yorkshire.

Chloe Smith:

The Government will now make available an increased estimated total of £95 million to support the running of the May 2021 elections. Of this, £15 million will be paid to local authorities in the form of additional funding grants to support the delivery of the local elections in May, given the additional costs associated with COVID-19 precautions that will be incurred. The grant funding allocations for the five local authorities in the West Yorkshire area are listed below. These allocations reflect the particular circumstances of each local authority area and the level of poll combination expected on 6 May.

LOCAL AUTHORITY NAME	FUNDING ALLOCATION
Bradford	£205,779
Calderdale	£103,443
Kirklees	£175,995
Leeds	£295,271
Wakefield	£145,910

The remainder of the £95 million is to fund the conduct of the Police and Crime Commissioner elections and will be paid directly to Returning Officers in line with statutory requirements.

■ Memorial 2007**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[173123\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his oral contribution of 12 November 2020, Official report, column 1047, what steps he has taken to meet representatives of the slavery memorial campaign.

Michael Gove:

I am grateful to the hon. Member for raising these issues in the House. The UK deplores the human suffering caused by slavery and the slave trade. They are among the most dishonourable and abhorrent chapters in the history of humanity. I remain eager to meet to discuss this important work when time allows.

■ Ministers: Codes of Practice**Sir George Howarth:**[\[172894\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent representations he has received on the adequacy of the Ministerial Code.

Chloe Smith:

The Cabinet Office receives correspondence on a broad range of subjects. Responsibility for the Ministerial Code rests with the Prime Minister.

■ Ministers: Members' Interests**Chris Bryant:**[\[172909\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans for the list of ministers' interests, last updated in July 2020, to be updated.

Chloe Smith:

Since the first List of Ministers' Interests was published in 2009, the timing of publication has varied. The next list of Ministers' interests will be published in due course, following the appointment of a new Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**Sir George Howarth:**[\[172890\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what representations he has received from businesses in Great Britain on delays in the distribution of goods to Northern Ireland.

Penny Mordaunt:

Government departments regularly engage with individual businesses to support the development of practical solutions to issues raised, to ensure the effective movement of goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Government receives regular feedback on issues of concern through the Northern Ireland Secretary's Business Engagement Forum and the dedicated Protocol sub-group of the Brexit Business Taskforce. This engagement supports ongoing UK-EU discussions on

addressing outstanding concerns on the Protocol. Concerns raised are addressed through action, including continuous improvements to the Trader Support Service, which processes approximately 99% of declarations within 15 minutes.

■ **UK Trade with EU: Exports**

Bill Esterson:

[\[171589\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent representations he has received on (a) delays and (b) no delivery of goods exported to EU member states.

Penny Mordaunt:

Lord Frost, the Minister of State regularly meets business representatives, including through the Brexit Business Taskforce, and hears representations on the full range of challenges faced by business in adapting to the end of the Transition Period.

The TCA provides tariff-free and quota-free trade of all goods between the UK and EU. We have received some examples of delays in goods being cleared by different Member States. Officials are working closely with Member State officials, businesses and their representatives to understand the reason for any delays or refusal of goods so that issues can be resolved and goods can move freely.

■ **Veterans: Asbestos**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[174251\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the number of veterans that have developed lung cancer as a result of their exposure to asbestos.

Johnny Mercer:

As I stated in my answer given to the hon. Member on 11 January 2021, the MOD's Health Safety and Environmental Protection directorate, alongside the Defence People function will work with the Office for Veterans' Affairs to explore potential health issues related to exposure to asbestos during service, and to continue to coordinate MOD's asbestos management approach. Claims for compensation in respect of injuries or illnesses arising as a result of service can be made by veterans through the Ministry of Defence.

■ **Voting Rights: British Nationals Abroad**

Craig Williams:

[\[173074\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to paragraph 2.41 of the Budget 2021 Red Book, what steps his Department has taken to end the 15 year limit for overseas voter registration following the commitment by the Government of £2.5 million of funding for the removal of that limit.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to [PQ133213](#), published on 11 January 2021.

■ **Weddings: Coronavirus**

Alberto Costa:

[171648]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether children under the age of five count toward the number of attendees allowed at weddings under Step Two of the Government's covid-19 roadmap.

Penny Mordaunt:

Guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships was published on 22 March and can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships#wedding-and-civil-partnership-ceremony-venues>

We recognise that any restrictions on wedding venues may be disappointing for those planning such events, but we have to take necessary steps to limit transmission of COVID-19. This includes the closure of some settings and restrictions on social contact, including wedding and civil partnership ceremonies. By their very nature, weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are events that bring families and friends together, making them particularly vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19. We appreciate the sacrifices people have had to make across the COVID-19 pandemic and we do not wish to keep any restrictions in place longer than we need to.

In the [COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021](#), the Government has set out the gradual and cautious approach to reopening in England, guided by science and the data, including the staged return of weddings and civil partnerships, as well as sporting events.

In order to inform the pace and sequencing of the roadmap, the Government commissioned advice and modelling from SAGE and its sub-groups. Scientific evidence supporting the government response to coronavirus is regularly published here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/scientific-evidence-supporting-the-government-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19>.

Caroline Lucas:

[172967]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the covid-19 risk from wedding ceremonies in (a) permitted places of worship and some public buildings from 12 April 2021 and (b) outdoor wedding ceremony venues.

Penny Mordaunt:

In the [COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021](#), the Government has set out the gradual and cautious approach to reopening different sectors in England, guided by science and the data.

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

Alternative wedding ceremonies are permitted in line with the regular wedding or civil partnership rules, in the same locations, at each step.

From 29 March, wedding and civil partnership ceremonies can take place indoors or outdoors in COVID-Secure venues that are not expressly closed by the Regulations, or where a broader exemption applies. Only six people are permitted to attend until Step 2, when limits will increase to 15. This approach allows couples to marry in legally binding licensed venues for wedding ceremonies (where outdoor options are limited) while remaining in line with the reopening of sectors and venues as set out in the roadmap. Wedding ceremonies should follow government guidance to reduce the risk of transmission.

Receptions (of up to 15 people) can resume from Step 2. The evidence shows that it is safer for people to meet outdoors rather than indoors. That is why receptions are only permitted outdoors at this Step and should be in a COVID-Secure venue.

From Step 3, no earlier than 17 May 2021, weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are permitted for up to 30 people in COVID-Secure venues that are not required to close, or where a broader exemption applies. Receptions can also proceed with up to 30 people in a COVID-Secure indoor venue, or outdoors, which includes private gardens.

Guidance for wedding and civil partnership receptions and celebrations can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-wedding-and-civil-partnership-receptions-and-celebrations>

At each step, the limits on the number of attendees includes children of all ages, but not workers.

For further information, please refer to the guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>

DEFENCE

■ Army

Mr Kevan Jones:

[172899]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the number of full-time army personnel is planned to be higher than that of US Special Operations Command.

James Heappey:

Yes. As the Defence Secretary said in the House on Monday 22 March, the future regular trained strength of the British Army will be 72,500. USSOCOM develops and employs multi-domain capability with a personnel count of nearly 70,000 consisting of military (regular and reserve) and civilian staff. Direct comparisons do not truly reflect the different purpose and value provided by the two forces.

In an era of robotics and artificial intelligence, we need to stop thinking about the strength of the Army simply in terms of numbers and focus on how best it can achieve what we ask of it. The Army will be leaner, lighter, faster to respond and more effectively matched to current and future threats. It will be integrated across domains, with allies in NATO, and beyond. It will be ever more globally engaged, with an increasing number of soldiers supporting Special Operations and amplifying the performance of partner forces.

China: Uighurs**Shabana Mahmood:**[\[172042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department made of the implications for the integrated review of security, defence, development and foreign policy of Chinese treatment of Uighur people in Xinjiang province during the period of that review.

James Heappey:

The situation in Xinjiang is one of the worst human rights crises of our time. The Government has repeatedly made its concerns clear and advocates that China must be held to account for their human rights violations. The Foreign Secretary's announcement in Parliament on Monday 22 March of sanctions targeting four key individuals alongside the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps represents the latest of a series of actions which send an unequivocal message that those responsible for serious human rights violations in China will face consequences.

This latest action reflects the approach and objectives articulated in the Integrated Review; the UK is committed to being a force for good in standing up for human rights around the world, using our independent sanction regime to hold to account those involved in serious human rights violations and abuses.

The Review recognises that China presents a complex, systemic challenge to the UK and our allies. As the Review makes clear, we need to be prepared to push back to protect our values and global interests, while maintaining our ability to cooperate in tackling global challenges such as climate change and the mutual benefits of our economic relationship. The UK wants a mature, positive relationship with China, based on mutual respect and trust. There is considerable scope for constructive engagement and cooperation. But as we strive for that positive relationship, we will not sacrifice either our values or our security. As we continue to engage, we will

always protect our national interests and hold China to its international commitments and promises.

■ Cyprus: Defence

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[172900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse has been of upgrades to the UK defence footprint in Cyprus over the last five years.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence has invested £173 million of capital expenditure over the past five years to improve facilities in the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas. This has included investment in accommodation, schools, the runway and military vehicles.

■ Defence: International Cooperation

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[172901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what measures he plans to put in place to contribute to deeper interoperability between the UK and (a) Norway, (b) the Netherlands and (c) France.

James Heappey:

The integration of our Armed Forces with those of our allies will be fundamental to retaining our global strategic advantage. Specifically, we are deepening levels of interoperability with Norway through collaboration on similar capabilities (such as P-8A Orion maritime patrol aircraft and F-35), our regular cold weather training deployments to Norway, bilateral capability talks and membership of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF). The UK is similarly committed to continuing to deepen our relationship with the Netherlands, both bilaterally and through the JEF. Our Naval and Amphibious Forces are already amongst the most interoperable in NATO, and will continue to operate and train alongside each other. We will also examine ways to work more closely with the Royal Netherlands Army and the Royal Netherlands Air Force, including on future common capabilities. Meanwhile, UK and French Armed Forces are now closer and more interoperable than they have ever been. Having successfully brought our Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) to its full operating capability last year, we now plan to further develop CJEF from its current state as a contingent intervention capability into a long-term framework for improving our interoperability and strategic coherence.

■ Destroyers

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[172905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the planned timeframe is for the concept and assessment phases of the Type 83 destroyer.

Jeremy Quin:

The Type 83 will replace our Type 45 destroyers when they go out of service in the late 2030s. We anticipate the concept phase for Type 83 to begin in the next few years with the assessment phase following.

■ Electronic Warfare**Sir John Hayes:**[\[172866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to address the risk to the UK's critical national infrastructure from technological advances in cyber warfare.

James Heappey:

The threat of cyber-attack on UK interests is real, every day we witness malicious interference from adversary states and hostile actors. We're continually protecting our systems and have previously called-out activity from Russia, China and Iran.

Our defensive cyber programmes are delivering an extensive suite of capabilities; Defence is working closely with Partner agencies such as GCHQ to deliver the National Cyber Force.

■ Guided weapons**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[172898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the status of the interim surface-to-surface guided weapon is.

Jeremy Quin:

The interim surface-to-surface guided weapon will replace the Royal Navy's existing Harpoon missile capability. There was a healthy response from Industry to the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire and we are planning to proceed to issue an Invitation to negotiate to the down selected bidders later this year.

■ HMS Scott**Luke Pollard:**[\[174267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to replace HMS Scott.

Jeremy Quin:

The out of service date for HMS Scott has not changed as a result of the Integrated Review. Current plans will see SCOTT retired from service in 2022. As part of the Government's investment in shipbuilding, which increases to over £1.7 billion a year this Parliament, we will procure a Multi-role Ocean Surveillance Ship (MROS) to replace HMS Scott.

■ India: Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[172904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, in reference to the Defence Command Paper published on 22 March 2021, how his Department intends to expand defence industrial relationships with India.

James Heappey:

As set out in the Command Paper, the UK is committed to increasing our bilateral industrial co-operation with India as part of our 'tilt' to the Indo Pacific. The UK and India have regular discussions across a variety of areas, including our defence industrial relationship. These discussions support India's aspiration to develop their capabilities, in line with Prime Minister Modi's self-reliance ambitions. The hon. Member will be aware of the Prime Minister's upcoming visit to India and should be assured that the Ministry of Defence and the Government of India will work closely to realise the aspiration set out in the Command Paper.

■ Indo-Pacific Region

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[172903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department has taken to strengthen relations with prospective allies in the Indo-Pacific region.

James Heappey:

The UK recognises the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific to global prosperity and security and is committed to its allies and partners in the region. Defence is an essential part of the UK's integrated offer to the region and, as such, we will be strengthening our regional defence cooperation and dialogue with our key partners in the region.

Working together to mitigate growing threats to our security, we will continue to work with Indo-Pacific partners such as India, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia and the United States to build resilience and capacity in the region, tackle shared security challenges and uphold freedom of navigation and international law. In addition, we will develop capability partnerships and support UK prosperity by strengthening defence exports and increasing our interoperability.

We have also committed to developing closer cooperation with ASEAN member states, and to make a bigger and more consistent contribution to the Five Power Defence Arrangements.

This year's Carrier Strike Group deployment to the Indo Pacific is just one example of a confident, UK-led, highly technological, and internationally partnered effort to strengthen our alliances and national interests. The CSG deployment to the Indo-Pacific underlines the UK's global ambition and leadership as an inclusive, outward-facing and free-trading nation, assertive in defending our values and interests and a champion of international rules.

■ Indo-Pacific Region: Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[172902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 32 of the Integrated Review, Defence Command Paper, which UK defence programmes will be exported to countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

James Heappey:

Exporting world-leading UK expertise through capacity building and training with partner forces is an integral part of our Indo-Pacific engagement. The UK's varied training offer is developed in consultation with our partners and tailored to their specific needs. It will continue to feature Professional Military Education - including Initial Officer Training - to build strong and responsible regional military leadership, as well as subject-specific training on everything from peacekeeping, to preventing sexual violence in conflict, to counter-terrorism and maritime security.

■ Marines

Luke Pollard: [\[174266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Integrated Review, published on 16 March 2021, what the establishment figure is for the Royal Marines in (a) 2021, (b) 2024 and (c) 2030.

James Heappey:

As at the 1 January 2021, the current Full Time Trained Strength of the Royal Marines is 5,968. No decisions have been made on the future size of the Royal Marines. As the Royal Marines transition into the Future Commando Force and turn to new upgraded and autonomous capabilities, there is the potential for the workforce structure to change in the future.

■ Minesweepers

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[172897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the planned dates are for the replacement of current Hunt and Sandown mine countermeasures vessels.

Jeremy Quin:

The Sandown and Hunt class Mine Counter-Measure Vessels will be withdrawn from service over the next 10 years as the new Mine Hunting Capability comes into service, maintaining operational outputs.

■ Ministry of Defence: Iron and Steel

Lucy Powell: [\[173048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the level of UK-produced steel procured by his Department and associated departmental public bodies and agencies in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government is working with the steel industry, the unions and devolved administrations to support the UK steel sector to develop a long-term sustainable future. This includes making sure that UK producers of steel have the best possible chance of competing for and winning contracts across all Government procurement. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy collates and publishes annually information on how much steel is purchased for Government's major infrastructure projects in the previous financial year, including what proportion is UK-produced. Information for 2019/20 has been collated and is expected to be published later this year. Information on UK steel procured in 2020/21 will be collated in due course.

■ Ministry of Defence: Land**Mark Pritchard:**[\[174054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to publish the Land Industrial Strategy; and if he will publish what engagement the British Army has had with the private sector on the design of that strategy.

Jeremy Quin:

We have welcomed the evidence provided by the private sector in support of the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy (DSIS). This evidence has helped shape the design of the DSIS, which I was pleased to announce on 23 March.

We are now developing the Land Industrial Strategy over the coming year. The team will consult with the private sector in maturing its design.

■ Nuclear Submarines: Devonport Dockyard**Luke Pollard:**[\[174269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Integrated Review, published on 16 March 2021, when he plans the first retired Devonport-based nuclear submarine to be recycled.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence is a responsible nuclear operator and remains committed to the cost effective, safe and secure full dismantling of our decommissioned nuclear submarines as soon as practicably possible. As set out in the United Kingdom's future nuclear deterrent: the 2020 update to Parliament, progress continues with the delivery of this complex initiative, working closely with UK industry partners and the civil nuclear sector, supporting key engineering skills and nuclear expertise.

■ Nuclear Weapons**Caroline Lucas:**[\[174078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to paragraph 4.13 of the Defence in a Competitive Age White Paper, published on 22 March 2021, whether the specification type of the planned replacement nuclear warheads will include (a) Holbrook

warheads of the type used in the UK's existing nuclear arsenal, (b) warheads compatible with the W93 US nuclear weapons programme and (c) other specification types; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the right hon. Member for Ludlow on 15 March 2021 to question 166353.

Attachments:

1. 166353 - Nuclear Weapons - USA [166353 - USA - Nuclear Weapons.docx]

■ **Qatar: European Fighter Aircraft**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[172908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Joint Typhoon Squadron with Qatar.

James Heappey:

12 Squadron, the innovative joint Typhoon Squadron with Qatar, has been very successful. It undertakes Operational training of both UK and Qatari pilots and provides Qatar with experience in preparation for receiving in 2022 their first Typhoon aircraft purchased from the UK. Building on an effective deployment to Qatar as part of Exercise Epic Skies in 2020, the Squadron boosts Qatar's ability to tackle our shared security challenges, contributing to regional stability and protecting the prosperity and security of the UK at home.

■ **Ranger Regiment**

Mark Pritchard:

[\[174055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to announce the location of the headquarters of the Special Operations Brigade.

James Heappey:

Following the Secretary of State's announcement to the House on 22 March of the creation of the Special Operations Brigade built around the four battalions of the new Ranger Regiment, the Army will now undertake a period of refinement and testing its future structures and capabilities. Once the conclusions from this work have been endorsed by Ministers then we will be in a position to provide more detail.

■ **Shipbuilding**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[174014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to support small, independent ship builders.

Jeremy Quin:

In his role as Shipbuilding Tsar the Secretary of State for Defence is firmly committed to reinvigorating the entire UK shipbuilding enterprise, including small shipbuilders. He is working closely with colleagues across Government to support the sector. For

example, on 22 March 2021 the Department for Transport launched the £20 million Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition. This will fund feasibility studies and initial technology trials in clean maritime technologies, such as the UK design and development of zero emission vessels, which will help put the UK shipbuilding supply chain at the forefront of the global green industrial revolution.

The Government has also announced its intent to publish an updated National Shipbuilding Strategy. This will set out the how the Government will create the conditions for success for all parts of the shipbuilding enterprise.

■ Spaceflight

Sir John Hayes:

[\[172867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the risk to the UK of the increase in the space capabilities of foreign states.

Jeremy Quin:

As the Defence Command Paper set out we are investing an additional £1.4 billion on space over the next decade, on top of the over £5 billion on Skynet 6 satellites. This will allow us to develop our capabilities to better understand the Space domain, and be able to protect and defend the capabilities there that are critical to national security. This will include the establishment of a space command.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Antiques and Art Works: UK Trade with EU

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[171728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure couriers can resume regular shipments of (a) retail art and (b) antiques currently suspended due to customs complications in several EU states.

Caroline Dineneage:

We are working closely with businesses in the art and antiques sector to support them in trading with, and shipping goods to and from, EU member states.

We recognise that leaving the EU means a period of change for businesses, at a time when everyone has been responding to the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic, but this is an unparalleled opportunity for the UK to do things differently and better, and create the blueprint for our growing prosperity through the 21st century.

The deal we have negotiated secures preferential market access to the EU for UK businesses whilst securing the UK's status as an independent and sovereign country. It ensures that there will be no tariffs or quotas for trade in goods with the EU.

We have taken steps to facilitate the export of cultural goods to EU countries. We developed a new inland pre-clearance process for export licences for works of art, and we are in the process of digitising the export licencing system for cultural goods. These steps reduce border friction and avoid delays and security risks.

We will continue to engage with businesses in sectors that are affected by our changing relationship with the EU to help them adjust and continue to successfully compete on the global stage.

■ **Broadband: Capital Allowances**

Chi Onwurah:

[173022]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 15 March 2021 to Question 166425, what assessment he has made of the potential acceleration of gigabit broadband rollout as a result of the the super deduction; and whether the Government plans to revise its targets for the rollout of gigabit broadband.

Matt Warman:

The March 2021 Budget announced a new super-deduction, allowing companies to cut their tax bill by up to 25p for every £1 they invest in qualifying new plant and machinery assets, ensuring the UK capital allowances regime is among the world's most competitive. This will give companies a strong incentive to make additional investments, including in gigabit network build, in line with the government's ambition to achieve nationwide coverage of gigabit-capable broadband as soon as possible.

■ **Broadband: Rural Areas**

Chi Onwurah:

[173008]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to his Department's press release, Government launches new £5 billion Project Gigabit, published on 19 March 2021, what the maximum sum available is per contract for broadband providers as part of that project; what criteria must be met by broadband providers to be eligible to receive a contract as part of that project; and if he will publish the process and outline the levels of oversight provided for contract procurement as part of that project.

Matt Warman:

The funding allocation for each project will be determined following the Open Market Review and Public Review for the relevant area, which will be used to identify the premises eligible for subsidy.

Information on the proposed approach to the procurement process is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/resources-for-communications-network-providers#project-gigabit>. Further information on the pipeline of procurements will be published in the next update on the programme in June 2021. We will follow Public Contracting Regulations 2015 for all procurements and will be subject to departmental and government wide governance and assurance. Details of the requirements to be met by broadband bidders will be published at the start of each procurement process. We will publish the contract in line with government policy.

Sarah Olney:

[\[173119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the role of satellites is in the delivery of the hardest to reach gigabit connections.

Matt Warman:

The government is investing £5 billion to deliver gigabit-capable broadband to the hardest to reach 20% of premises in the UK. Our approach is technologically neutral but, at present, satellite broadband does not meet the technical specification for funding under the £5 billion programme.

However, the government recognises that the UK has some very remote places that may be too expensive to build a gigabit-capable broadband network to, even with substantial public subsidy. Less than 0.3% of the country or less than 100,000 premises are likely to fall into this category. On 19 March, the government launched a call for evidence to explore the barriers to improving the broadband of these premises and how innovative new technologies (such as Low Earth Orbit satellites) could help.

■ **Broadband: Voucher Schemes**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[173010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to increase the number of suppliers registered on the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme.

Matt Warman:

Building Digital UK has a comprehensive supplier engagement strategy which, since the inception of the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme, has resulted in over 700 suppliers registering to provide connections as part of the Local Full Fibre Networks and the Rural Gigabit Connectivity programmes. As part of Project Gigabit a new UK Gigabit Voucher will launch on 8 April 2021 and supplier registration is already open.

■ **Crafts**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[172862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to support heritage crafts.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Government fully recognises the contribution that the UK's heritage crafts make to the country's cultural fabric and international reputation. We welcome programmes of support to help artisans and communities continue to practice those traditions which are important to them. For example, organisations such as Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund provide grants for community organisations to support traditional craft skills.

The Heritage Stimulus Fund stream of the Culture Recovery Fund, co-ordinated by Historic England, provided £53m of funding to support construction and conservation projects at heritage sites across England. This included funding over 1000 projects

directly, and also providing over £11m of funds through umbrella organisations including the Historic Houses Association and Church of England. These construction and conservation projects have sustained a pipeline of work for skilled craftspeople. I also recognise the contribution of philanthropy to this vital element of our shared heritage.

■ Culture: Coronavirus

Sir John Hayes:

[\[172870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what financial support he is providing to the cultural and arts sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinenage:

Last year the government announced the unprecedented £1.57 billion support package for the culture sector, of which over £1 billion has now been allocated to almost 3,800 arts and culture organisations across the country and a further £500 million to enable the film and TV sector to restart production. This funding is supporting the arts and culture sector to survive the pandemic and continue operating. On 4 March, the Chancellor announced over £400 million in additional funding for arts, culture and heritage industries, including £300 million additional funding for the Culture Recovery Fund, to continue to support key cultural organisations as audiences begin to return.

The £300 million additional funding for the Culture Recovery Fund will continue to support key cultural organisations; bridge the sector as audiences begin to return; and continue to ensure a vibrant future for the culture sector as the nation recovers from the pandemic. The Fund covers charitable and private organisations of all sizes in the arts, museums, heritage sectors as well as music venues, festivals and independent cinemas.

The Government's other unprecedented packages of support includes bespoke support schemes for those who are self employed. SEISS has so far helped c.2.7 million self employed. Details on future SEISS support were announced by the Chancellor in his Budget Statement with an extension of the scheme to September 2021, with 600,000 more people who filed a tax return in 2019-20 now able to claim for the first time. The Government has extended the temporary reduced rate of VAT (5%) for hospitality, accommodation and attractions from 31 March to 30 September 2021. In addition, to help businesses manage the transition back to the standard rate, a 12.5% rate will then apply for a further six months, until 31 March 2022.

■ Culture: North of England

James Daly:

[\[R\] \[174321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, steps his Department is taking to support the cultural sector in the north of England.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has taken steps to ensure unprecedented levels of support has been provided to the cultural sector in the North of England. In 2020/2021, over £350 million has been invested in over 900 organisations based in the North via Arts Council England and the introduction of the Culture Recovery Fund.

The £300m additional funding for the Culture Recovery Fund announced at Budget 2021 will continue to support key cultural organisations up and down the country to help the sector as audiences begin to return, and to ensure a vibrant future for the culture sector as the nation recovers from the pandemic. This support is in addition to the extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and the continued reduction in VAT, which has supported many creatives and organisations across the North of England.

■ Culture: Slavery**Shabana Mahmood:**[\[172043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what impact assessments his Department has conducted on modern slavery in supply chains in the arts and culture sector.

Shabana Mahmood:[\[172044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support his Department is providing to the entertainment sector to help ensure that modern slavery is removed from its supply chains.

Caroline Dinenage:

The prevalence of modern slavery and complexity of global supply chains means that it is highly unlikely that any sector or company is immune from the risks of modern slavery. The Government encourages companies to report transparently about how they are mitigating modern slavery risks and to use their modern slavery statements to demonstrate year on year progress.

Section 54 of the The Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires certain businesses in all sectors with a turnover of £36m or more (including within the arts, culture, entertainment industry) to report annually on the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

The transparency legislation was designed to enable consumers, investors and civil society to scrutinise business action. To improve the quality and detail of reporting and accelerate action to prevent modern slavery, the Government announced an ambitious package of changes to strengthen the reporting requirements on businesses and has committed to introduce financial penalties for those that fail to meet their obligations under section 54.

In March 2021, the Government launched a digital registry for modern slavery statements which will enhance transparency by making statements available in one

place for the first time. It will provide greater visibility of the steps organisations are taking to prevent modern slavery in their global supply chains and empowering investors, consumers and civil society to scrutinise action and monitor progress.

These measures, including requiring organisations to publish their statement on the Government modern slavery registry, require primary legislation and will be introduced when parliamentary time allows.

DCMS, along with other government departments, will be publishing its own Modern Slavery statement in September 2021. This will extend to our Arms Length Bodies that have a budget of at least £36m.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Iron and Steel**

Lucy Powell:

[\[173041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the level of UK-produced steel procured by his Department and associated departmental public bodies and agencies in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government is working with the steel industry, the unions and devolved administrations to support the UK steel sector to develop a long-term sustainable future. This includes making sure that UK producers of steel have the best possible chance of competing for and winning contracts across all Government procurement.

BEIS collates and publishes annually information on how much steel is purchased for Government's major infrastructure projects in the previous financial year, including what proportion is UK-produced.

We have collated the 2019/20 data and expect to publish later this year. We will start collating the data on UK steel procured in 2020/21 in due course.

■ **Entertainments: Human Rights**

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[172045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department plans to take to protect the entertainment sector from human rights abuses committed in the Xinjiang province of China against Uighur people.

Caroline Dinenage:

The UK remains gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang.

As a consequence the Foreign Secretary announced a series of measures to build on our response to the human rights situation in Xinjiang on 12 January. These new measures help ensure UK businesses and the public sector are not complicit in human rights violations in Xinjiang. They also show China that there is a reputational and economic cost to its policies in Xinjiang.

The measures include;

- o Strengthening the Overseas Business Risk (OBR) guidance to make clearer the risks to UK businesses investing in, or with supply chains in Xinjiang.
- o A review of export controls as they apply to the situation in Xinjiang to ensure we are doing all we can to prevent the export of goods that may contribute to human rights violations in Xinjiang.
- o The introduction of financial penalties for organisations who fail to comply with the Modern Slavery Act.
- o Increasing support for UK public bodies to use public procurement rules to exclude suppliers where there is sufficient evidence of human rights violations from their supply chains

These build on the UK's existing measures to respond to Xinjiang, including research funded by the UK to help build the evidence base, and guidance to help UK businesses conduct due diligence to ensure supply chains are free of forced labour. The UK was the first country to require companies by law to report on modern slavery in their supply chains. We will continue our international leadership to hold China to account.

■ Football Index

Clive Lewis: [\[174180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will support a public inquiry into Football Index.

Clive Lewis: [\[174181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to respond to the collapse of Football Index.

Clive Lewis: [\[174182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with the Gambling Commission in response to the suspension of Football Index's licence.

Clive Lewis: [\[174183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with the Gambling Commission on why traders were allowed to continue depositing funds with Football Index until just before trading was suspended on that platform and the notice of administration was released on 11 March 2021.

Clive Lewis: [\[174184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of any steps that were taken to protect deposited funds with Football Index whilst the Gambling Commission's section 116 review was taking place.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Gambling Commission has suspended the licence of BetIndex Ltd, the operators of Football Index, and a live investigation is ongoing. The Secretary of State and I have met the Gambling Commission twice to receive urgent reports and are monitoring the situation very closely. Further information, including an update on the status of customer funds, can be found on the Commission's website:

<https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/news-action-and-statistics/news/2021/BetIndex-update.aspx>

It is a condition of a gambling operating licence that customers should be able to withdraw funds from their accounts. The Commission acted to suspend BetIndex's licence on learning that the operator planned to freeze access to funds. Operators who hold customer funds must tell customers whether funds are protected in event of insolvency and the level of the protection offered. Football Index provides a medium level of customer funds protection, which means customer funds are kept in accounts separate from business accounts, and arrangements are made to ensure assets in the customer accounts are distributed to customers in the event of insolvency.

The government has launched a Review of the Gambling Act 2005 and has called for evidence on a range of issues across the sector, including the powers and resources of the Gambling Commission. The call for evidence closes on 31 March, and we will be led by the evidence received.

■ Gambling: Video Games**Carolyn Harris:****[174160]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions (a) he and (b) his officials have had with (i) the Gambling Commission and (ii) the video game industry on classifying loot boxes as gambling.

Caroline Dinanage:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport launched a call for evidence in September 2020 to examine issues and concerns relating to loot boxes and we have received more than 30,000 responses. As part of the call for evidence, officials held a series of roundtable discussions with video game companies, third sector organisations, researchers, and other government departments; this included regulatory authorities such as the Gambling Commission. The roundtables were organised to discuss a range of public concerns raised about loot boxes, including potential links to gambling-like behaviour.

The call for evidence closed in November 2020 and we are continuing to analyse the evidence gathered. We will announce next steps when all the evidence has been fully considered.

■ Internet: Children

Carla Lockhart:

[\[173225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to introduce user advocacy arrangements to represent children to the regulator to help tackle online harms, funded by an industry levy; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Dineneage:

Protecting children is at the heart of our plans to transform the online experience for people in the UK and the strongest protections in the online harms framework will be for children. Under these new laws, Ofcom will have a duty to establish ongoing mechanisms for user advocacy. This is to ensure Ofcom understands the experiences of users, including children, and is able to detect and address issues early on.

The costs incurred by Ofcom in carrying out its functions under the Online Safety Bill, will be met by proportionate fees charged to industry.

The Online Safety Bill, which will give effect to the regulatory framework outlined in the Online Harms White Paper full government response, will be ready this year.

■ Internet: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[174177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2021 to Question 166491 on Digital Technology: Disability, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that disabled people have access to the internet.

Caroline Dineneage:

To tackle the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on disabled people DCMS launched the £2.5m digital inclusion Digital Lifeline fund on 25 February. The fund will provide 5000 devices, data and support for disabled people to use the devices safely and confidently.

The government is working on the project with leading digital inclusion charities Good Things Foundation and AbilityNet, both highly experienced in helping disabled people boost their mental health and achieve their goals through digital technology.

The Government has worked closely with industry throughout the pandemic and has agreed a set of commitments with the UK's major broadband and mobile operators to support vulnerable consumers during the Covid-19 period. Providers committed to working with customers who are finding it difficult to pay their bill as a result of Covid-19 to ensure that they are treated fairly and appropriately supported. Supplementary to this work, Ofcom published a [Vulnerability Guide](#) for providers, setting out its expectations and good practice on how vulnerable telecoms consumers should be supported.

■ Museums and Galleries: Gender**Janet Daby:****[174273]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent comparative assessment he made of the proportional representation of female artists and male artists in Britain's major galleries.

Caroline Dineneage:

DCMS does not play a role in the creative or curatorial decisions of Britain's major galleries.

Major galleries present both male and female artists within their permanent collections and curators seek to increase representation where needed. Major galleries, including the National Gallery Tate, and National Portrait Gallery also run exhibitions focused on displaying female artists.

■ National Leisure Recovery Fund: West Yorkshire**Imran Ahmad Khan:****[174308]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding from the National Leisure Recovery Fund has been allocated to (a) Wakefield Council and (b) councils in West Yorkshire.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus. The National Leisure Recovery Fund sought to support eligible public sector leisure centres to reopen to the public, giving the sport and physical activity sector the best chance of recovery to a position of sustainable operation over the medium term.

A total of £100 million was available as a biddable fund to eligible local authorities in England, which was allocated in a single funding round. Eligible local authorities include: those in England who hold responsibility for the provision of leisure services, those who have outsourced their leisure provision to an external body to and those whose outsourced leisure arrangements have ended since 20 March 2020 and services are now delivered as an in-house function. This is in addition to the wider financial support provided to councils throughout the pandemic.

Leisure services for Wakefield Council are delivered in-house under the brand Aspire Health. Therefore, they were not eligible to apply for the National Leisure Recovery Fund and would have been able to access support through the Local Government Income Compensation Scheme.

Of the five local authorities in West Yorkshire, only Kirklees submitted an application to the National Leisure Recovery Fund. They were awarded a total of £1,175,523.

■ Society of Antiquaries: Burlington House

Daisy Cooper:

[\[174277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that Society of Antiquaries can remain at Burlington House; and what plans he has to support the Society in the future.

Caroline Dinenage:

Officials from my Department are working closely with colleagues in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to explore whether there is a solution that can deliver public value and help the Society of Antiquaries and other Learned Societies to remain in situ at New Burlington House.

We do recognise the importance of the Society of Antiquaries, its collections and the historic site it is located in, but equally the government has a duty to maximise return to the public purse so we must explore options which balance the landlord and heritage interests in the situation.

This government is committed to supporting culture and heritage. The Society of Antiquaries recently received Culture Recovery Fund grant funding to support them during the pandemic and have been in receipt of National Heritage Lottery Fund project grants in recent years.

■ Tourism: West Yorkshire

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[174309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department plans to take to increase the level of tourism to (a) Wakefield and (b) West Yorkshire once covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

My Department plans to take a number of steps to encourage tourism in all regions following the easing of restrictions.

The Global Travel Taskforce last year committed the Government to publish a Tourism Recovery Plan in support of the sector. The Government intends to set out proposals in the Spring, including plans for a marketing campaign to welcome visitors back to the UK as soon as it is safe to do so.

The recently announced £56 million Welcome Back Fund will help councils improve green spaces, provide more outdoor seating areas and support tourism's reopening this summer.

When holidays are permitted again, we will work with VisitBritain, VisitEngland and local partners to champion the UK's diverse tourism offer once again - just as we did with last year's Enjoy Summer Safely and Escape The Everyday campaigns.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[174310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department will take to ensure that the tourism industry in (a) Wakefield and (b) West Yorkshire complies with covid-19 rules as the lockdown is eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

My Department will continue to provide guidance and support to tourism businesses across England to ensure that they can comply with COVID-19 restrictions.

The Government's COVID-19 Secure guidance for hotels and guest accommodation and the visitor economy will be kept up to date over the coming months, in line with the reopening process for the sector. We have also worked with industry bodies like UKHospitality and the Association of Event Organisers during the pandemic to produce more detailed sub-sector specific guidance.

We will continue to provide guidance and assurance regarding when people can safely go on holiday - as demonstrated through initiatives such as VisitBritain's 'Good to Go' COVID-19 secure industry standard, now in use by over 44,000 tourism businesses across the UK.

■ **UK Youth Parliament: Finance**

Liam Byrne:

[\[174031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, for what reasons the funding for the UK Youth Parliament has been reduced; and if he will make a statement.

Matt Warman:

HM Government's core funding for the UK Youth Parliament in 21/22 remains at the same level as the previous two years. Additional funding has been made available in 21/22 to continue enabling UK-wide participation in this programme.

EDUCATION

■ **Adoption Support Fund: Coronavirus**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[174256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to allow Adoption Support Funding for the 2020-21 year to be transferred to 2021-22 in cases where therapy has been delayed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

There are no plans to allow funding, approved for services in the 2020-21 financial year, to be used to deliver those services in the 2021-22 financial year. This is outside normal departmental accounting rules. However, funding will continue to be available for new applications for services from April 2021, so children and families will be able to get the therapeutic support they need.

■ Children and Young People: Mental Health Services

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[174220]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much his Department has spent to date on the delivery of the proposals in the Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health green paper.

Vicky Ford:

The Department for Education has spent £9.2 million to date on the delivery of our specific commitments outlined in the government's 2018 response to 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health: A Green Paper'. This includes £2.6 million for supporting the roll-out of new mental health support teams, the national roll-out (and adaptation during the COVID-19 outbreak) of the Link Programme, improving joint working between local health and education partners, and developing a training offer for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges.

In response to the pressures of the COVID-19 outbreak, the government prioritised bespoke training and support to meet the immediate challenges that schools and colleges were facing in supporting children and young people. The department has therefore also spent £6.6 million contributing to the Wellbeing for Education Return programme alongside the Department for Health and Social Care, providing training and support to schools and colleges with their immediate approach to wellbeing and mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme has funded local experts to provide training, advice and resources for schools and further education (FE) providers to help support the wellbeing, resilience and recovery of pupils and students, parents and carers and staff in light of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown.

Over 90% of local authority areas in England have reported that they are delivering additional training and support into local schools and FE providers because of the Wellbeing for Education Return funding, and have been continuing to do so remotely. Nationally, information indicates that more than 15,000 education settings are being offered additional training and support. We remain committed to our joint green paper delivery programme with DHSC and NHS England, including introducing new mental health support teams for all schools and colleges, providing training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges and testing approaches to faster access to NHS specialist support.

The support that schools and FE providers provide to their pupils as they return to face-to-face education should include time devoted to supporting mental health and wellbeing, which will play a fundamental part in supporting children and young people's recovery. The £700 million package includes a new one-off Recovery Premium for state primary, secondary and special schools to use as they see best to support disadvantaged students. This will help schools and FE providers to provide their disadvantaged pupils with a one-off boost to the academic and pastoral support that has been proved most effective in helping them recover from the impact of the

COVID-19 outbreak. It can be used for mental health and wellbeing support. The expectations for schools in this regard are set out clearly in the department's guidance to schools, which also signposts further support:

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

This funding follows our £1 billion COVID-19 catch-up package, which includes £650 million shared across early years, schools and 16-19 providers over the 2020/21 academic year to support education settings to put the right catch-up and pastoral support in place. This is already being used by schools to put in place additional mental health and wellbeing and other support.

We have also recently announced a £79 million boost to children and young people's mental health support, including through mental health support teams. The support teams provide early intervention on mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in schools and colleges, supporting them with their wider approach and liaison with health services. The teams will grow from the 59 set up by last spring to around 400 by April 2023, supporting nearly 3 million children. This increase means that millions of children and young people will have access to significantly expanded mental health services.

As well as providing additional COVID-19 specific mental health advice and support, our relationships education, relationships and sex education and health education curriculum includes mental health and wellbeing. We have online training materials and implementation guides, as well as case studies, which gives inclusive advice to schools and staff on how best to support pupils' mental health:

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

The department has convened its Mental Health in Education Action Group to look at the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and staff in nurseries, schools, colleges, and universities. It is bringing together partners to take additional action to support mental wellbeing of children and young people with the return to education settings and with transitions between education settings in September 2021. This will include looking at what more we can do to help schools to make the most effective use of the recovery premium to support mental health and wellbeing.

■ Children: Literacy

Daisy Cooper:

[174276]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the aims of the Turn on the Subtitles campaign that encourages television companies to provide subtitles on children's TV programmes as a default to help improve child literacy rates.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is committed to continuing to raise literacy standards, ensuring all children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, can read fluently and with

understanding. By ensuring high quality phonics teaching, the Government wants to improve literacy levels to give all children a solid base upon which to build as they progress through school and help children to develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information.

Turn on the Subtitles (TOTS) is a campaign to persuade broadcasters to turn on same language subtitles by default for children's television (Key Stage 2 and 3). The Department has recently made an assessment of the evidence behind the TOTS campaign and the current evidence is inconclusive over whether turning on the subtitles improves children's reading.

It is the choice of parents and guardians whether their child watches television with subtitles on.

■ **Coronavirus: Special Educational Needs**

Marsha De Cordova:

[174260]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will bring forward proposals to end the provisions in section 38 and Schedule 17 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 as covid-19 restrictions are lifted to make it the duty of schools to secure SEND provision for disabled children and young people.

Marsha De Cordova:

[174261]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will work with Cabinet colleagues to bring forward proposals to end the provisions in section 38 and Schedule 17 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 as covid-19 restrictions are lifted to make it the duty of schools to secure SEND provision for disabled children and young people.

Vicky Ford:

The legal duties on schools, local authorities, and health bodies to provide support to children and young people with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans are fully in force. As part of the early response to the COVID-19 outbreak, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, did issue notices under the Coronavirus Act 2020 for the months of May to July 2020 that temporarily modified the law over the provision set out in EHC plans. However, when the July notice expired last year, the full duty to secure or arrange provision under section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014 was reinstated.

The safeguards built into the Coronavirus Act 2020 include that such notices can only be made where this is an 'appropriate and proportionate action in all the circumstances relating to the incidence or transmission of Coronavirus'. Therefore, this is not a power that can be used without compelling reason. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, continues to keep the need to issue further such notices under review, but he has made it clear that he will not do so unless the evidence changes.

As part of the one year review of the Coronavirus Act 2020, and in line with the announcement of the roadmap, the government has conducted a thorough review of

the non-devolved provisions to check that they are necessary and proportionate. We have considered whether there is a robust justification for keeping each power. Where we have concluded that powers are no longer necessary to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, we are providing for these to expire or be suspended. We do not, however, consider it appropriate at this stage to remove the power to issue notices relating to the law on EHC plans. Use of the power was and remains an important contingency to use swiftly in the event of local authorities, health bodies and education settings again needing flexibility to prioritise their resources in response to the changing demands of the outbreak.

■ Crafts: Apprentices

Sir John Hayes:

[172872]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to increase the number of apprenticeships across a range of traditional craft skills broken down by craft.

Gillian Keegan:

We have introduced new high-quality apprenticeship standards which are developed and designed by employers to meet the skills needs of their sectors. There are currently 600 high-quality standards available to employers and apprentices, at a range of levels and across a broad range of industries.

Groups of employers can propose apprenticeship standards for development to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute), which will fall into one of 15 occupational routes for technical education, based on the Sainsbury Panel recommendations. We do not hold a definitive list of craft occupations but within the Creative and Design route, where occupations considered to be traditional crafts are likely to feature, apprenticeship standards include Bookbinder and Leather Craftsperson at level 2 and Bespoke Furniture at level 3. We continue to work closely with the Institute to ensure there are sufficient standards to meet employer demand. A full list of available standards can be found here:

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/>.

To help employers in all sectors offer new apprenticeships, they will be able to claim a higher payment of £3,000 for every new apprentice they hire between 1 April and 30 September 2021 as part of the government's Plan for Jobs. The increased payment makes it a great time for employers to offer new apprenticeship opportunities and to take advantage of existing flexibilities to train apprentices in a way that suits their needs.

We are committed to supporting employers of all sizes to offer apprenticeships. In the 2021-22 financial year, we are making available £2.5 billion to support apprenticeships in all employers, irrespective of their size.

From 1 April 2021, all small to medium-sized enterprises arranging new apprenticeship starts will do so through the apprenticeship service, as levy payers do now. This will give them more control over their apprenticeship choices and the ability

to reserve funds before choosing the provider that best meets their needs. We continue to work with smaller employers to give them the confidence and support to take on new apprentices.

■ **Department for Education: Chief Scientific Advisers**

Greg Clark:

[170574]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many meetings he had with his Department's Chief Scientific Adviser from (a) 1 March 2020 to 31 May 2020, (b) 1 June 2020 to 31 August 2020, (c) 1 September 2020 to 30 November 2020 and (d) 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021.

Nick Gibb:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, had meetings with the Department's Chief Scientific Adviser on the following dates:

- (a) 4 meetings between 1 March 2020 to 31 May 2020
- (b) 3 meetings between 1 June 2020 to 31 August 2020
- (c) 0 meetings between 1 September 2020 to 30 November 2020
- (d) 6 meetings between 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021

It should be noted that key scientific evidence and advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and other sources is made available to the Secretary of State on a weekly basis.

■ **Education: Coronavirus**

Robert Halfon:

[174096]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to page six of the guidance published by his Department in March 2021 entitled Face coverings in education, what reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and students means.

Nick Gibb:

The Department's published guidance for schools to support the return to full attendance, can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

As our published guidance outlines, schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and students, to support them to access education successfully. Schools must continue to meet equalities duties outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

Guidance to help schools understand how the Equality Act affects them and how to fulfil their duties under the act is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315587/Equality_Act_Advice_Final.pdf.

■ Educational Visits: Coronavirus

Hilary Benn:

[174026]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when schools will be able to start taking pupils on residential trips as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Nick Gibb:

Schools are advised against all educational visits at this time. The Department has updated its advice to schools on the planning and booking of educational day and residential visits: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-coronavirus-covid-19-operational-guidance#educational-visits>.

It is 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>.

■ Financial Services: Education

Bob Blackman:

[174101]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of provision of financial education at a primary education level; and if his Department will make an assessment of the potential contribution of Global Money Week to improving that provision.

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. 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, the Department has also published a non-statutory citizenship curriculum for Key Stages one and two, stating 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, however, 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.

The Department does not plan to make its own assessment of the contribution of Global Money Week to improving the provision of financial education at primary education level but 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 gained from such initiatives and whether there is scope to provide further support for the teaching of financial education in schools.

■ Literature: Curriculum

Sir John Hayes:

[172874]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the curriculum for all school pupils includes (a) the work of William Shakespeare and (b) the full canon of English Literature.

Nick Gibb:

The National Curriculum for English aims to ensure that all pupils appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage. It encourages pupils to read a range of books, poems, and plays to encourage the development of a life-long love of literature. Pupils should be taught to maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including myths, legends and traditional stories, modern fiction, fiction from our literary heritage, and books from other cultures and traditions.

The English National Curriculum applies to all state-maintained schools, but not academies or free schools. Academies must teach a broad and balanced curriculum, including English. It is a statutory requirement that maintained schools follow the English Programmes of Study. Whilst these Programmes of Study do not set out specific reading lists at secondary level, they set out the following categories from which schools should choose texts.

At Key Stage 3, all pupils in maintained schools must study: English Literature, both pre-1914 and contemporary, including prose, poetry and drama; Shakespeare (two plays); and seminal world literature. We have also strengthened the Key Stage 4 English Programmes of Study to ensure all pupils read a wide range of high-quality, challenging, classic English Literature. There is a renewed focus on the reading of whole texts. At Key Stage 4, all pupils in maintained schools must study: at least one play by Shakespeare; works from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries; and poetry since 1789, including Romantic poetry.

Exam boards will set out a range of choices within the following categories from which schools can select texts. Those taking a GCSE in English Literature, which is the majority of Key Stage 4 pupils, must study: at least one play by Shakespeare; at least one nineteenth-century novel; a selection of poetry since 1789, including

representative Romantic poetry; and fiction or drama from the British Isles from 1914 onwards.

■ **Maintained Schools: Collective Worship**

Sir John Hayes:

[174005]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that a daily act of worship is taking place in every maintained school.

Nick Gibb:

Every maintained school, academy and free school is required to ensure that collective worship takes place each day.

If the Department is informed that a school may be in breach of this requirement, it will be investigated. Where needed, the Department will remind schools of their duty on this matter and advise on how this can be met.

■ **Maintained Schools: Coronavirus**

Chi Onwurah:

[173018]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of collaborations between local authorities and trust and maintained schools in overcoming challenges related to the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

Since March 2020, Regional Schools Commissioners have led Regional Education and Children's Teams (REACT), each covering dedicated geographical areas. REACTs brought together existing Department staff from areas including education, children's social care and special educational needs and disability, early years, and further education.

The role of REACTs is to pool intelligence and assess risks across local authority areas as part of the COVID-19 response. REACTs also identify common themes and issues to feed back to Ministers and to policy teams, and signpost to additional support and guidance.

REACTs are working with local authorities, academy trusts and others on a wide variety of issues throughout the response to the COVID-19 outbreak and have witnessed many examples of effective local collaboration between local authorities and different types of schools.

■ **Outdoor Education: Coronavirus**

Daisy Cooper:

[173176]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the guidance, Covid-19 Response - Spring 2021, at what stage the Government plans to re-open outdoor education facilities for overnight school trips; and when he plans to publish relevant guidance.

Nick Gibb:

Schools are advised against all educational visits at this time. The Department has updated its advice to schools on the planning and booking of educational day and residential visits: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-coronavirus-covid-19-operational-guidance#educational-visits>.

It is 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>.

■ Pre-school Education**James Daly:****[R] [174324]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support maintained nursery schools.

Vicky Ford:

Maintained nursery schools (MNSs) are an important part of the early years sector and provide valuable services, especially in disadvantaged areas.

Early years providers, including MNSs, have continued to receive early education entitlements funding during the COVID-19 outbreak. We have also re-confirmed around £60 million, nationally, in supplementary funding for MNSs for the financial year 2021-22.

Like private nurseries, MNSs typically rely on private income for a significant proportion of their income, unlike most state-funded schools. Therefore, we have ensured that access to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is also available to MNSs, in line with published guidance. On 3 March 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced that the CJRS will be extended until the end of September 2021. As long as staff meet the other criteria for the scheme, schools and early years providers are able to furlough their staff if they have experienced a drop in either their income from parents or government. MNSs were also able to access free school meals vouchers via Edenred.

This government remains committed to the long-term funding of maintained nursery schools, and any reform to the way they are funded will be accompanied by appropriate funding protections.

■ Pupils: Counselling**Dr Lisa Cameron:****[173064]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the document published by his Department in 2016 entitled *Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future*, what progress his Department has made on meeting the expectation set out in that document that all schools should provide counselling services to pupils.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[173065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of the children referred to CAMHS in 2019-20 that did not meet the threshold to receive treatment received support from a school counselling service.

Vicky Ford:

School and college-based counselling is valuable provision which can play a particularly effective role as part of a whole school or college approach within which support can come from several sources. In that context, it is important that schools and colleges have the freedom to decide what support to offer to students and staff based on their particular needs and drawing on an evidence base of effective practice. The purpose of the blueprint was to support schools to make provision and set out advice from school and counselling experts to illustrate to schools how to make best use of counselling support.

The government does not hold central data on the mental health support accessed by individual children and young people. The department does not require schools to provide regular information on the provision of counselling in schools and colleges for pupils and staff. Our most recent survey of mental health provision in schools and colleges published in 2017 found that 61% of schools and colleges (56% of primary schools, 84% of secondary schools and 93% of colleges) reported offering access to counselling service for their pupils.

In the long term, we remain committed to our joint green paper delivery programme with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England, including introducing new mental health support teams for all schools and colleges, providing training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges, and testing approaches to faster access to NHS specialist support.

We have recently announced a £79 million boost to children and young people's mental health support, including through mental health support teams. These teams, which provide early intervention on mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in schools and colleges, will grow from over 180 teams currently established or in development to around 400 by April 2023, supporting nearly 3 million children across the country. This increase means that millions of children and young people will have access to significantly expanded mental health services.

■ **Pupils: Disadvantaged**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[173019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect of digital exclusion on the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

Nick Gibb:

I refer the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central to the answer I gave on 19 March 2021 to Parliamentary Question [168910](#).

■ Pupils: Hearing Impairment

Robert Halfon:

[174095]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that deaf children are not disadvantaged by the use of face coverings in classrooms during the covid-19 outbreak.

Robert Halfon:

[174098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance he has issued to schools on ensuring that reasonable adjustments are put in place for (a) deaf and (b) other pupils who rely on lipreading or facial expressions when face masks or coverings are worn in classrooms.

Robert Halfon:

[174099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the guidance published by his Department entitled Schools coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance, what specific evidence is referred to in that guidance in respect of the effectiveness and safety of transparent face coverings; and if he will place a copy of that evidence in the Library.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has published updated guidance for schools to support the return to full attendance, which includes updated advice on face coverings. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak> and here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education>.

As the guidance outlines, some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. This includes people who cannot put on, wear, or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness, impairment, or disability, or if you are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate. The same legal exemptions that apply to the wearing of face coverings in shops and on public transport also apply in schools and we expect staff and pupils to be sensitive to those needs, noting that some people are less able to wear face coverings and that the reasons for this may not be visible to others.

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

Our guidance on the system of controls and the use of face coverings in schools is informed by the latest public health evidence and advice from Public Health England. Schools should follow the system of controls as outlined in our guidance and put in place proportionate control measures that suit their individual circumstances, based on a thorough risk assessment. This should include making reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and students to support them to access education successfully.

The Department continues to provide information to the sector on our guidance, and any changes to it, through regular departmental communications. These additional precautionary measures will be kept under review and we will update guidance as necessary.

■ Remote Education

Kirsten Oswald:

[173072]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the difficulties facing parents who are working from home and supporting school-age children with remote learning.

Nick Gibb:

Attendance has been mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age since 8 March 2021. There will be specific instances where an individual, small group, or class of pupils or students cannot attend school on-site because they are, for example, self-isolating or shielding in line with guidance or law relating to COVID-19.

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

We recognise that different expectations are appropriate for younger and older age groups when teaching remotely. We also expect schools to consider the remote education expectations in relation to pupils' age, stage of development or special educational needs.

We know this is a challenging time for parents, carers and children. This is why we have published guidance for parents and carers on remote education and how they can best support their child while educating from home:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/supporting-your-childrens-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>. This includes resources and advice to help parents and carers on how to establish a routine with their child, and how best to support mental health and wellbeing during this period.

Parents and carers should not feel that they need to set work for their child. If parents or carers feel they need further support or additional teaching materials for their children, they are encouraged to discuss this with their school or college first.

In our guidance for parents and carers, we have provided links to some educational resources which parents may also find it helpful to be aware of, such as Oak National Academy, BBC Bitesize, LendED, and specialist resources for supporting children with special educational needs and disability with their remote education:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/supporting-your-childrens-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

■ Remote Education: ICT

Chi Onwurah:

[173020]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which (a) Government department or (b) organisation will be responsible for (i) assessing the number of children and young people who remain without access to an appropriate (A) digital device, (B) internet connection and (C) data after the rollout of the Get Help with Technology scheme is complete; and what steps his Department is taking to tackle digital exclusion among school pupils after the rollout of that scheme.

Nick Gibb:

I refer the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central to the answer I gave on 19 March 2021 to Parliamentary Question [168911](#).

James Daly:

[174331]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many laptops, iPads and other IT and broadband support has been given to schools and other education providers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including making 1.3 million laptops and tablets available for disadvantaged children and young people. The Government is providing this significant injection of laptops and tablets on top of an estimated 2.9 million already owned by schools before the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.

To date, over 1.2 million laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, academy trusts, local authorities and further education colleges. We are making further deliveries on an ongoing basis, and any school that has not yet ordered their allocation of devices can still do so.

Laptops and tablets are owned by schools, academy trusts, local authorities or further education colleges who can lend these to the children and young people who need them most, during the current COVID-19 restrictions.

We have also partnered with the UK's leading mobile operators to provide free data to help over 30,000 disadvantaged children get online as well as delivering over 70,000 4G wireless routers for pupils without connection at home.

We are grateful to Asda mobile, BT Mobile, EE, giffgaff, iD Mobile, IQ Mobile, Lebara, Lycamobile, O2, Sky Mobile, Smarty, Tesco Mobile, Three, Virgin Mobile and Vodafone for supporting the mobile data offer.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Peter Aldous:

[173001]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 9 Mar 2021 to Question 159297 on Schools: Coronavirus, what other information or advice has been provided to (a) schools, (b) parents and (c) young people on applying exemptions from

wearing face coverings in schools and classrooms; and which advice or guidance from his Department sets out what action should be taken if masks are removed to aid communication between teachers and pupils.

Nick Gibb:

The Department's advice on face coverings is outlined clearly in published guidance, which can be found at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education>.

We have also published information for parents and carers about attending schools, nurseries and colleges in the spring term 2021. This can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Our recommendation regarding the use of face coverings in classrooms applies to those in schools and colleges where Year 7 and above are educated unless social distancing can be maintained in classrooms. Whilst we recognise that the wearing of face coverings may impact communication, increased use of face coverings will strengthen the current safety measures in place in schools and support the return to face to face education.

As the guidance outlines, those who rely on visual signals for communication, or communicate with or provide support to such individuals, are currently exempt from any requirement to wear face coverings in schools and colleges or in public places. The same exemptions apply in schools and we expect staff, pupils and students to be sensitive to those needs, noting that some people are less able to wear face coverings and that the reasons for this may not be visible to others.

Schools should follow the system of controls as outlined in our guidance and put in place proportionate control measures that suit their individual circumstances, based on a thorough risk assessment. This should include making reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and students to support them to access education successfully.

We continue to provide information to the sector on our guidance, and any changes to it, through regular departmental communications. These additional precautionary measures will be kept under review and we will update guidance as necessary.

Chi Onwurah:

[173017]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with headteachers on streamlining the process for accessing funding during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department engages with school and college leaders at consultative groups on a regular basis. In addition to this, representatives from the Department attend local authority regional finance officers' groups and schools forums to gather intelligence

and feedback to shape policy decisions based on concerns raised. We work with representatives and user groups to ensure guidance is clear, payments are on time, and all digital claim forms are user friendly.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[173181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many false positives from lateral flow tests have been reported by schools; and what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of changing the guidance to allow a correct negative from a subsequent PCR test to be allowed to reduce the number of pupils being sent home.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has removed confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing for lateral flow tests taken at test sites following advice from Public Health England that, when COVID-19 prevalence rates are high, the performance of lateral flow devices (LFDs) and PCRs are broadly comparable when used at test sites, significantly reducing the need for routine confirmatory testing.

All positive results from rapid tests undertaken at home do need to be confirmed with a standard PCR test. Despite the low risk of false positives, this requirement is in place because tests at home are not conducted in a controlled environment with trained staff. When testing at the home, the individual should report positive, negative and void results to the school/college. If the result is positive, the individual and close contacts should isolate, and the school/college should help with contact tracing. The individual will also need to arrange a PCR test either online or via 119 to confirm the result. If the PCR test is negative, it overrides the LFD home test, and a child can return to school.

■ Schools: Platinum Jubilee 2022

Sir John Hayes:

[\[172873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that schools commemorate and celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's forthcoming Platinum Jubilee.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is currently considering ways in which it, and schools, can commemorate and celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Details of this will be available once decisions have been made and plans are in place.

■ Special Educational Needs

James Daly:

[\[174329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to improve educational and developmental outcomes for children with SEND.

Vicky Ford:

Our ambition is for every child, no matter what challenge they face, to have access to a world-class education that sets them up for life. Supporting children and young

people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to access high quality teaching and specialist professional care is a priority for this government.

The cross-government SEND Review is looking at ways to improve the SEND system, including better outcomes for children and young people with SEND, with help offered early in genuine partnership with families. Our ambition is to publish proposals for public consultation in the spring.

We have announced a major investment in special needs education, including an additional £730 million into high needs in the 2021-22 financial year, coming on top of the additional £780 million in the 2020-21 financial year, which means high needs budgets will have grown by over £1.5 billion, nearly a quarter, in just 2 years. We are also investing £300 million capital funding in the 2021-22 financial year for new places for children and young people with SEND, a significant single-year increase in our capital investment in new high needs places.

We are also supporting local SEND services. On 10 February 2021, we announced over £42 million of funding for projects to support children and young people with SEND in financial year 2021-22. This investment will ensure that specialist organisations around the country can continue their work to help strengthen local area performance, support families and provide practical support to schools and colleges. Crucially, it will strengthen participation of parents and young people in the SEND system, ensuring they have a voice in designing policies and services and have access to high quality information, advice and support. It includes £27.3 million specifically to support families on low incomes raising children with disabilities or serious illnesses.

Finally, we recognise that the COVID-19 outbreak has had a particular impact on children and young people. We are committed to helping all pupils, including those with SEND, make up learning lost as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. The government has announced £1.7 billion to give education settings support to help pupils get back on track, including additional funding, tutoring, early language support and summer schools. Sir Kevan Collins has also been appointed as the Education Recovery Commissioner and is considering how schools and the system can more effectively target resources and support at pupils in greatest need.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Claudia Webbe:

[173216]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of forgiving student debt accrued during the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

This has been a very difficult time for students, and the government is working with the higher education (HE) sector to make sure all reasonable efforts are being made to enable students to continue their studies. We thank all HE staff for their tireless work to ensure that young people do not have to put their lives or their academic journeys on hold.

The government's clear and stated expectation is that universities should maintain the quality and quantity of tuition and should seek to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have the resources to study remotely.

Universities are autonomous and responsible for setting their own fees within maximum fee limits set by regulations. The government is committed to a sustainable HE funding model that supports high quality provision, meets the skills needs of the country and maintains the world-class reputation of UK HE. We recognise that tuition fees must continue to represent value for money for students and taxpayers, both during the COVID-19 outbreak and afterwards.

The government has already announced that the maximum tuition fee cap will remain at £9,250 for the 2021/22 academic year, in respect of standard full-time courses at approved (fee cap) HE providers. We also intend to freeze the maximum tuition fee caps for the 2022/23 academic year to deliver better value for students and to keep the cost of HE under control (the fifth year in succession that maximum fees have been frozen). Our income-contingent student loan system helps remove financial barriers to study and means that no eligible student needs to pay tuition fees upfront.

The Office for Students, as the regulator for HE providers in England, has made it clear that HE providers must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and academic standards. These standards set out requirements to ensure that courses are high-quality, that all students (both domestic and international) are supported and achieve good outcomes and that standards are protected, regardless of whether a provider is delivering its courses through face-to-face teaching, remote online learning or a combination of both.

Whether or not an individual student is entitled to a refund will depend on the specific contractual arrangements between the HE provider and student. If students have concerns, there is a process in place. They should first raise their concerns with their university. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education to consider their complaint, this is the case for both domestic and international students. The OIA website is available at: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.

The OfS does not get involved in individual student complaints, as this is for the relevant HE provider and possibly the OIA. Students can, however, notify the OfS of issues that may be of regulatory interest to it. These are called 'notifications'. The OfS uses this information as part of its regulatory monitoring activity and keep higher education providers under review to ensure that they comply with the ongoing conditions of registration. The OfS has produced a guide for students to support them in this process, which is available here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/office-for-students-notifications/>.

The government recognises that in these exceptional circumstances some students may face financial hardship. The department has worked with the OfS to clarify that providers are able to use existing funds, worth around £256 million for the academic year 2020/21, towards hardship support. We have also made an additional £70

million of student hardship funding available to HE providers this financial year. HE providers have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to students, in a way that best prioritises those in greatest need – this is available to all students.

Claudia Webbe:

[173220]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the November 2020 study by the National Union of Students that found that three in four students were anxious about paying their rent; and what financial support he is providing to students in relation to rents during the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

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

We recognise that in these exceptional circumstances, some students may face financial hardship. The department has worked with the Office for Students to clarify that higher education (HE) providers are able to use existing funds, worth around £256 million for the 2020/21 academic year, towards hardship support. We have also made an additional £70 million of student hardship funding available to HE providers this financial year (2020/21).

HE providers have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to students, in a way that best prioritises those in greatest need. Support might include help for students facing additional costs arising from having to maintain accommodation in more than one location. The funding can be distributed to a wide population of students, including postgraduates (whether taught or research) and international students. We will continue to monitor the situation to look at what impact this funding is having.

There is further information for tenants and landlords in the context of COVID-19, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities>.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has published guidance on consumer contracts, cancellation and refunds affected by COVID-19: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-consumer-contracts-cancellation-and-refunds>. This guidance sets out the CMA's view on how the law operates to help consumers understand their rights and help businesses treat their customers fairly.

Students may be entitled to refunds from certain accommodation providers, depending on the terms of their contract and their particular circumstances. Organisations such as Citizens Advice offer a free service, providing information and support.

If a student thinks their accommodation provider is treating them unfairly, they can raise a complaint under the accommodation codes of practice as long as the provider

is a code member. The codes can be found at: <https://www.thesac.org.uk>, <https://www.unipol.org.uk/the-code/how-to-complain> and <https://www.rla.org.uk/about/nrla-code-of-practice.shtml>.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education can consider complaints about student accommodation in England and Wales, but only where an HE provider is involved in the provision of that accommodation. The OIA cannot consider complaints where students may have concerns about accommodation in the private rented sector.

■ Students: Debts

Claudia Webbe:

[173217]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of cancelling all student debt.

Michelle Donelan:

Cancelling all student loan debt would have a significant fiscal impact on the economy, and on taxpayers, many of whom may not have benefited directly from higher education (HE), but who would be required to fund this additional public spending.

The latest statistical release, published in December 2020, shows that the value of outstanding loans at the end of March 2020 reached £140 billion:

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn01079/>.

The government's approach to student finance ensures that costs are split fairly between borrowers and the taxpayer. This approach has helped more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds go to university than ever before. Taxpayers currently subsidise around 50% of the cost of HE, which is a conscious investment in the skills capacity of the economy.

We believe that it is right that students should contribute to the cost of their HE and that this contribution should be linked to their income. Monthly repayments are linked to income and not to interest rates or the amount borrowed. Repayments are made at 9% of amounts earned over the relevant repayment threshold. The repayment threshold is currently equivalent to £26,575 a year for borrowers with a post-2012 loan, rising to £27,295 from 6 April 2021. Borrowers are protected, as their repayments decrease if their income decreases, and stop where income falls below the relevant repayment threshold. Any outstanding debt is written off after 30 years or in line with the terms of the borrower's specific loan type, with no detriment to the borrower.

■ Students: Fees and Charges

Claudia Webbe:

[173219]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many complaints his Department has received on the cancellation of tuition fees (a) during the covid-19 outbreak and (b) over the last 10 years.

Michelle Donelan:

This is a difficult and uncertain time for students, but we are working with the sector to make sure all reasonable efforts are being made to enable students to continue their studies.

The government's expectation is that quality and academic standards must be maintained, and the Office for Students (OfS) has made it clear that all higher education (HE) providers must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and standards.

If students have concerns, there is a process in place. They should first raise their concerns with their higher education provider. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) to consider their complaint. The OIA is independent of government, and because of this and the autonomy and independence of HE providers, the government does not become involved in individual student complaints.

The OIA was established in 2005 as an alternative to the courts to consider unresolved student complaints. It is independent of government, providers and students and it is free of charge to students.

The OIA reports the numbers of complaints it has handled during the previous calendar year in its Operating Report and in its Annual Report which is published in the spring each year. The OIA received 2,604 complaints in 2020, which represents a 10% increase on 2019. The OIA has reported that complaints have continued to rise this year, with more than half of them relating to disruption caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Many of the complaints the OIA receives are not related to tuition fee refunds although that may be a remedy which the OIA recommends. The OIA publishes, in its Annual Report, the total compensation for students it has recommended. The OIA has also published a number of COVID-19 related case summaries and their outcomes which can be found here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/case-summaries/?keyword=coronavirus&type=&sort=desc>.

■ Students: Loans**Claudia Webbe:****[173218]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the finding by the UCL Institute of Education in June 2017 which found that risk of student loan debt deters students from poorer backgrounds from applying to university.

Michelle Donelan:

The government's approach to student finance ensures that costs are split fairly between borrowers and the taxpayer and has helped more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds go to university than ever before. Data for 2020 shows,

there were 25,820 placed English 18-year-old applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds (POLAR Q1), entry rate of 24.0%. Both are the highest on record.

Higher education (HE) providers wishing to charge higher levels fees (£9250) must have an access and participation plan agreed by Office for Students. Plans set out how they will support, including providing financial support, students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups to access and successfully participate in HE.

Student finance is available to all eligible students, irrespective of their background and credit history. The current system protects borrowers if they see a reduction in their income. Monthly repayments are linked to income, not to interest rates or the amount borrowed. Repayments are made based on a borrower's monthly or weekly income, not the interest rate or amount borrowed, and no repayments are made for earnings below the repayment threshold, which is currently equivalent to £26,575 a year for borrowers with a post-2012 loan, rising to £27,295 from 6 April 2021. Borrowers are protected, as their repayments decrease if their income decreases, and stops where income falls below the relevant repayment threshold. Any outstanding debt is written off after 30 years or in line with the terms of their specific loan type, with no detriment to the borrower. This write-off (currently around 50%) is a government subsidy of the cost of HE and is a conscious investment in our people and the skills base of the economy.

■ Universities: Coronavirus

Claudia Webbe:

[173213]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will work with the Office for Students to provide guidance to universities on how to effectively take account of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on academic performance.

Michelle Donelan:

It is vital that a fair approach to exams and assessment is in place and understood by students. As autonomous bodies, higher education (HE) providers will make their own judgements about how best to ensure students' achievements are reliably and fairly assessed.

The government's clear and stated expectation is that quality and academic standards must be maintained. We expect providers to make all reasonable efforts for student achievement to be reliably assessed and for qualifications to be awarded securely.

The Office for Students (OfS), as the HE regulator in England, has produced guidance to the sector setting out expectations about provider approaches to teaching and assessment during this time. OfS guidance is clear that standards must be maintained, but clearly changes to assessments may be required in some circumstances. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has also published resources for providers on practical ways in which students can be

assessed and complete their studies while ensuring quality and standards are upheld.

The government will continue to work closely with the QAA, professional bodies and the OfS to ensure students continue to leave university with qualifications that have real value, reflect their hard work and allow people to progress.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Animals: Republic of Ireland

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [\[170770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many animals entered the UK from the Republic of Ireland in each month from January 2020 to February 2021 inclusive.

Victoria Prentis:

The number of live animals imported from the Republic of Ireland to the UK from January 2020 to February 2021 are as follows:

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF LIVE ANIMALS
Jan 2020	1,250,272
Feb 2020	406,040
Mar 2020	7,757,702
April 2020	9,117,860
May 2020	7,263,557
June 2020	2,868,940
July 2020	1,108,790
Aug 2020	1,341,426
Sept 2020	620,357
Oct 2020	207,214
Nov 2020	793,702
Dec 2020	725,924
Jan 2021	2,107,612
Feb 2021	2,649,697

This data was extracted from the Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES). TRACES is a European Commission system employed by EU member states to facilitate and record animal/animal product movements into and throughout the EU.

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.

■ **Ash Dieback Disease: Wakefield**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[173188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of Wakefield Council on ash dieback in that local authority area.

Victoria Prentis:

The Forestry Commission is engaged with Wakefield Council through their Arboricultural Officer in the planning team. The Officer attended a Tree Health event in January which was run by the Forestry Commission in partnership with Sheffield City Council, Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust and Amey. The event focused on a number of tree health issues including Ash Dieback, woodland resilience and future species choice.

On 12 March 2021 Defra announced the Local Authority Treescapes Fund to increase tree planting and natural regeneration in local communities. £2.7 million will be available this year (2021/22), building the pipeline of projects for community planting in future years. The fund is part of the Government's Nature for Climate Fund. Local authorities can apply for funding to build back greener from the pandemic and will target landscapes that have been ecologically damaged or affected by tree diseases like ash dieback.

■ **Bees: Imports**

Ben Lake:

[\[174242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the risk to the health of domestic bee colonies of the importation of honey bees.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is committed to preventing pests and diseases reaching our borders. We are promoting biosecurity internationally, at UK borders and inland.

Imports of honey bees are only accepted from approved countries, and are subject to rules relating to notification and health certification to ensure that imports are free of key pests and diseases. Post-import checks are also carried out, including follow-up inspections and laboratory testing for evidence of statutory controlled pests. These checks are done using a risk-based approach.

Ben Lake:

[\[174243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to minimise the risk of importing small hive beetle into the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

Small hive beetle is an invasive, non-native pest which the Government recognises as presenting a serious threat to our honey bee population.

We are working with the National Bee Unit, beekeepers and other stakeholders to stop this pest from entering the UK. We have an extensive surveillance programme in place for exotic pests. National Bee Unit inspectors currently conduct around 6,500 apiary inspections each year. Our Sentinel Apiary Programme ensures that there is enhanced surveillance at high-risk apiaries near ports and airports. Inspectors also provide training and guidance on pest recognition to beekeepers.

Almost all imports of honey bees into the UK come from EU countries. In Europe, the only region where the presence of Small hive beetle has been confirmed is in the far south of Italy. Imports of honey bees from the affected region of Italy are currently prohibited.

■ **Bivalve Molluscs: UK Trade with EU**

Luke Pollard:

[\[174270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to use the arbitration mechanism in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement to resolve issues exporting live bivalve molluscs to European markets.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is working to find a resolution on this issue and we have been discussing with the EU and key partners. We have offered to provide reasonable additional reassurances to demonstrate shellfish health, on the understanding that the Commission recognises the existing high standards and history of UK-EU trade.

Until we get this issue resolved, we will do all we can to help businesses adapt to the new trading conditions and access alternative markets.

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement is still awaiting ratification by the European Parliament.

The Agreement contains robust mechanisms that can be used by both parties to ensure that the trade and cooperation arrangements are implemented effectively. As a matter of course we will be monitoring such implementation and will use such mechanisms where appropriate.

■ Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control

Preet Kaur Gill:

[174235]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of extending badger cull licences on the badger population in the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

We recently consulted on the next phase of our bovine TB eradication strategy as part of our objective for TB-free status in England by 2038. The consultation, which closed on 24 March, included:

- i) proposals to stop issuing intensive cull licences for new areas after 2022 and could see new four-year licences, after two-years of culling, be revoked after a progress evaluation by the Chief Veterinary Officer.
- ii) proposals to restrict supplementary badger control licences to two years and to prohibit the issuing of new licences for areas licensed after 2020.
- iii) proposals to reduce the duration of badger cull licenses, rather than extending them.

A Government response and next steps will be published in due course. Changes to the intensive and supplementary cull licences will be implemented by Natural England through revised guidance from Defra, which we also consulted on. Details can be found at <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/bovine-tb-2020/eradication-of-btb-england/>.

As part of the licensing criteria, for intensive and supplementary badger control, Natural England sets minimum and maximum numbers of badgers to be removed. This is to ensure the badger control operations deliver disease reduction benefits without endangering the local badger population.

■ Countryside

Sir John Hayes:

[172860]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress the Government has made on its policy to rewild areas of the countryside; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

Re-wilding generally refers to actions that restore natural processes to create and sustain rich ecosystems, sometimes with a species recovery component where appropriate. The Government is supporting a number of initiatives to create wilder landscapes across England, as part of a broader approach to nature recovery.

For example, the Knepp Wildland project in West Sussex shows what can be achieved with re-wilding approaches, where the creation of extensive grassland and scrub habitats has significantly benefited declining bird species like the nightingale or the turtle dove.

Over the past three years, we have allocated £10 million to deliver approximately 6,000 hectares of peatland restoration for projects in England. In March 2020, the Chancellor announced England's biggest ever investment in peat and tree planting through the £640 million Nature for Climate Fund. We are using a proportion of this to restore 35,000 hectares of peatland over the next five years.

We will also initiate ten Landscape Recovery projects between 2022 and 2024 to help restore wilder landscapes. The focus will be on large-scale sites where there are opportunities significantly to enhance the landscape to deliver a wide range of environmental outcomes.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Iron and Steel**

Lucy Powell:

[173042]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the level of UK-produced steel procured by his Department and associated departmental public bodies and agencies in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is working with the steel industry, the unions and devolved administrations to support the UK steel sector to develop a long-term sustainable future. This includes making sure that UK producers of steel have the best possible chance of competing for and winning contracts across all Government procurement.

BEIS collates and publishes annually information on how much steel is purchased for Government's major infrastructure projects in the previous financial year, including what proportion is UK-produced.

We have collated the 2019/20 data and expect to publish later this year. We will start collating the data on UK steel procured in 2020/21 in due course.

■ **Dogs: Northern Ireland**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [170766]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many dogs entered Great Britain from Northern Ireland in each month from January 2020 to February 2021 inclusive.

Victoria Prentis:

APHA have completed a report in the Trade Control and Expert System and the Post Import Management System, and have not identified any matching consignments of these imports for 2020 or 2021.

As dogs from Northern Ireland moving to Great Britain do not require any notification or health certification, we are not able to provide any data regarding this.

■ Environmental Land Management Scheme

Neil Parish:

[173002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with representatives from organic farms during the design of the Environmental Land Management scheme.

Victoria Prentis:

We are working closely with a range of environmental and agricultural stakeholders collaboratively to design the new schemes that reward environmental benefits.

The new schemes will fairly compensate farmers for environmental goods generated across all land types and farm management systems, including organic farms.

Several representatives of the organic sector are involved in codesigning the schemes in a variety of ways, including being part of our stakeholder and codesign groups, as well as separate one to one and small group meetings.

■ Equine Herpes Virus

David Mundell:

[172916]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what further steps his Department plans to take to help tackle equine EHV1 infections.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is aware of the outbreak of Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1) in Europe and is working closely with the equine sector to ensure owners are aware of the risks and are taking the necessary precautions to keep their animals safe.

Equine Herpes Virus (EHV) is not notifiable and isolation of sick animals is the best protection against infection. There is no public health risk.

Horse owners are advised to contact their private vet if they observe any respiratory illness, abortion or neurological signs in horses or ponies in their care or would like to discuss options for vaccination against the disease.

All horses imported into the UK are required to be certified as being fit to travel and not to have originated from premises where disease is known to be present. Any horses imported into the UK should be placed in isolation for at least 10 days before allowing them to mix with other equines.

Comprehensive industry advice and guidance on biosecurity and vaccination is available online and the Animal and Plant Health Agency international trade team is, on behalf of Defra, writing to anyone wishing to import any equine from Europe to remind them of this guidance and strongly recommend that it is followed.

■ Fisheries: Finance

Luke Pollard:

[\[174271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason his Department drafted the fisheries support scheme conditions to exclude sail-powered fisheries from being eligible for financial support.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is delivering support to catching and shellfish aquaculture businesses affected by the impact of Covid-19 or new trading conditions via the Seafood Response Fund.

In order to ensure that funding is targeted only at businesses which are dependent on fishing as their main source of income, the criteria for the scheme specify that all beneficiaries must have at least £10,000 in seafood catch sales. In order to verify that businesses meet the criteria and that the scheme represents value for money for the taxpayer, we must rely on a combination of sales data, vessel licensing data and reference data for calculating average fixed costs for that class of vessel.

Businesses, including sail-powered fisheries businesses, whose vessel is not licensed or registered for the commercial activity of fisheries, and for whom we do not hold sales data to demonstrate they meet the sales threshold, are not eligible for the scheme. Such businesses, however, may still be eligible for wider Government support for organisations impacted by Covid-19.

■ Hares: Poaching

Alexander Stafford:

[\[174343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle hare poaching.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government takes wildlife crime seriously and is committed to ensuring the protection wildlife legislation offers is effectively enforced. We recognise the problems and distress which poaching and hare coursing causes for local communities.

We recognise the importance of preserving our iconic brown and mountain hare populations – and we are exploring a range of options to help drive their recovery across England.

Poaching (including hare coursing) is already one of the UK's six wildlife crime priorities. Each wildlife crime priority has a delivery group to consider what action should be taken and develop a plan to prevent crime, gather intelligence on offences and enforce against it.

The National Wildlife Crime Unit, funded partly by Defra and the Home Office, continues to support efforts to tackle poaching and hare coursing, assisting regional police forces in tackling these crimes by gathering and analysing intelligence, sharing this with the police and assisting police investigations.

Hare poaching is illegal under the Game Acts (the Game Act 1832 and the Night Poaching Act 1828). Enforcement is an operational matter for the police, and it is for individual Chief Constables to determine how their resources are deployed.

Alexander Stafford:

[174344]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many incidents of hare poaching have been recorded in (a) South Yorkshire and (b) England since 2016.

Rebecca Pow:

There is no requirement for the police to record incidents of hare poaching – it is a matter for individual police forces to decide whether and how they wish to do so.

There is no national data on the number of hare poaching incidents in England.

■ Horses: Animal Welfare

Robert Halfon:

[174092]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that tethered horses are given freedom to exercise off the tether for a reasonable period at least once a day.

Victoria Prentis:

This country leads the way in animal welfare, including setting standards for horse welfare. Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, all owners and keepers of horses must provide for the welfare needs of their animals.

The statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and Their Hybrids provides owners and keepers with general welfare information. The Code states that tethered horses require daily exercise and that tethering is not a suitable method of long-term management of an animal but may be useful as an exceptional short-term method of animal management.

Whilst it is not an offence to breach the Code, if proceedings are brought against someone for a welfare offence under the 2006 Act, (including failing to tether a horse appropriately and ensuring that its welfare needs are met) it could be used as evidence in support of those proceedings.

The equine welfare sector promotes good welfare practice through their respective websites and via social media e.g. National Equine Welfare Council's compendium:

<http://www.newc.co.uk/advice/>

Robert Halfon:

[174093]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department takes to ensure that tethered horses are inspected regularly by their owners.

Victoria Prentis:

This country leads the way in animal welfare, including setting standards for horse welfare. Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, all owners and keepers of horses must provide for the welfare needs of their animals.

The statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and Their Hybrids provides owners and keepers with general welfare information. The Code states that when horses are tethered, the need for regular supervision is paramount and that tethered horses should be inspected no less frequently than every six hours during waking normal hours.

Whilst it is not an offence to breach the Code, if proceedings are brought against someone for a welfare offence under the 2006 Act (including failing to tether a horse appropriately and ensuring that its welfare needs are met), it could be used as evidence in support of those proceedings.

The equine welfare sector promotes good welfare practice through their respective websites and via social media e.g. National Equine Welfare Council's compendium: <http://www.newc.co.uk/advice/>

■ Horses: Northern Ireland

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [170773]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many horses entered Great Britain from Northern Ireland in each month from January 2020 to February 2021 inclusive.

Victoria Prentis:

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has completed a report in the Trade Control and Expert System and the Post Import Management System, and has not identified any matching consignments of these imports for 2020 or 2021.

When the TPA was renegotiated between the UK, the Republic of Ireland and France it was decided that there would be no requirement for certification and/or electronic moves to be recorded between the UK and the Republic of Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and the UK. Therefore, there are no records held on the number of TPA equidae moves between the UK and the Republic of Ireland on any APHA database or TRACES.

This was also the case for all other moves of unregistered Equidae between to UK and Republic of Ireland. As part of the TPA renegotiations, it was determined that no paperwork was required for these moves either. Therefore APHA does not hold any records on these movements.

From 1 January 2021, these agreements ceased and export health certification is required for all Equidae moves between the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

■ Horses: Republic of Ireland

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [170774]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many horses entered the UK from the Republic of Ireland in each month from January 2020 to February 2021 inclusive.

Victoria Prentis:

The Animal and Plant Health Agency has completed a report in the Trade Control and Expert System and has not identified any matching consignments of these imports for 2020.

The following information is for 2021:

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF EQUINES
Jan 2021	91
Feb 2021	235

There are no records of movements for 2020. The UK, Republic of Ireland and France all formed the Tripartite Agreement and there was no requirement for certification or electronic moves to be recorded. From 1 January 2021, this agreement ceased and export health certification is required for all Equidae moves between the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Dr Neil Hudson:**[R] [\[170778\]](#)**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many horses left the UK for the Republic of Ireland in each month from January 2020 to February 2021 inclusive.

Victoria Prentis:

The number of equines exported from the UK to the Republic of Ireland from January 2020 to February 2021 are as follows:

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF EQUINES
Jan 2021	88
Feb 2021	471

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has completed a report in Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES) and has not identified any matching consignments of these imports for 2020.

There are no records of movements for 2020. The UK, Republic of Ireland and France all formed the Tripartite Agreement and there was no requirement for certification and/or electronic moves to be recorded. From 1 January 2021, this agreement ceased and export health certification is required for all Equidae moves between the UK and Republic of Ireland.

This data was extracted from the TRACES. TRACES is a European Commission system employed by EU member states to facilitate and record animal/animal product movements into and throughout the EU.

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

■ Horses: Transport

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [\[170780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many horses travelled between the UK, the Republic of Ireland and France under the Tripartite Agreement in each month from January 2020 to February 2021 inclusive.

Victoria Prentis:

The number of equines exported from the UK to France and the Republic of Ireland from January 2020 to February 2021 are as follows:

MONTH	UK TO FRANCE	FRANCE TO UK
Jan 2020	106	148
Feb 2020	120	102
Mar 2020	114	112
April 2020	115	61
May 2020	76	201
June 2020	418	73
July 2020	337	84
Aug 2020	198	70
Sept 2020	195	78
Oct 2020	274	145
Nov 2020	78	112
Dec 2020	241	187
Jan 2021	N/A	N/A
Feb 2021	N/A	N/A

When the TPA was renegotiated between the UK, the Republic of Ireland and France it was decided that there would be no requirement for certification and/or electronic moves to be recorded between the UK and the Republic of Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and the UK. Therefore, there are no records held on the number of TPA equidae moves between the UK and the Republic of Ireland on any APHA database or TRACES.

There are no figures for 2021 as the Tripartite Agreement ended when the UK exited the EU on 31 December 2020.

This data was extracted from the TRACES. TRACES is a European Commission system employed by EU member states to facilitate and record animal/animal product movements into and throughout the EU.

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

■ Horticulture: Imports

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:

[\[171498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the preparedness of Border Control Posts for the import inspection of horticulture products.

Victoria Prentis:

Since 1 January, high-risk plants have been inspected at their places of destination. Defra is confident that the Border Control Posts (BCPs) will be ready to start physical inspections of high-risk plants and plant products when the new regime of checks commences on 1 January 2022. The BCPs will be ready to start physical inspections of low-risk plants and plant product checks from March 2022.

Defra continues to work directly with ports and airports to prepare the necessary infrastructure, staff and IT systems for SPS checks to be completed. We continue to monitor port BCP delivery and will support ports to achieve an initial operating capability as import controls are phased in.

The phased implementation reduces risk of BCP infrastructure not being ready and provides Port Health Authorities, importers, hauliers, exporters and their agents, sufficient time to prepare and familiarise themselves with these new requirements.

■ Nature Conservation: Property Development

Daisy Cooper:

[\[171729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the extent of damage to Local Wildlife Sites by prospective developers, prior to applications for planning permission being submitted.

Rebecca Pow:

My department has not undertaken such an assessment. National planning policy expects local plans to identify and map Local Wildlife Sites and to include policies that not only secure their protection from harm or loss but also help to enhance them and their connection to wider ecological networks.

Defra requires local authorities to report annually on the proportion of Local Wildlife Sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented. In 2018/19, 47% of Local Wildlife Sites across England were in positive conservation management.

The Environment Bill contains important new measures for reversing nature's decline. These include strengthening the existing biodiversity duty, to require all public authorities to take action to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Local Authorities will also be required to produce 5-yearly Biodiversity Reports setting out the action they have taken and its impact as part of this duty.

Additionally, the Environment Bill introduces a new biodiversity net gain requirement for development. This includes measures that allow planning authorities to recognise any habitat degradation since January 2020 and to take the earlier habitat state as the baseline for the purposes of biodiversity net gain.

■ **Pets: Tagging**

James Daly:

[R] [\[174325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to support the incorporation of Tuks Law and Gizmo's Law into statute.

Victoria Prentis:

This Government launched a public consultation on cat and dog microchipping and scanning in England which ended on 17 February 2021. The consultation asked for views on compulsory scanning of animal's microchips prior to euthanasia (Tuk's Law) and dead cats found by the roadside (Gizmo's Legacy). The responses are currently being analysed and the Government will issue its response later this year.

■ **Plastics: Packaging**

Elliot Colburn:

[\[169057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to encourage a shift from conventional single use plastic films to certified compostable alternatives; and if he will set a target under the Environment Bill to accelerate that process.

Rebecca Pow:

While compostable materials may be seen as a solution to reduce the impact of waste, they can also be more environmentally damaging than non-compostable materials if disposed of incorrectly. The Government is concerned that, some claims about the compostability of plastic-based products cannot be verified.

In order to consider impacts carefully, Defra and BEIS published a call for evidence to help us consider the development of standards or certification criteria for bio-based, biodegradable, and compostable plastics, and to better understand their effects on the environment and our waste management system. We are currently analysing responses to the call for evidence and will publish the Government's response shortly.

Our Resources and Waste Strategy sets out our ambition to transition to a circular economy by keeping resources in the system for longer and extracting maximum value from them, before recycling materials when they can no longer be reused. We

have recently published consultations on introducing Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging and introducing a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers. These consultations will inform policy that will transform the economic incentives on packaging producers by encouraging an increase in the amount and quality of unavoidable plastic packaging that is recycled or reused, so driving up recycling rates and helping to move us towards a circular economy.

We are also preparing to launch a second consultation on increasing the consistency of materials collected for recycling from households, businesses and other organisations in England, which will seek views on the collection and disposal of compostable and biodegradable materials and the recycling of plastic films.

The UK Plastics Pact is targeting plastic film as a coordinated effort involving the entire value chain to fix the system to create a circular economy for single use plastic films. Last year the Plastics Pact published a roadmap 'Creating a Circular Economy for Flexible Plastic Packaging', which sets out the high-level actions that need to be taken by each part of the value chain. The new roadmap sets out five key areas where efforts should be focused in order to develop a circular economy for flexible plastics. These are: designing packaging that can be recycled and sorted; capitalising on existing front of store collection points; implementing kerbside collection by all local authorities; investing in sorting and reprocessing capacity and capabilities; and ensuring strong and stable end markets for recycled flexible plastic packaging.

The Environment Bill requires the Government to set at least one long-term, legally binding target in four priority areas, including Resource Efficiency and Waste Reduction. This will not be focused on increasing the use of compostable plastics, instead the target will ensure a holistic approach to all materials. These targets will be set following a robust, evidence-led process that includes seeking independent expert advice, a role for stakeholders and the public, and parliamentary scrutiny.

■ Poaching: Animal Housing

Alexander Stafford:

[\[174345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to amend the Game Act 1831 to enable the police to recover the kennelling costs incurred where dogs have been seized.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is aware of various proposals which have been made to amend the Game Act. and will continue its discussions with all those concerned, whilst considering what further action could be taken.

■ Rivers: Pollution

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[172980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he made on the extent of *Sphaerotilus natans* in rivers in England.

Rebecca Pow:

Sphaerotilus natans is an aquatic periphyton organism associated with polluted water. It forms colonies commonly known as "sewage fungus", but can be associated with different types of organic pollution such as from agriculture or some industrial effluents. The Environment Agency does not have a specific monitoring programme for sewage fungus itself, but it is used as an indicator of pollution when the Environment Agency responds to pollution incidents, and when it carries out wastewater treatment works or storm overflow inspections. If observed the presence of sewage fungus would usually be recorded by monitoring teams when carrying routine ecological and chemical monitoring. The extent of sewage fungus is often used in evidence as an indicator of gross pollution when taking action under the Environment Agency's enforcement and sanctions policy.

■ **Sea Bass****Simon Jupp:**[\[172126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will take steps to preserve bass stocks by (a) tackling illegal targeting by commercial boats and (b) limiting the use of inshore netting.

Victoria Prentis:

Steps have already been taken to preserve bass stocks.

We have ensured the current bass management approach to address commercial fishing pressure has been achieved by applying landing limits under specific fishing gear type derogations for both UK and EU vessels. These limits are closely monitored and actively enforced by the Marine Management Organisation.

Ensuring the current annual unavoidable by-catch limit for fixed gillnetters at 1.4 tonnes is adhered to is a key enforcement priority. This approach has reduced UK bass landings from inshore netting by up to 70% in recent years.

■ **Wildlife****Stuart Anderson:**[\[173168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what safeguards are in place to ensure that companies who are granted wildlife licences by Natural England carry out an acceptable standard of work under those licences; and what compensation is available to help protect consumers against excessive expenses in the event that those services so provided are not adequate.

Rebecca Pow:

Wildlife licensing authorities assess applications to conduct otherwise unlawful activities impacting protected species. The assessment of an application focuses on the justification for the activity and the consequences for the protected species. It is commonplace for this assessment to consider the suitability of an applicant for a licence to conduct the proposed works, as this is relevant to the conservation and

welfare of protected species, but the emphasis is on the consequences for the wildlife, and not the service provided by that person or company.

There are no provisions within wildlife legislation in England concerning compensation for inadequate service for activities conducted under a wildlife licence. Anyone engaging the services of a third party to conduct licensed works is encouraged to check the experience and qualifications of service provider and to get more than one quote for the work. It is also worth considering employing a member of a relevant professional body as membership of such bodies is typically subject to professional standards and may include recourse to a complaints procedure regarding the conduct of members.

■ **Wildlife: Conservation**

Sir John Hayes:

[172861]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) protect and (b) promote (i) hedgehogs, (ii) red squirrels, (iii) water voles, (iv) dormice and other native species in the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is committed to taking action to recover our threatened native species, such as hedgehogs, red squirrels, water voles and dormice. Our Environment Bill includes measures that will help improve the status of threatened species, including setting at least one biodiversity target in law. The Bill will also strengthen the biodiversity duty on public authorities to take action to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Additionally, through our net gain provisions in the Bill, we are supporting the role of new development in helping protect and create the habitat that our native species need to thrive.

We continue to work with stakeholders to determine the specific actions that will be paid for by our new schemes that will reward environmental land management. The Agricultural Transition Plan sets 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 native species.

Furthermore, Defra and Natural England are bringing together partners, legislation and funding to create the Nature Recovery Network. Through this work, by 2042 we will create or restore 500,000 hectares of additional wildlife-rich habitat which will benefit our native species.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ African Union: Overseas Aid****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[173125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to Answer of 18 March 2021 to Question 168997, on African Union: Overseas Aid, how much ODA was dispersed to the covid-19 Therapeutics Accelerator in 2020-21.

Nigel Adams:

The UK has disbursed £5.66 million to the Covid-19 Therapeutics Accelerator in 2020-21.

■ Amritsar Massacre**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[173149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy to issue a statement of formal apology for the 1919 Amritsar Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

Nigel Adams:

We recognise how deeply people feel about the events of 1919 at Jallianwala Bagh. The UK Government condemned the incident at the time and former Prime Minister Theresa May made a statement on 10 April 2019 expressing our deep regret. We are committed to ensuring that what took place on 13 April 1919 is never forgotten. It is right that we continue to pay respect to those who lost their lives, remember what happened and learn lessons from the past, while recognising that, today, the UK and India enjoy a flourishing partnership.

■ Bangladesh: Rohingya**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[174066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to Rohingya refugees who have lost shelter as a result of the fire in Cox's Bazaar camp on 22 March 2021.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[174067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve fire safety in the refugee camp at Cox's Bazaar.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[174068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of Rohingya refugees without shelter as a result of the fire in Cox's Bazaar camp on 22 March 2021.

Nigel Adams:

Assessments of the impact of the fire on 22 March in Kutapalong camp in Cox's Bazar are still underway. It appears that approximately 45,000 Rohingya refugees

may have been made homeless, with around 10,000 shelters destroyed. Through our High Commission in Dhaka and our Humanitarian Adviser in Cox's Bazar, we are working closely with the UN and our implementing partners to fully understand the scale of the needs of the affected refugees and how best we can support the refugees' immediate needs. These include shelter, and access to food, water, non-food items and healthcare.

■ **British Overseas Territories: Biodiversity**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[174306]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to increase biodiversity in the British Overseas Territories.

Nigel Adams:

Environmental policy is a devolved responsibility. However the UK works in partnership with the Overseas Territories (OTs) to deliver both OT-specific objectives and to contribute to wider regional and international environmental commitments. Since 2012, the UK Government's Darwin Plus Programme has committed £22m towards 122 individual projects in the UK Overseas Territories, aimed at conserving and protecting unique and globally significant species and habitats.

There are a number of funding streams available to the British Overseas Territories to support the protection and management of their natural resources, including Darwin Plus (also known as The Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund), with an annual budget of £10 million from 2021. The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund has also provided funding from 2016-2021 for a number of environmental projects such as the Blue Belt of marine protection around the OTs. Other environmental projects include assessing renewable and non-renewable natural assets (natural capital); implementing actions plans to protect fragile coral reefs and non-native species, and biosecurity measures to prevent the introduction and spread of harmful species to new environments.

■ **British Overseas Territories: Tourism**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[174307]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has to help encourage tourism to British Overseas Territories following the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

Responsibility for tourism is devolved to the Overseas Territories Governments. The British Government supports strong cultural links with the Overseas Territories, which attract many visitors from the United Kingdom each year.

The UK Government has supported the Overseas Territories throughout the pandemic, and the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office have been coordinating the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines to the Territories which will be essential to help reopen their economies and borders.

■ China: Uighurs**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[174300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support freedom of religion in the Xinjiang province of China.

Nigel Adams:

The Government remains gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang, including the systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture and the practice of Islam. The UK is committed to taking robust action to hold China to account for its human rights violations in the region. On 22 March, the Foreign Secretary announced that the UK has imposed, under the UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime, asset freezes and travel bans against four Chinese government officials, as well the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the organisation responsible for enforcing the repressive security policies across many areas of Xinjiang. The Government has repeatedly called on China to respect the freedom of religion and belief in line with its Constitution and its international obligations.

■ Egypt: Press Freedom**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[173205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps his Department is taking to help encourage freedom of the press in Egypt.

James Cleverly:

Promoting media freedom is a priority for the UK in Egypt. We regularly raise concerns relating to restrictions on media freedom with the Egyptian authorities, both in private and public, including at Ministerial level. On 12 March the UK participated alongside 30 other countries in making a joint statement on Egypt at the UN Human Rights Council. The statement called on the Egyptian authorities to end the practice of blocking independent media websites and to release all journalists arrested in the course of practicing their profession. We regularly raise the cases of detained journalists with the Egyptian authorities.

■ Eritrea: Religious Freedom**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[174304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support freedom of religion in Eritrea.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government takes every opportunity to voice our concern about arbitrary arrests and detentions in Eritrea on the basis of religion or belief, and have called for release of such worshippers. We have done so directly with the Government of Eritrea and publicly - through our annual reporting on human rights and at the UN

Human Rights Council. Most recently the UK raised Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in Eritrea in a statement by the UK's International Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French, at the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea during the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council on 24 February. We welcomed the release of Muslim, Christian and Jehovah's Witness detainees in 2020 and continue to push for further releases. We also encouraged Eritrea to make progress on their commitment to the Universal Periodic Review process including the promotion of FoRB.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Iron and Steel**

Lucy Powell:

[\[173051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the level of UK-produced steel procured by his Department and associated departmental public bodies and agencies in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office did not procure steel domestically or internationally in 2019-20 and 2020-21.

■ **Gaza: Hamas**

Robert Largan:

[\[173222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for regional stability of the re-election of Yahya Sinwar as Hamas's leader in the Gaza Strip.

James Cleverly:

The UK continues to monitor the situation closely and retains a policy of no contact with Hamas in its entirety. We continue to call upon Hamas to end permanently their incitement and indiscriminate attacks against Israel.

■ **Iran: Religious Freedom**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[174302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support freedom of religion in Iran.

James Cleverly:

The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities.

The Baha'i community in Iran continue to be systematically discriminated against, harassed, and targeted. We have repeatedly raised these persistent human rights violations with Iran. On 9 March, at the latest session of the UN Human Rights Council, the UK called on Iran to end the discrimination and persecution of religious minorities, particularly towards the Baha'i and Christian converts. Lord Ahmad made

a statement on 12 February, criticising the persecution against religious minorities in Iran, particularly focusing on expropriation of Baha'i-owned land. The UK fully backs renewing the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, so he can examine these issues further.

The minister responsible for human rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, made the UK's commitment to FoRB for all clear in a number of international meetings in November 2020. On 16 November 2020, he virtually attended the ministerial meeting to advance Freedom of Religion or Belief in Warsaw and reaffirmed the UK's commitment to promoting FoRB, particularly during the pandemic. He also reaffirmed the UK's commitment to promoting FoRB for all at the ministers' forum of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance in the same month. On 20 December 2020, the Prime Minister appointed Fiona Bruce MP as his special envoy for FoRB. Mrs Bruce represents the UK at meetings of the alliance, who work to advocate for the rights of individuals being discriminated against or persecuted on the basis of their faith or belief.

■ Iraq: Religious Freedom

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[174317]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support freedom of religion in Iraq.

James Cleverly:

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

Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities. HRH Prince Charles discussed the need to promote FoRB with Iraq's Prime Minister Kadhimi during his visit to London in October 2020. HMA Baghdad regularly discusses the need to protect and empower religious minorities with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The UK is working to support the rights of religious minorities in Iraq who were the victims of appalling Daesh crimes. To enable the return of internally displaced persons, including minorities, we have contributed £28 million to the UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilisation, which is restoring vital infrastructure and basic services in areas liberated from Daesh. In order to support the prosecution of Daesh crimes in Iraq, we have provided £2 million to the UN Investigative Team for the Accountability of Daesh (UNITAD) and are encouraging close co-operation between UNITAD and the Government of Iraq to achieve justice for Daesh's victims.

The Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, underlined the UK's commitment to FoRB for all in a number of international meetings in November 2020, speaking at the Ministerial to Advance FoRB and the Ministers' Forum of the International Freedom of Belief Alliance. On 20 December 2020, the Prime Minister reaffirmed his commitment to FoRB by appointing Fiona Bruce MP as his Special Envoy for FoRB. Mrs Bruce represents the UK at meetings of the Alliance

who work to advocate for the rights of individuals being discriminated against or persecuted on the basis of their faith or belief.

■ Malaysia: Freedom of Religion

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[174318]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support freedom of religion in Malaysia.

Nigel Adams:

The British Government is firmly committed to standing up for freedom of religion, and for individuals to practise their beliefs free from fear. These views are well known in Malaysia, and our longstanding relationship allows us to raise concerns in this area at senior levels with the Malaysian government.

HMG funded a project in 2020 to better understand attitudes towards freedom of religion or belief in Malaysia, facilitate two interfaith community exchange programmes, and develop a policy recommendation paper on the promotion of inter-religious understanding and education.

Our High Commission in Kuala Lumpur regularly raises the issue of freedom of religion or belief with their Malaysian counterparts. The Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, discussed freedom of religion or belief with the then Malaysian Minister for National Unity, Waytha Morthy, in January 2020.

■ Myanmar: Freezing of Assets

Rushanara Ali:

[173029]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government has taken steps to freeze assets of the Government of Myanmar in the UK, including all bank accounts and properties.

Nigel Adams:

We have imposed travel bans and asset freezes on nine senior military officers responsible for serious human rights violations during the coup. This is in addition to the 16 individuals previously designated for serious human rights violations in Myanmar. It is the Myanmar military that are responsible for the coup and the abhorrent human rights violations associated with it and we are determined to impose a cost on them. We will consider all tools at our disposal, including further sanctions on individuals and entities.

We have used the Burma sanctions regime and the Global Human Rights regime to target those responsible for human rights violations in Myanmar. On Thursday 26 March we imposed sanctions on military owned entity Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL), in concert with the US to incur a cost on the military for the coup.

■ Myanmar: Health Services**Dr Dan Poulter:**[\[172968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take with (a) the UN and (b) other international partners to ensure that the Myanmar military and police forces do not violate medical neutrality and uphold their obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is appalled at reports that protestors and medical professionals have been subject to attacks by the Myanmar security forces. The violent crackdown on peaceful protestors and the obstruction of medical care-givers is completely unacceptable. The UK has coordinated a strong international response including through the UN Security Council and the G7. We secured a Presidential Statement at the UN Security Council on 10 March which condemned the violent crackdown on peaceful protestors. We are clear that the military must pay the price for their actions. We have worked with partners such as the EU, US and Canada to sanction military officers who are responsible for serious human rights violations and are exploring all options to put pressure on the economic interests of the military.

We have used the Burma sanctions regime and the Global Human Rights regime to target those responsible for human rights violations in Myanmar. On Thursday 26 March we imposed sanctions on military owned entity Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL), in concert with the US to incur a cost on the military for the coup.

■ Myanmar: Military Coups**Rushanara Ali:**[\[173030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will take steps to hold the Myanmar military accountable by using provisions of universal jurisdiction applicable in British law.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is deeply concerned at the serious human rights violations perpetrated by the Myanmar security forces during the coup. The UK is clear that there must be accountability for these acts. Crimes of universal jurisdiction can be reported to the police in the same way as any other offence, and the same standards of evidence and independence of process will apply in respect of any investigation, arrest or prosecution. The operational responsibility for deciding whether to commence or pursue a criminal investigation falls to the police, who exercise their discretion and responsibility to investigate independently of the executive.

■ Myanmar: Press Freedom**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[173204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps his Department is taking to help encourage freedom of the press in Myanmar.

Nigel Adams:

The UK has led a strong, coordinated international response to the coup and the crackdown on rights and freedoms. We used our UN Security Council Presidency to urgently convene the Council following the coup and secured a unanimous statement of condemnation on 4 February. In response to the deteriorating situation in Myanmar we convened the Council again on 5 March and secured a UN Security Council Presidential Statement on 10 March calling for the protection of human rights and freedoms. We co-led a Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council on 12 February and secured a unanimous resolution which called for the protection of press freedom and journalists. Our Embassy in Yangon has worked closely with partners to highlight the draconian measures limiting freedom of speech in Myanmar and to coordinate joint statements on these issues. We continue to condemn the deliberate disruption of communications to limit freedom of expression and press freedom as well as the intimidation and arbitrary detention of journalists. Journalists must be allowed to carry out their job without fear or threat of violence.

The UK has consistently raised the issue of freedom of expression and press freedom internationally both with partners and at the UN. The unanimous statements at the UN Security Council on 4 March and 10 March called for the respect of human rights and freedom of expression, as did the resolution passed at the Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council on 12 February.

■ Myanmar: Private Military and Security Companies**Rushanara Ali:**[\[173027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is aware of British companies providing insurance, reinsurance, financial services or consultancy services to Myanmar military companies; and whether the Government is taking steps to prevent British companies from providing such services to the military.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary and International Trade Secretary have written to UK companies active in Myanmar to make clear the expectation that they do not do business with the military through their trading relationships. HMG expects them to conduct due diligence to ensure that they aren't supporting any military linked businesses.

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: Religious Freedom**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[174303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support freedom of religion in Myanmar.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is very concerned by divisive, racist and nationalist propaganda perpetuated by the military regime since the coup. Our Embassy is meeting with a range of stakeholders, including Buddhist, Christian and Muslim leaders who are bravely standing up against the military junta.

We continue to raise our concerns, including at the UN Human Rights Council, on the Race and Religion Laws and the 1982 Citizenship Law which have been used to discriminate against non-Buddhists.

■ Myanmar: Rohingya**Rushanara Ali:**[\[173028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether a date has been set for making a decision on whether the UK will make an intervention in the Rohingya genocide case at the International Court of Justice.

Nigel Adams:

The UK supports the International Criminal Justice (ICJ) process which is putting pressure on Myanmar to protect the Rohingya. We are clear that Myanmar must comply with the provisional measures ruling. We have reiterated our support to the ICJ process in Parliament, at the UN Security Council, and through public statements. We provided funding to enable Rohingya refugees to attend the ICJ hearing in December 2019. We are monitoring developments closely and have not yet decided whether to intervene. The rules governing an intervention are set out in the Statute and Rules of Court of the ICJ. Myanmar filed preliminary objections on 20 January 2021, and the Gambia now has until 20 May 2021 to file observations and submissions on those objections. The Court has not yet determined the timetable beyond that point.

■ North Korea: Religious Freedom**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[174313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support freedom of religion in North Korea.

Nigel Adams:

The UK continues to have strong concerns about the lack of freedom of religion or belief in North Korea. We continue to urge North Korea to uphold its human rights obligations and engage substantively with the international community on this issue. We regularly raise our concerns directly with the North Korean authorities and at the UN, including most recently through the Human Rights Council in March 2021.

The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities.

The Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, underlined the UK's commitment to FoRB for all in a number of international meetings

in November 2020, speaking at the Ministerial to Advance FoRB and the Ministers' Forum of the Alliance. On 20 December 2020, the Prime Minister reaffirmed his commitment to FoRB by appointing Fiona Bruce MP as his Special Envoy for FoRB. Mrs Bruce represents the UK at meetings of the Alliance who work to advocate for the rights of individuals being discriminated against or persecuted on the basis of their faith or belief.

In 2019, the Bishop of Truro released a report commissioned by the then Foreign Secretary looking into the then FCO support for persecuted Christians, with recommendations to improve the lives of people persecuted for their religion, faith or belief. One of those recommendations related to the establishment of the UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime. This regime came into effect on 6 July 2020 and allows us to designate those who commit serious human rights abuses or violations, including those who target individuals on the grounds of their religion or belief. We take decisions about whether particular individuals or entities could be subject to measures under the regime on a case-by-case basis. We have already designated two entities involved in administering the North Korean penal system.

■ Pakistan: Religious Freedom

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[174301]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support freedom of religion in Pakistan.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities around the globe. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities.

We continue to urge the Government of Pakistan at senior levels to guarantee the fundamental rights of all its citizens, regardless of their religion or belief. Most recently, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and Human Rights, raised the need to promote respect for all religions with Pakistan's Special Representative for Religious Harmony, Tahir Ashrafi, on 23 March. Lord Ahmad also raised our concerns on Freedom of Religion or Belief in Pakistan with the Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 20 February.

The UK works within the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, and the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance ("the Alliance") to promote and protect FoRB for all. Lord Ahmad underlined the UK's commitment to FoRB for all at a number of international meetings in November 2020, speaking at the intergovernmental Ministerial to Advance FoRB and the Ministers' Forum of the Alliance. On 20 December 2020, the Prime Minister reaffirmed his personal commitment to the issue by appointing Fiona Bruce MP as his Special Envoy for FoRB.

■ Palestinians: Terrorism**Robert Largan:** [\[173221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the UK will issue a condemnation of the alleged payment of salaries to prisoners convicted of terrorist offences by the Palestinian Authority.

James Cleverly:

No UK aid is used for prisoner payments to Palestinian prisoners or their families. We continue to raise the need for reform to the prisoner payments system to become more needs-based, transparent and affordable.

■ Sudan: Religious Freedom**Imran Ahmad Khan:** [\[174305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support freedom of religion in Sudan.

James Duddridge:

We welcome the Government of Sudan's pledge to ensure that human rights and freedom of religion and belief are fully respected and commend progress, including legal reforms decriminalising apostasy, declaring Christmas a national holiday and lifting of public order laws that disproportionately affected Christian women. In addition we commend the reference to freedom of religion or belief as part of the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA), including the intention to establish an independent commission for religious freedom in Sudan. However, long-standing human rights issues remain and it will take time for these commitments to impact ordinary people as the country transitions to democracy and the JPA is implemented. The Foreign Secretary emphasised the need for progress on human rights reforms when he met Prime Minister Hamdok in Khartoum in January 2021. The UK also continues to work with the Government of Sudan, civil society and the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission Sudan (UNITAMS), to deliver further progress as part of our wider work to support human rights improvements. More broadly our Annual Human Rights Report sets out in detail the UK's approach to human rights priority countries, including Sudan, and the work we have undertaken to promote and protect human rights around world.

■ Syria: Religious Freedom**Imran Ahmad Khan:** [\[174316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support freedom of religion in Syria.

James Cleverly:

The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities.

Christians and people of other religions or beliefs have suffered in the Syrian conflict, persecuted particularly by Daesh. The UK is committed to supporting efforts to bring an end to this conflict as quickly as possible through the UN-facilitated political process, which aims to reach a lasting political settlement which protects the rights of all Syrians. We also support efforts to pursue accountability for the most serious crimes committed in Syria and have contributed over £13 million since 2012 in support of Syrian and international efforts to gather evidence and assist victims of human rights abuses and violations, including support to the UN International Impartial and Independent Mechanism.

The Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, underlined the UK's commitment to FoRB for all at the Ministerial to Advance FoRB and the Ministers' Forum of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance. On 20 December 2020, the Prime Minister reaffirmed his commitment to FoRB by appointing Fiona Bruce MP as his Special Envoy for FoRB.

■ **Tajikistan: Religious Freedom**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[174314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support freedom of religion in Tajikistan.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities. On a country level, Ministers and officials regularly raise specific cases of concern, and discuss practices and laws that discriminate on the basis of religion or belief. On a multilateral level, we work within the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance ('Alliance') and other international organisations and networks to promote and protect FoRB for all where it is threatened. The Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, underlined the UK's commitment to FoRB for all in a number of international meetings in November 2020, speaking at the Ministerial to Advance FoRB and the Ministers' Forum of the Alliance. On 20 December 2020, the Prime Minister reaffirmed his commitment to FoRB by appointing Fiona Bruce MP as his Special Envoy for FoRB. Mrs Bruce represents the UK at meetings of the Alliance who work to advocate for the rights of individuals being discriminated against or persecuted on the basis of their faith or belief.

■ **Turkmenistan: Religious Freedom**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[174315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support freedom of religion in Turkmenistan.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities. Turkmenistan remains a Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Human Rights Priority Country. Our 2019 Human Rights Report and a subsequent statement by the Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, in November 2020 highlighted our concerns over the imprisonment of a number of conscientious objectors to military service, which included Jehovah's Witnesses. Officials in London have met with The European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses to discuss freedom of religion or belief across Central Asia.

Lord Ahmad also underlined the UK's commitment to FoRB for all in a number of international meetings in November 2020, speaking at the Ministerial to Advance FoRB and the Ministers' Forum of the Alliance. On 20 December 2020, the Prime Minister reaffirmed his commitment to FoRB by appointing Fiona Bruce MP as his Special Envoy for FoRB. Mrs Bruce represents the UK at meetings of the Alliance who work to advocate for the rights of individuals being discriminated against or persecuted on the basis of their faith or belief.

■ Venezuela: Press Freedom**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[174299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support freedom of the press in Venezuela.

Wendy Morton:

We remain concerned about the increasing intimidation and harassment of the media by the Maduro regime. A statement by the Independent International Fact Finding Mission on Venezuela on 10 March stated that there have been 9 detentions of journalists, and the independent press since its last report in September 2020. We highlighted this issue at the UN Human Rights Council meeting on Venezuela in March, and signed up to the ministerial statement by the International Contact Group on Venezuela on 2 February, which called for an immediate end to repression and attacks on the media in Venezuela.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Sarah Owen:**[\[91730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to his oral contribution of 15 September 2020, Official Report, column 185, if he will publish the source of the data which shows 484 people receiving covid-19 tests in Luton on 14 September 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: The source of this data is the Test and Trace Weekly Statistical bulletin. The data provided immediately and there are some cases where a test is registered after the day it has been taken, which means that the number of tests can increase slightly over time.

The updated data is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/number-of-coronavirus-tests-processed-by-local-authority-england-28-may-to-16-september-2020>

■ Abortion: Drugs**Sally-Ann Hart:****[164679]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the advice to women to seek medical advice or call an ambulance on 999 if they experience certain complications from medical abortions at home, whether Emergency Departments are recording the complications medical abortions based on whether those pills were taken (a) at home, (b) partially at home, or (c) in a clinic; and whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring Emergency Departments to distinguish between home and in-clinic medical abortion complications.

Helen Whately:

This level of detail is not recorded in the Emergency Care Data Set or Hospital Episode Statistics accident and emergency data. The Department acknowledges there are limitations with the abortion complications data that is collected. We are planning to examine with partner organisations how well these systems are working in relation to recording complications arising from abortions and whether improvement is required.

■ Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund**Helen Hayes:****[171669]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Infection Control Fund on supporting care homes with their infection prevention control measures during the covid-19 outbreak; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of that fund closing on 31 March 2021.

Helen Hayes:**[171670]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to extend the Infection Control Fund for care homes; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

Since May 2020, the Infection Control Fund has supported adult social care providers to take several key measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission within and between care settings. The Department has been monitoring reporting from local authorities, which has shown that providers have been able to use this funding to take these key

measures, such as paying staff their normal wages while self-isolating and limiting staff movement between settings.

It will be important to continue rigorous infection control measures beyond 31 March as we begin to cautiously ease restrictions and reintroduce visits to care homes. On 18 March 2021, the Government announced an extra £341 million for adult social care to pay for infection prevention control measures and support rapid testing to the end of June 2021. Additionally, in 2021-22, local authorities are expected to receive estimated funding of around £3 billion to help manage the impact of COVID-19. This includes £1.55 billion of grant funding to meet additional service pressures, including adult social care.

■ **Alzheimer's Disease and Motor Neurone Disease: Medical Treatments**

Claire Hanna:

[174298]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential role of the Gene Therapy Innovation and Manufacturing Centre in Sheffield in developing new treatment options for (a) motor neurone disease and (b) Alzheimers.

Edward Argar:

No such assessment has been made.

■ **Asthma**

Paul Blomfield:

[158024]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason his Department amended the definition of severe asthma sufferers as those who were formally shielding, regularly take steroid tablets or had ever had an emergency hospital admission; and what impact assessment was undertaken before that definition was amended.

Jo Churchill:

People suffering from severe asthma are more likely to have had an emergency hospital admission or have taken oral steroids for a specified frequency. These criteria were behind the decision to include severe asthma sufferers as part of priority group six for vaccination.

Regarding shielding, patients with severe asthma were identified as being priority group four or clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) by two routes. An algorithm was used to identify patients who received high levels of certain asthma medication. Inpatients were also directly added to the CEV list by a clinician in either primary or secondary care following the shielding advice for those with severe respiratory conditions, which was published by the British Thoracic Society in April 2020.

■ Autism and Learning Disability: Health Services

Alex Cunningham:

[168908]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department undertake a national review of existing commissioning arrangements for (a) autistic people and (b) people with learning disabilities.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 18 March 2021]: While we have no current plans to review the existing commissioning arrangements, as part of work on the upcoming Health and Care Bill, we are supporting the National Health Service's efforts to develop more integrated services and remove barriers and bureaucracy.

■ Autism: Coronavirus

Paul Bristow:

[R] [105576]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that autistic adults who need a social care assessment are able to receive one during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Bristow:

[R] [105577]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing to autistic adults during the covid-19 outbreak who normally receive social care in the community.

Helen Whately:

We recognise the significant impact that the pandemic has had on autistic people including those who normally receive social care in the community. We have enabled access to the National Health Service volunteer responder scheme, developed tailored guidance for autistic people, informed by stakeholders, and funded autism and learning disability charities with more than £1 million to provide support.

■ Blood: Donors

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[173189]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to promote blood donations during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

In collaboration with Anthony Nolan, NHS Blood and Transplant has continued to promote blood donation during the pandemic, using a combination of partnership outreach, press and social coverage, paid media and extensive direct communications to targeted groups. It has also maintained regular engagement with the public and donors to reinforce the ongoing need for blood donation and to overcome perceived barriers, such as whether travel to donate was allowed and safety of the donation sessions.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[173191]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of altering the time period permitted between receiving a covid-19 vaccine and donating blood.

Helen Whately:

'Non-live' immunisations, including all COVID-19 vaccines currently licensed in the United Kingdom, do not use material that can cause the recipient infection. This means there is no risk to people receiving donated material from a recently immunised non-exposed donor. However, NHS Blood and Transplant advises donors who have received a COVID-19 vaccine to wait for seven days before donating blood. This is because some patients may experience side effects which would require the donation to be deferred until the side effects had settled to ensure the safety of the donor. If a donor develops symptoms after their donation, NHS Blood and Transplant would recall any components made from these donations from production and/or hospitals as a precautionary measure.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[173199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to promote the giving of blood donations from students approaching the age of 18.

Helen Whately:

NHS Blood and Transplant, in collaboration with Anthony Nolan, has developed free, curriculum-linked resources for secondary school teachers in England, to educate children aged 11 to 16 years old about blood, organ and stem cell donation. In addition, NHS Blood and Transplant charity partners have developed resources for children and young people.

NHS Blood and Transplant also delivers events and outreach activity in local colleges, sixth forms and universities. This activity has currently been paused or delivered virtually but will resume when national restrictions ease.

■ Bone Marrow: Donors

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[173190]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to promote bone marrow donations during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

NHS Blood and Transplant's British Bone Marrow Registry has continued to recruit blood donors as potential stem cell donors after a brief pause at the start of the pandemic. They have exceeded the annual target for new donors for the past year and aim to double the number of donors added in this coming year to 30,000.

In 2020-21, the Department's stem cell programme provided funding of £620,000 including recruitment and genotyping of prospective donors from ethnic minority backgrounds and supporting the use of the cord blood stem cell bank. In 2020, Anthony Nolan was awarded £315,000 from the Department for Digital, Culture,

Media and Sport voluntary sector scheme to support stem cell donations, stem cell transplants and blood cancer patient's wellbeing during the pandemic.

■ **Business: Coronavirus**

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[172090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of businesses in Cambridge that are eligible for the workplace testing programme have registered for that programme.

Helen Whately:

There are 760 private sector organisations in Cambridge which have registered interest in workplace testing. This represents approximately 16% of all businesses in the area.

■ **Cancer: Health Services**

Wes Streeting:

[\[173096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were waiting more than 62 days for initial treatment for cancer in the London Borough of Redbridge in the most recent period for which that information is available.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 25 March 2021]: Most recent official data for Redbridge Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) shows in January 2021, 19 out of 24 cancer patients were treated within the 85% threshold, against the 62-day general practitioner referral to first treatment for cancer standard. Five patients waited over 62 days for their first cancer treatment at Redbridge CCG.

■ **Cancer: Nurses**

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[173061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding plans he has to ensure an adequate number of nurses are in place to deliver the targets for cancer set out in the NHS Long Term Plan.

Jo Churchill:

The National Health Service in England is continuing to increase the Cancer Nurse Specialist (CNS) workforce. Health Education England is offering training grants for 350 nurses to become CNS and chemotherapy nurses. The NHS People Plan also commits to extending cancer support-worker training which will further increase the capacity of CNS already in post.

The Spending Review 2020 will also provide £260 million to continue to increase the NHS workforce and support commitments made in the NHS Long Term Plan. Full details on funding allocations in 2021-22, including for the NHS cancer workforce and cancer diagnostics, will be subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and finalised in due course.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Justin Madders: [140148]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with representatives of care homes on the reliability of lateral flow tests.

Helen Whately:

The Department has regular discussions with care sector stakeholders including the National Care Forum and Care England, care home provider groups and individual care homes regarding the use of lateral flow device testing.

Richard Thomson: [172119]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of care home (a) staff and (b) residents have received a (i) first dose and (ii) second dose of a covid-19 vaccination to date.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The information requested is available at the following link:

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

Richard Thomson: [172120]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of care home (a) residents and (b) staff have been offered each covid-19 dose to date; and how many have refused that vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The top four priority groups including those aged 70 years old and over, care home residents and staff, have now all been offered the vaccine.

Information regarding the number of people who refuse a vaccine is not collected and data on vaccination invitations issued is not centrally held.

■ Care Homes: Staff

Sir Mark Hendrick: [154774]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage the recruitment of care workers.

Helen Whately:

In order to attract more people into the sector we have been running a national recruitment campaign across broadcast, digital and social media. The latest phase of the campaign, Care for Others, Make a Difference, was launched in early February. We are also working with the Department for Work and Pensions to provide resources to work coaches to help them promote adult social care careers to jobseekers.

■ Care Homes: Visits

Stephen Timms:

[\[113469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of reduced visitor access on the levels of (a) loneliness and (b) mental ill health of care home residents since the start of the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: New visiting arrangements started on 8 March. Our guidance states that each resident can nominate one named person who can have regular, indoor visits. Those residents with the highest care needs can also nominate an “Essential Care Giver”. These visitors will be able to visit more often in order to provide essential care.

Visiting arrangements that have been available throughout the period of national lockdown should continue i.e. using screens, visiting pods, behind windows or outdoors. Visits in exceptional circumstances including end of life should always be supported and enabled.

We are working with the National Health Service, Public Health England and others to gather evidence and assess the potential longer-term mental health impacts of COVID-19 and plan for how to support the public’s mental health and wellbeing throughout the coming weeks and months.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[153157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of issuing guidance to ensure that by 1 March essential caregivers can visit their loved ones in care homes to limit the detrimental effect of isolation on older residents in care homes.

Helen Whately:

As announced as part of the roadmap publication on 22 February, new visiting arrangements started on 8 March. Our guidance states that each resident can nominate one named person who can have regular, indoor visits. Those residents with the highest care needs can also nominate an “Essential Care Giver”. These visitors will be able to visit more often in order to provide essential care. They will have the same testing and personal protective equipment arrangements as care home staff so that they can also provide extra support, like help with washing and dressing or eating well.

Detailed guidance was published on 4 March 2021.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[164531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set out a timetable for the re-introduction of close contact care home visits in England.

Helen Whately:

New visiting arrangements started on 8 March. From then, every care home should ensure that each resident can nominate one named person who can have regular, indoor visits. Those with the highest care needs can also nominate an 'essential care giver'. These visitors will be able to visit more often in order to provide essential care. They will have the same testing and arrangements as care home staff so that they can also provide extra support, like help with washing and dressing or eating well.

At step two of the roadmap, we will assess the data and take a decision on opening up further opportunities for visiting, setting out a plan for the next phase of visits for people in residential care.

Continuing Care**Karin Smyth:**[\[173078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of Continuing Health Care assessments that are outstanding as a result of the six-month suspension imposed in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Karin Smyth:[\[173079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the additional resources required to ensure that outstanding Continuing Health Care assessments are undertaken in a timely manner in accordance with the statutory guidance.

Helen Whately:

As of 14 March 2021, there were just under 3,000 assessments outstanding from the period when NHS Continuing Healthcare (NHS CHC) assessments were not required, as a result of the legislation implemented due to the pandemic. Funding from the COVID-19 hospital discharge scheme was made available in order to support the National Health Service and social care to undertake the NHS CHC deferred assessments and colleagues continue to make excellent progress towards completion of the deferred assessments.

Coronavirus**Neil O'Brien:**[\[155376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cumulative total number of laboratory-confirmed cases of covid-19 is in each Middle Layer Super Output Area; and what the rate of those cases was relative to the population in those areas at the time that those cases were so confirmed.

Helen Whately:

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

Sir David Evennett:

[174032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people experiencing long covid symptoms in (a) England, (b) Greater London and (c) Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We do not currently have the data requested at Greater London or constituency level. The Office for National Statistics that as of 27 December 2020, 301,000 people in England were living with COVID-19 symptoms that had persisted for between five and 12 weeks.

■ **Coronavirus: Birkenhead**

Mick Whitley:

[137316]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 vaccines are being administered each day to people living in Birkenhead constituency.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England and NHS Improvement publish daily data for vaccinations in England, which is available at the following link:

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

■ **Coronavirus: Children**

Rachael Maskell:

[142026]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children aged (a) under one, (b) one, (c) two, (d) three, (e) four and (f) five years have received a covid-19 test; and what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the sample size on significance in the data sets in identifying the prevalence of covid-19.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 27 January 2021]: The information is not available in the format requested. Data showing demographic and regional information on the number of people tested is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-test-and-trace-england-statistics-18-february-to-24-february-2021>

Claudia Webbe:

[148052]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many school age children have been diagnosed with symptoms of long covid to date in (a) Leicester East constituency and (b) England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There has been no specific assessment of the prevalence of 'long' COVID-19 in children.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[155393]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential disproportionate effect of long covid on BAME children.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 24 February 2021]: We know more about the impact of the virus following Public Health England's report on COVID-19 and black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. However, as 'long' COVID-19 is an emerging condition, a better understanding of how it affects under-represented communities is needed.

■ **Coronavirus: Contact Tracing**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[147978]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the NHS Track and Trace app and the NHS text messaging service are synchronised when giving self-isolation end dates.

Helen Whately:

There remain some circumstances when the app's isolation countdown may legitimately differ from what people have been told by NHS Test and Trace in England. For example, the app may have identified a close contact with an unknown person who later tests positive, who contact tracers would not be able to identify due to the app's anonymity.

The COVID-19 app support website provides further advice at the following links:

<https://faq.covid19.nhs.uk/article/KA-01147/en-us>

<https://faq.covid19.nhs.uk/article/KA-01146/en-us>

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[147979]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which date a person should follow in the event that self-isolation end dates differ between the NHS Track and Trace app and the NHS text message service; and what steps he will take to publicise his guidance on this issue.

Helen Whately:

If the app advises a person to self-isolate for a shorter period of time than the period advised by contact tracers, they must self-isolate for the time advised by contact tracers in order to comply with the law. If the app advises a longer period than the period advised by contact tracers, then the additional time period identified by the app is advisory but is a recommended precaution.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[147980]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the reasons why people are being provided with different self-isolation end dates by the NHS Track and Trace app and the NHS text messaging service.

Helen Whately:

There are a number of reasons why the NHS COVID-19 app's isolation countdown may differ from what people have been told by NHS Test and Trace in England.

The COVID-19 app support website provides further advice at the following links:

<https://faq.covid19.nhs.uk/article/KA-01147/en-us>

<https://faq.covid19.nhs.uk/article/KA-01146/en-us>

Helen Hayes:**[149294]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of covid-19 contact tracing is provided by (a) outsourced companies through NHS Test and Trace and (b) local authorities; and what assessment he has made of the performance of each type of organisation.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: To date, approximately 93% of all completed contact tracing has been provided by outsourced companies operating under NHS Test and Trace, 4% by NHS Professionals and 3% has been provided locally. Key performance indicators are included within the contracts with outsourced suppliers and these are monitored, measuring productivity and the quality and outcome of calls. Local arrangements differ between local authorities and no assessment has yet been made of the overall performance of the local system.

■ Coronavirus: Coronavirus and Nurseries**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[173139]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 16 March 2021 to Question 164605 and 164606 on Coronavirus: Children's Centres and Nurseries, whether he had specific discussions at those meetings on workers in nurseries and children's centres.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[173140]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 16 March 2021 to Question 164605 and 164606 on Coronavirus: Children's Centres and Nurseries, if he will publish the dates of those meetings.

Jo Churchill:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care met with the Secretary of State for Education to discuss the Government's response to COVID-19 on 7 December 2020, 30 December 2020 and 10 February 2021. A range of matters related to the pandemic and its impact on the education sector were discussed.

■ Coronavirus: Databases**Mr Kevan Jones:****[170554]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the value for money of awarding contracts to both BAE Systems

and Palantir Technology for the creation of covid-19 databases for the (a) Joint Biosecurity Centre and (b) the NHS; and whether his Department made an assessment of the potential merits of creating one such database for both the Joint Biosecurity Centre and the NHS; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 March 2021]: BAE Systems and Palantir Technology provided two pieces of software, Intelligence Reveal and Foundry. Management processes for each contract were defined at the outset in collaboration with the supplier. Overall performance, including value for money, is continually monitored through contract management meetings and performance reporting milestones aligned to the Government standards and best practice. Decisions on data assessment, storage and collection are yet to be confirmed. The contract with BAE Systems is to build the necessary data architecture, engineering and analytics capability to serve NHS Test and Trace, including the Joint Biosecurity Centre. Its scope is far wider in terms of National Health Service data and the analytics capability is more advanced than that provided by Foundry.

■ **Coronavirus: Derbyshire**

Nigel Mills:

[134428]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients in (a) Derbyshire and (b) Amber Valley constituency are in phase 1 priority groups for covid-19 vaccination.

Nigel Mills:

[134429]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients in (a) Derbyshire and (b) Amber Valley constituency are in the top four priority groups for covid-19 vaccination.

Nigel Mills:

[134430]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in (a) Derbyshire and (b) Amber Valley constituency have received a covid-19 vaccine as of 7 January 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 13 January 2021]: The information requested at county level is not currently available. In addition, constituency level vaccination and eligibility data is not available in the format requested as of 7 January 2021.

Data on the number of vaccinations delivered is available at the following link:

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

■ Coronavirus: Disability

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[163177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 24 February 2021 to Question 153163 on Coronavirus: Disability, 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.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 March 2021]: The Government plans to publish a National Strategy for Disabled People later this spring to ensure that all disabled people can play a full role in society. The Strategy will take into account the impacts of the pandemic on disabled people and will focus on the issues that disabled people say affect them the most in all aspects of life.

Local authorities are working with other local partners including clinical commissioning groups, voluntary sector partners and community leaders, to identify the way in which COVID-19 has widened health inequalities and factor this into their recovery plans.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Caroline Lucas:

[\[144655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the (a) Head of the NHS Test and Trace programme and (b) Government's scientific advisers with expertise on behavioural science on the reasons that people with covid-19 symptoms do not come forward for a covid-19 test; what assessment he has made of the effect of the (i) amount of and (ii) accessibility of Government financial support for people on low incomes to self-isolate on the numbers of people with covid-19 symptoms coming forward for a covid-19 test; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care regularly discusses a range of issues relating to COVID-19 with NHS Test and Trace and scientific advisers.

The objective of the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is to support people on low incomes to self-isolate when they test positive for COVID-19 or are identified as a recent contact of someone who has tested positive and to encourage more people to get tested.

While no specific assessment has been made of the amount and accessibility of such support, we are working closely with all 314 local authorities in England to monitor and assess its effectiveness.

Robert Halfon:

[\[165499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) Public Health England and (b) its replacement the National Institute for Health Protection to tackle the covid-19 outbreak and future pandemics.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 March 2021]: The Government has committed over £37 billion to support the essential work of NHS Test and Trace and Public Health England in tackling COVID-19. We have already brought this work together under unified leadership and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) will be established formally very shortly.

In addition, The Department of Health and Social Care has made available more than £6 billion to develop, manufacture and procure COVID-19 vaccines and continues to provide free personal protective equipment (PPE) to testing and vaccination centres to ensure frontline workers remain protected.

Future resourcing for the UKHSA will be determined in the next Spending Review.

Chi Onwurah:[\[170633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 16 March 2021 to Question 109345 on Coronavirus: Disease Control, what the cost to the public purse was of the in-app notifications provided by Instagram and Facebook to the users of their platforms.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 March 2021]: These notifications were implemented by Facebook and Instagram at no cost to the Government.

Philip Davies:[\[174053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 March 2021 to Question 135878, on Coronavirus: Disease Control, in what format that data is available.

Helen Whately:

The data collected on each individual positive case from a specific date does not show whether that individual is later admitted to hospital.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[174162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to implement the recommendations of the Care Quality Commission report, Protect, respect, connect – decisions about living and dying well during COVID-19, published 18 March 2021.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[174163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the CQC report, Protect, respect, connect – decisions about living and dying well during covid-19, published 18 March 2021, what estimate he has made of the number of inappropriate or blanket Do Not Attempt CPR decisions taken during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[174164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the CQC report, Protect, respect, connect – decisions about living and dying well during covid-19,

published 18 March 2021, what steps she will take to address outstanding inappropriate or blanket do not attempt CPR decisions taken as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[174165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the CQC's report, entitled Protect, respect, connect: decisions about living and dying well during COVID-19, published on 18 March 2021.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[174166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many do not attempt CPR decisions were taken annually across the health and social care sector from 2010 to 2021; and how many of those decisions were taken in each of those years without being signed off by a senior clinician.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department is committed to driving forward the recommendations set out in the Care Quality Commission's report through the establishment of a Ministerial Oversight Group. This group will bring together partners across health and social care to implement improvements in Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decisions and ensure everyone receives the compassionate care they deserve.

The Department does not hold data on the numbers of DNACPR decisions. However, we remain clear that it is unacceptable for DNACPR decisions to be applied in a blanket fashion to any group of people and have taken continued action over the last year, alongside clinical leaders, to clarify best practice. The Adult Social Care Winter Plan reinforces that any advance care decision, including DNACPR decisions, should be fully discussed with the individual and their family where possible and appropriate, and signed by the clinician responsible for their care.

The 2020/21 General Medical Services contract Quality and Outcomes Framework includes a requirement for all DNACPR decisions for people with learning disabilities to be reviewed. We continue to monitor the situation and have invited charities to inform us where cases of inappropriate practice are identified so that action can be taken.

Munira Wilson:

[\[174279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending support bubble arrangements to grieving households of any size during periods of national lockdown since covid-19 regulations were last revised.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Although limiting social contact is critical to halting the spread of the virus, the Government recognises the challenges caused by the current lockdown measures, particularly for those who are grieving. We have therefore put in place support bubbles to help those who are at risk of isolation by the restrictions. Those who are

grieving may be eligible to form a support bubble, for example, if they live alone or are a single parent. They are also able to access bereavement support groups, including in person where necessary.

■ **Coronavirus: Educational Institutions**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[113234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2020 to Question 91159, whether specific modelling was carried out on the potential effect of the return of students to (a) schools, (b) colleges and (c) universities on levels of demand for covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: No specific modelling was carried out on the return to schools, colleges and universities. However, schools, colleges and universities did form part of the modelling carried out on the overall demand for testing.

■ **Coronavirus: Employment**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[174171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing to clinically extremely vulnerable people who have been unable to work from home and will be returning to their workplace once shielding pauses on 31 March 2021.

Jo Churchill:

On 17 March the Government issued a letter to all clinically extremely vulnerable people on the Shielded Patient List, containing guidance about the changes from 1 April and the support available.

All employers are required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace and should be able to explain what measures they have put in place to keep their employees safe at work. The Health and Safety Executive has also published guidance on protecting vulnerable workers, including advice for employers and employees on how to talk about reducing risks in the workplace.

■ **Coronavirus: Hospitals**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[144828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide an estimate of the staffing levels at each of the Nightingale hospitals.

Helen Whately:

We have made no such estimate. Staffing of the Nightingale hospitals is managed by host trusts, and is based on safe staffing levels according to the number of patients requiring care and the type of care provided. This has meant that throughout the pandemic, staffing levels have fluctuated to ensure an appropriate number of staff are available at all times.

■ Coronavirus: Inquiries

Claudia Webbe:

[173209]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it Government policy to undertake an inquiry into the disproportionate effect of covid-19 on BAME, migrant and low-income workers.

Jo Churchill:

We have no plans to do so. The Minister for Equalities (Kemi Badenoch MP) is leading cross-Government work to understand the disparities in the risks and outcomes from COVID-19 among the black, Asian and minority ethnic community and the relationships between the different risk factors.

Her first quarterly progress report concluded that a range of socioeconomic and geographical factors coupled with pre-existing health conditions were contributing to the higher infection and mortality rates for ethnic minority groups. The report can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/quarterly-report-on-progress-to-address-covid-19-health-inequalities>

Findings of the second quarterly progress report included the role of deprivation in the unequal impact of COVID-19 which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/second-quarterly-report-on-progress-to-address-covid-19-health-inequalities/second-quarterly-report-on-progress-to-address-covid-19-health-inequalities>

Tackling deprivation will be the focus of the third quarterly progress report. The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities has been set up to explore issues faced by ethnic minorities in this country and the challenges identified in the COVID-19 response is a key part of the Commission's work, which is due to report shortly.

■ Coronavirus: Medical Treatments

Emma Hardy:

[170721]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the treatment options available to people with symptoms of long covid.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

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. The Government has provided funding, through the National Institute for Health Research and UK Research Innovation for several research studies. One of these studies, based at the University of Birmingham, is researching therapies for 'long' COVID-19 in non-hospitalised patients.

On 18 December, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence published a guideline on the management of the long-term effects of COVID-19. As part of

developing the guidance, an expert panel undertook an evidence review into pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions. The evidence review is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng188/evidence/evidence-review-5-interventions-pdf-8957629261>

■ Coronavirus: Older People

Dr Matthew Offord:

[126847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the three-month trend in the level of covid-19 infection among over-60s in London.

Helen Whately:

The Office for National Statistics' study shows that for those aged 50-69 years old, estimates of infection increased from 0.2% in mid-September to 0.8% in the last week of October before decreasing to 0.6% at the beginning of December.

The Real-Time Assessment of Community Transmission REACT-1 data also shows infection levels in over 60 year olds was 0.2% in September, 0.8% in October, 0.1% in November 0.4% at the beginning of December.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Daisy Cooper:

[153384]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will update Public Health England guidance on personal protective equipment in response to (a) the new more transmissible strains of the virus and (b) inadequate ventilation in hospitals to ensure all healthcare workers in covid-19 wards are able to access fluid resistant surgical masks.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: The personal protective equipment (PPE) recommendations for use in the National Health Service are set out in the infection prevention and control (IPC) guidance, which was updated on 21 January and is available on GOV.UK. According to the guidance, Type IIR fluid resistant surgical masks should be worn when providing direct care within two metres of a suspected/confirmed COVID-19 case. As such, these masks are distributed to health and care settings by the Department.

Due to the identification of new COVID-19 variants, the United Kingdom Infection Prevention Control Cell conducted a comprehensive review and assessed the available evidence in order to inform any necessary changes to the guidance for health workers, including recommended levels of PPE. Based on the evidence, they concluded that current PPE recommendations remain appropriate.

Emerging evidence and data on variant strains will be continually monitored and reviewed, and the guidance will be updated accordingly if needed.

Philip Davies:

[161726]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 February to Question 157295 on Coronavirus: Protective Clothing, if he will publish those reviews and the scientific evidence upon which they were based.

Jo Churchill:

Copies of the reviews 'Face coverings in the community and COVID-19: a rapid review' and 'Face coverings in the community and COVID-19 A rapid review (update 1)' are enclosed. Both documents contain references to the scientific literature that was reviewed as part of the study.

Attachments:

1. [Rapid Review](#) [ER-031 Face coverings Rapid Review Update1 2021 01 28.pdf]
2. [Rapid Review](#) [PHECOVID19EvidenceReviewFaceCoverings.pdf]

■ **Coronavirus: Quarantine**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[142793]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to provide additional funding to local authorities for the provision of discretionary payments to people self-isolating during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

Since September 2020, the Government has provided an initial £50 million to local authorities, including £15 million for discretionary payments. The Government provided a further £10 million for discretionary payments in January 2021 and a further £10 million in February.

The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme will continue into the summer and will be expanded to cover parents who are unable to work because they are caring for a child who is self-isolating. The funding made available for local authorities as part of this to make discretionary support payments will be increased to £20 million per month, to ensure local authorities can continue to make payments and support people on low incomes to stay at home and self-isolate when required to do so.

Ellie Reeves:

[163278]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how often individuals and their recent contacts who are required to self-isolate are contacted; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the monitoring of adherence to the requirement to self-isolate.

Helen Whately:

NHS Test and Trace contacts those who have tested positive and the close recent contacts they provide by text, email and/or telephone and will call up to 10 times. NHS Test and Trace subsequently maintains contact with each person who is self-isolating on days four and seven of their self-isolation period. SMS messages or e-mails are sent on days two, five and eight.

NHS Test and Trace has carried out surveys of reported compliance with self-isolation for people who have tested positive and their contacts. Data is being compiled an assessment of the effectiveness of the monitoring of adherence to self-isolation has yet to be completed.

■ Coronavirus: Research

Dr James Davies: [\[148068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support research into long covid.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department, through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), launched a £20 million joint research call which closed on 9 December 2020. This call will fund comprehensive research to understand and address the longer term physical and mental health effects of COVID-19 in individuals who contracted the virus but were not hospitalised. Results of the call will be published in due course.

The NIHR and UKRI have already invested £8.5 million in the PHOSP-COVID study led by the University of Leicester. The study is one of the world's largest comprehensive research studies into the long-term physical and mental health impacts of COVID-19 on hospitalised patients and will draw on expertise from a consortium of leading researchers and doctors from across the United Kingdom.

■ Coronavirus: Schools

Wes Streeting: [\[164548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of schools and colleges were provided with covid-19 tests for use on 8 March 2021 in England.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 March 2021]: On 8 March, 98.11% of secondary schools and colleges were provided with COVID-19 self-test kits and 98.5% were provided with on-site testing kits.

Munira Wilson: [\[166576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of transparent face coverings compared to cloth face coverings in protecting against covid-19 transmission in a school setting.

Jo Churchill:

We have made no specific assessment.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Barbara Keeley: [\[124707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that lateral flow tests are administered by trained professionals.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 December 2020]: Evidence suggests that those with no clinical background or training should be completely able to secure an effective sample. International peer-reviewed evidence suggests that self-swabbing is just as effective at securing a valid sample as clinician-administered testing. Each kit comes with comprehensive instructions on how to administer the swab.

Karl Turner:[\[128667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the evidential basis was for his decision (a) to implement mass covid-19 testing of secondary school pupils in London and the South-East and (b) not to implement that testing in (i) Yorkshire and the Humber and (ii) other regions of England.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 December 2020]: The decision to implement testing of secondary school pupils in London and the South East on 10 December was based on public health recommendations informed by a comparative analysis by region of the following factors: case rates in all age groups and, in particular, among over 60 year olds; how quickly case rates were rising or falling; the number of positive cases as a proportion of tests taken; current and projected pressure on the National Health Service; and other circumstances such as local outbreaks. At the time, the case rates in London and the South East were 271 and 217 respectively per 100,000 population, compared with 208 in the region with the next highest case rates.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[133888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which Government department is responsible for collecting the number of covid-19 tests that have gone missing.

Helen Whately:

While tests are not labelled as 'missing', the Test and Trace team within the Department collects the number of tests which have been booked but not processed. This includes home test kits which have not been returned; test site appointments which were booked but not attended; and other reasons.

Alex Sobel:[\[148898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to introduce asymptomatic covid-19 testing for relatives of hospital patients to allow visitations.

Helen Whately:

There are no plans at present to introduce a blanket policy on COVID-19 testing for asymptomatic hospital visitors. However, we have introduced targeted asymptomatic testing for visitors to maternity scans and end of life care.

Charlotte Nichols:[\[158229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will expand free covid-19 testing to businesses with fewer than 50 employees.

Helen Whately:

Organisations with fewer than 50 employees can access tests via local community testing.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[160812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will (a) review the cost of covid-19 testing for the Test to Release scheme and (b) exempt people who are returning to the UK from work-related travel from payment of that cost.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 March 2021]: The costs of the Test to Release scheme are kept under regular review. We currently have no plans to exempt people from the cost of the testing package who are returning to the United Kingdom from work-related travel.

Justin Madders:

[\[162634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of expanding the list of symptoms which trigger a covid-19 test.

Helen Whately:

Scientific experts keep the symptoms under review as our understanding of the virus develops.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[173197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many adults who received a positive test result from a lateral flow test for covid-19 subsequently received a negative test result from a PCR test in the most recent period for which that information is available.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not hold the data requested.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[173198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many school-age students who received a positive test result from a lateral flow test for covid-19 subsequently received a negative test result from a PCR test in the most recent period for which that information is available.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not hold the data requested.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[174248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 March 2021 to Question 167938 on Coronavirus: Screening, for what reason no such assessment has been made.

Helen Whately:

No assessments have been made within the early years and nursery settings as they are still in the early stages of regular testing.

■ **Coronavirus: Travel****Sarah Olney:**[\[159346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of replacing the covid-19 hotel quarantine system with a PCR test to allow entry into the UK.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 March 2021]: All international arrivals to England are already required to take a test within the 72 before arriving in England and present a negative test certificate to their carrier. Due to the increased risk of new variants entering the United Kingdom, introducing mandatory testing on days two and eight for all international arrivals and managed quarantine facilities for those arriving from high-risk countries safeguards public health, reduces transmission of the virus and protects the vaccine programme.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination****Philip Davies:**[\[135885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason there is no mass covid-19 vaccination centre in Yorkshire; and whether his Department plans to open a mass covid-19 vaccination centre in Yorkshire.

Nadhim Zahawi:

In England, latest published data shows that a total of 1,763 vaccination sites have now been established including 158 large scale vaccination centres in total and 6 mass vaccination centres in Yorkshire.

The location of vaccination sites is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/vaccination-sites/>

Kate Hollern:[\[135958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria his Department is using to assess the viability of covid-19 vaccination sites.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement undertake an assessment of all potential sites which may be considered under the vaccination programme. This will include size, location, availability, suitability and will include an assessment around accessibility aligned to the Equality Act 2010. Where there are running costs to be incurred, the site will also be subject to a value for money assessment. Sites will be secured under formal lease or licence.

Daisy Cooper:

[136061]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review the format of the letters of invitation to national vaccination hubs to clarify (a) the location of the proposed vaccination centre and (b) that those patients have the option to wait for an invitation to a local centre, managed by their (i) GP surgery or (ii) local Primary Care Network.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 14 January 2021]: There are currently no plans to review the format of letters of invitation for a COVID-19 vaccination.

The letter informs the recipient that they have a choice in how they get vaccinated. Local vaccination centres including those run by general practitioner surgeries and local Primary Care Networks are available.

Patients booking vaccination appointments can choose a site that meets their accessibility needs and transport requirements and will be informed of the distance of the site from the postcode they have entered.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[136433]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is the Government's policy to deliver second doses of covid-19 vaccines within the 12 week timeframe; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect on vaccine efficacy in the event that timeframe is exceeded.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government's policy, based on recommendations from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation and the four United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers, is that second doses should be administered within 12 weeks of the first dose. For the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, the second dose may be given between three to 12 weeks following the first dose whilst the second dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine may be given between four to 12 weeks following the first dose.

Recent data from Public Health England shows a single dose of either the Oxford/AstraZeneca or Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine reduces hospital admissions by 80% in the over 70 year olds. No assessment has been made of the potential effect on vaccine efficacy at a timeframe over 12 weeks.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[136434]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will publish weekly figures on the number of covid-19 vaccine doses which were spoilt due to (a) supply chain issues and (b) appointment no-shows.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The information requested is not currently held centrally. Work is ongoing across the vaccination programme to standardise and increase the information available for management purposes.

All vaccination services have been advised to maintain backup reserve list of eligible people to take up any missed appointments.

Rachael Maskell:

[136570]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to complete the administration of first and second covid-19 vaccines to people in priority groups one and two prior to progressing to roll out those vaccines for people in priority group three.

Nadhim Zahawi:

On 15 February, the National Health Service met its target to offer the COVID-19 vaccine to everyone in the top four priority cohorts.

Gareth Thomas:

[137116]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the length of time it takes for medically qualified and registered individuals to become covid-19 vaccinators; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The vaccination programme includes different training pathways for individuals applying for vaccinator roles depending on their qualifications, experience, clinical training and registration status.

The training is designed to be completed at the individual's pace and the criteria for completing certain modules will vary. Therefore, the length of time it may take a medically qualified person who is registered will also vary depending on their previous vaccination experience and that relevant training is up to date.

Catherine West:

[137263]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with (a) local authorities and b) the Mayor of London on access to local data for the national covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: Ministers routinely meet local authorities and the M9 Mayors - the group of directly elected regional Mayors in England - including the Mayor of London, to discuss a range of issues concerning the pandemic response, including COVID-19 vaccination programme data.

NHS England and NHS Improvement provide a weekly vaccination data, including the number of people vaccinated, by both constituency and lower local authority. includes the proportion of people vaccinated for COVID-19 across a range of cohorts and geographies and population estimates are provided for most of the data. The data is available at the following link:

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

Olivia Blake:

[\[137348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether staff working with people who have been sleeping rough are in the top four priority groups to receive the covid-19 vaccine and included in the category of frontline health and social care workers.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 18 January 2021]: All frontline social care workers directly working with people clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 who need care and support irrespective of where they work have been a priority in phase one of the vaccination programme. Local authorities are encouraged to recognise that workers in homelessness settings who work with people vulnerable to COVID-19 are social care workers and are covered by this advice.

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[138110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who have received a covid-19 vaccine should not consume alcohol for a specified period of time post-vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

There is no specific period of time post vaccination during which people should not consume alcohol.

Jon Trickett:

[\[138386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on involving local authorities in the rollout of covid-19 vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has discussions on a wide range of issues with his Ministerial counterparts, including the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

As key partners in integrated care systems and sustainability and transformation partnerships, local authorities are closely involved in supporting the vaccine deployment programme. This includes the selection of sites for vaccination centres; critical partnership working to manage vaccinating in care homes; local communications on vaccine messaging; and engaging with vulnerable or disproportionately impacted groups.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[138423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish weekly data on the numbers and 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 and (d) prisoners within each vaccine priority group when that priority group becomes eligible for vaccination who have received a (i) first dose of a covid-19 vaccine and (ii) full dose of a covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The information requested is not currently held centrally in the format requested.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[138530]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of reducing the 15-minute waiting period following the administration of the second dose of a covid-19 vaccine when no negative reaction occurred following the administration of the first dose of that vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The 15 minute waiting period applies only to the Pfizer vaccine. Appropriate medical treatment and supervision should always be readily available in case of an anaphylactic reaction following the administration of the vaccine. The waiting time is in line with the conditions under which that vaccine was authorised for use, which are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-pfizer-biontech-vaccine-for-covid-19> The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) advised that Pfizer vaccine recipients should be monitored for 15 minutes after vaccination. The MHRA's advice is informed by their research on the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines prior to approving them for use. It also recommends that a second dose of the vaccine should not be given to those who have experienced anaphylaxis to the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[138534]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people whose covid-19 vaccinations have been cancelled as a result of severe weather conditions will be prioritised for new appointments.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Anyone whose COVID-19 vaccinations were cancelled as a result of severe weather conditions will be prioritised for new appointments. They will be contacted by the National Booking Service by letter, text or phone call and given the option to re book their appointment either online or by calling 119.

Chi Onwurah:

[138963]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether covid-19 vaccine candidates within a particular age decade will be offered that vaccine in order of their year group, date of birth, alphabetically or otherwise; and whether the scenario is possible that people resident in the same local area who are aged 71 could receive their vaccinations in advance of people living in that same local area who are aged 79.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 21 January 2021]: Nationally, individuals eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine within a particular age-based priority group are offered a vaccine in order of their year group in descending order.

Operationally, if patients in the eligible cohort wish to utilise a vaccination centre, they can choose to do so by booking online or via 119. It is therefore possible that if an individual will wait longer to book their vaccination than others it is possible they may receive a vaccine after residents in the same local area who are younger.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[138993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are in each priority groups for phase 1 of the covid-19 vaccination programme, by ethnicity.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 21 January 2021]: We do not currently hold this information centrally in the format requested.

Brendan Clarke-Smith: [\[139140\]](#)

"To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on that country's distribution of covid-19 vaccines to neighbourhood vaccination centres and remote sites.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: The Department has had no specific discussions.

Fay Jones: [\[140278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of how medical waste created by the covid-19 vaccine rollout will be disposed of.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Medical waste is being disposed of in line with local clinical waste disposal arrangements. Through Local Resilience Forums, health and care leaders with managers of vaccine sites and other vaccines delivery facilities are working collaboratively with local authorities to ensure there is sufficient capacity for this essential function. All staff involved in vaccinating patients in all types of vaccination facility are fully trained in the vaccination process including the disposal of medical waste.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[140334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the guidance provided to healthcare professionals administering the covid-19 vaccine states that they should inform patients of the impact alcohol can have on the vaccine's efficacy.

Nadhim Zahawi:

There is no specific period of time post vaccination during which people should not consume alcohol.

Justin Madders: [\[140833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria his Department uses to determine the geographical distribution of covid-19 vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: Work has been carried out with local clinical commissioning groups to ensure that vaccine supply aligns with the number of registered patients in the priority cohort groups in the local area. Where sites progress through their supply more quickly than others, NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with sites across the country to ensure that supplies are replenished to ensure an adequate and consistent supply of vaccine.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[140920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to follow the recommendation of the British Society of Immunology on the need to provide strong and clear messaging to the public to convey that highest level of covid-19 protection was only gained through receiving two doses of the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 25 January 2021]: The Government's public information campaigns include reminders that people should return for their second dose when they are contacted. In addition, those receiving their first dose are given a record card, a note of when they received their vaccine. The card includes a statement highlighting the importance of receiving a second dose to provide the best protection.

Stephen Doughty:[\[141473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the relative proportions of Pfizer-BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, as a proportion of total vaccine supply, being distributed (a) to regions within England and (b) to the devolved nations, are the same.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 26 January 2021]: The proportion of Pfizer-BioNTech to Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines may vary between sites/regions due to logistical imperatives such as storage and wider national supply.

Rosie Cooper:[\[141950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people without access to a (a) telephone or (b) computer can receive notice of their covid-19 vaccination appointment in a timely manner.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The National Booking Service is sending physical invitation letters to registered addresses. Others can make an appointment on behalf of individuals who are not able to make it themselves.

Dan Jarvis:[\[142935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce (a) disposal rates of and (b) the number of missed appointments for covid-19 vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 28 January 2021]: No vaccine should be wasted. All vaccination centres should have a backup list of people in the eligible cohorts who can be called in case doses would be wasted. If no members of the currently vaccinated cohorts are available, it is recommended that members of the next priority cohorts be vaccinated. In the extremely exceptional case where this is not possible, locally available people can be vaccinated based on clinical judgement.

To maximise the likelihood that appointments will be attended, the National Booking Service is available for members of the public to book at convenient times and locations.

Emma Hardy:[\[143070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) community nurses, (b) district nurses, (c) emergency practitioners and (d) other community healthcare workers have the same priority for receipt of the covid-19 vaccine as other NHS and social care staff.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation identified that the vaccination of frontline healthcare workers should be a priority for the COVID-19 vaccination programme. Frontline healthcare staff includes staff involved in direct patient care, either in either secondary or primary care/community settings, including non-National Health Service frontline healthcare staff. Therefore, frontline healthcare workers who are community nurses, district nurses, emergency practitioners and other community healthcare workers will receive the same priority as NHS and social care staff.

Neil Coyle:[\[143773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether anyone working in the UK will be required to pay for a covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 1 February 2021]: Anyone living in or visiting the United Kingdom is entitled to receive the COVID-19 vaccination if they are eligible under the prioritisation categories set out by the Government for the general population. This entitlement is regardless of whether the person is working or whether they are in the UK legally or not. There is no charge for COVID-19 vaccination.

Sir Mark Hendrick:[\[144613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to encourage the public to receive annual inoculations of the covid-19 vaccine following the first two doses.

Nadhim Zahawi:

More evidence is needed to understand whether a seasonal vaccination or booster dose might be needed. While further evidence is gathered, the Government is planning for a re-vaccination campaign which is likely to run later this year in autumn.

or winter. Over the longer term, re-vaccination is likely to become a regular part of managing COVID-19.

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[144916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including household members living with a person particularly vulnerable to covid-19 within the same vaccination cohort as the vulnerable person with which they live.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Those who are eligible for a carer's allowance or those who are the sole or primary carer of an elderly or disabled person who is at increased risk of COVID-19 mortality and therefore clinically vulnerable, should be offered vaccination in priority group six. This group includes unpaid carers. On 29 March 2021, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advised that household contacts of the immunosuppressed should be offered a COVID-19 vaccination alongside priority group six.

Mr Steve Baker:

[R] [\[145009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to reduce the spread of anti-vaccination material in BAME communities.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 2 February 2021]: The Department, the National Health Service and Public Health England are providing advice and information to support those getting the vaccine and who might have questions about the vaccination process. Our communications include targeted information and advice via TV, radio and social media. This has been translated into 19 languages including Bengali, Chinese, Filipino, Gujarati, Hindi, Mirpur, Punjabi and Urdu. Print and online material, including interviews and practical advice has appeared in hundreds of national, regional, local and specialist titles including black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) media for Asian, Bangladeshi, Bengali, Gujarati and Pakistani communities.

The Department of Health and Social Care, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the NHS are holding regular meetings with local authorities, faith leaders and BAME organisations to provide advice and information about COVID-19 vaccines and how they will be made available.

Sarah Olney:

[\[145831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to include nannies in the same covid-19 vaccination phase as (a) teachers and (b) other key workers.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 3 February 2021]: For phase two of the vaccination programme, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's interim advice sets out that the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise

people by age, not occupation. This is because age is assessed to be the strongest factor linked to mortality, morbidity and hospitalisations.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[146792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the priority given to members of the public with severe allergic conditions under the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) advice on priority groups for COVID-19 vaccination is based on a range of evidence and assessments, including a review of UK epidemiological data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic so far and data on demographic and clinical risk factors for mortality and hospitalisation from COVID-19. To date, having severe allergic conditions alone has not been identified as a condition that would place an individual at increased clinical risk to COVID-19.

Mr Mark Harper: [\[146800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will launch a national campaign to educate the public on the safety and benefits of the covid-19 vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: The Department is working closely with Public Health England and NHS England and NHS Improvement to provide authoritative information to the public and urge everyone to seek National Health Service advice, so they have the right information to make an informed choice about getting vaccinated.

We are also working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to help social media platforms identify and take action against incorrect claims about the virus in lines with their terms and conditions. This includes anti-vaccination narratives that could endanger people's health.

Barbara Keeley: [\[146838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) advice on priority groups for covid-19 vaccination and the UK covid-19 vaccines delivery plan, what estimate he has made of the number of unpaid carers who may be eligible for a vaccine in priority group six.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 4 February 2021]: NHS England's Standard Operating Procedure sets out how unpaid carers are being identified. NHS England estimates that there are approximately two million unpaid carers in England. This is based on the number of people either eligible for a carer's allowance, identified through general practitioner records, receiving support following a carer's assessment by their local council or from a local carer's organisation, or who are the sole or primary carer of an elderly or disabled person who is clinically vulnerable to COVID-19.

A bespoke process is being developed for any eligible but unknown unpaid carers so they can self-declare and still apply for priority vaccination.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[147906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support people who are clinically extremely vulnerable and have severe needle phobia to receive the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

Marion Fellows:

[\[147913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans are in place to support blind and visually impaired people to access their covid-19 vaccine with (a) braille inclusive vaccine information, (b) vaccine centre location assistance, (c) vaccine centre signage and lighting and (d) staff guidance.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: PHE (Public Health England) has published British Sign Language, braille, and large print versions of the guidance. The national booking letters are sent in size 16 font as standard, as defined by RNIB as large print and also provide 119 as an option.

PHE is currently working with RNIB to further disseminate our resources, identify any gaps, support RNIB's teaching programme to the vaccination workforce and refine plans for the production of audio versions of our leaflets. All vaccination venues are accessible and will meet the needs of people with disabilities. Individuals and families are being encouraged to raise any need for a reasonable adjustment required ahead of vaccination appointments.

Matt Western:

[\[147958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish weekly data on (a) the number of people vaccinated for covid-19 by (i) constituency and (ii) lower local authority level and (b) the proportion of people vaccinated for covid-19 in each Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation priority group by (A) constituency and (B) lower local authority level.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement publish daily data on the total first and second doses given to date by region. NHS England and NHS Improvement also release a weekly publication of vaccination data including the number of people vaccinated by both constituency and lower local authority level. The weekly publications also include the proportion of people

vaccinated for COVID-19 across a range of cohorts and geographies and population estimates are provided for the majority of the data. This data is available at the following link:

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

Emma Hardy: [147981]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the covid-19 vaccination process is accessible to people with sight loss.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England (PHE) has published braille and large print versions of the vaccination information leaflet, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-what-to-expect-after-vaccination>

The national booking letters are sent in size 16 font as standard as defined by RNIB as large print and also provide 119 as an option. All vaccination venues are accessible and will meet the needs of people with disabilities. Individuals and families are being encouraged to raise any need for a reasonable adjustment required ahead of vaccination appointments.

Emma Hardy: [147983]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to include SEND staff in the first phase of the covid-19 vaccination roll-out.

Nadhim Zahawi:

For the first phase, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advised that the vaccine should be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population over 50 years old in order of age. The first phase also includes those with certain clinical risk factors, which make them particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Special educational needs teachers will therefore be prioritised according to their age and clinical risk along with the rest of the population.

Apsana Begum: [148035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the people over the age of 85 who have not been vaccinated (a) have an NHS number and (b) come from a BAME background.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We do not hold this information.

Apsana Begum: [148036]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people aged over 65 in (a) prisons and (b) immigration detention centres have been prioritised for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

If an individual in prison or an immigration detention centre is over 65 years old, they will be prioritised for vaccination in line with the rest of the population.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[148752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on estimating the volume of wastage of covid-19 vaccines resulting from restrictions on the re-use of vaccines allocated to prisoners not being permitted to be re-used for prison staff.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: Data on wastage of vaccination doses is not currently available. Work is ongoing across the vaccination programme to standardise and increase the information available for management purposes. However, no vaccines should be wasted.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has advised that where vaccine remains unused following an offer of vaccination to those in detained settings, such vaccine could reasonably be offered to prison officers.

Margaret Greenwood:[\[148820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that parents and carers of clinically extremely vulnerable children receive clear information about how the needs of their children are being considered as part of the vaccination programme for covid-19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: At present, there is very limited data on vaccination in adolescents, with no data on vaccination in younger children. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advises that only those children at very high risk of exposure and serious outcomes, such as older children with severe neuro-disabilities that require residential care, should be offered vaccination as part of phase one. The Green Book also sets out that children under 16 years of age, even if they are clinically extremely vulnerable, are at low risk of serious morbidity and mortality and given the absence of safety and efficacy data on the vaccine, are not recommended for vaccination.

Clinicians should discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with a person with parental responsibility, who should be told about the paucity of safety data for the vaccine in children aged under 16 years old. However, the matter of whether to vaccinate a child should always be ultimately a decision to be made by the physician responsible for the patient.

Sir Desmond Swayne:[\[149150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what representations he has received on expediting covid-19 vaccinations for the members of households of patients suffering from blood cancer.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: The Department has received representations from Blood Cancer UK on expediting COVID-19 vaccination for the members of households of patients suffering from blood cancer. Those with a blood cancer and undergoing treatment are prioritised in phase one of the COVID-19 vaccine deployment programme in priority group four as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV). Adult members of a household that includes someone who is CEV are prioritised for vaccination according to their own age and clinical risk. They are not prioritised on the basis of sharing a household with someone who is CEV.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has to date concluded there is not sufficient evidence for prioritisation of household members of those who are CEV. The JCVI continues to look at the emerging evidence on COVID-19 and offers further advice if and when evidence is found that vaccinating a particular group, including household members of individuals most at risk from COVID-19, would further reduce overall mortality, morbidity and hospitalisation.

Alex Sobel:[\[149329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether retired General Practitioners have been asked to assist and develop the efficient delivery of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 9 February 2021]: Retired general practitioners have been asked to offer their help through the National Health Service Bring Back scheme.

Ian Mearns:[\[149743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of people that have been offered a covid-19 vaccination appointment have been offered that appointment at a vaccination centre within 10 miles of their home address.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 10 February 2021]: The data is not held in the format requested. In England, currently more than 98% of the population is within 10 miles of a vaccine service. In a small number of highly rural areas, the vaccination centre will be a mobile unit.

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[151687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to monitor the effectiveness of existing covid-19 vaccines against new variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Justin Madders:[\[151744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to monitor the effectiveness of existing covid-19 vaccines against new variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Ruth Jones:

[151845]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to monitor the effectiveness of existing covid-19 vaccines against new variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England has published early estimates of vaccine effectiveness which includes the United Kingdom variant of concern which is available at the following link:

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.03.01.21252652v1>

The 2021 Budget included £28 million to increase the United Kingdom's capacity for vaccine testing, support for clinical trials and improve the UK's ability to rapidly acquire samples of new variants of COVID-19. In addition, £22 million has been allocated to a world-leading study to test the effectiveness of combinations of different vaccines and fund the world's first study assessing the effectiveness of a third dose of vaccine to improve the response against current and future variants of COVID-19. A further £5 million investment in clinical-scale mRNA manufacturing has been provided to create a 'library' of vaccines to work against COVID-19 variants for possible rapid response deployment.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[151689]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of vaccine passports.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government will review whether COVID-19 status certification could play a role in reopening the economy, reducing restrictions on social contact and improving safety. This will include assessing to what extent certification would be effective in reducing risk and the potential uses to enable access to settings or a relaxation of COVID-19 secure mitigations. The Government will also consider the ethical, equalities, privacy, legal and operational aspects of this approach and what limits, if any, should be placed on organisations using certification. It will draw on external advice to develop recommendations that take into account any social and economic impacts, and implications for disproportionately impacted groups and individuals' privacy and security. The review will also include consideration of potential solutions for people to access their COVID-19 vaccination status.

Justin Madders:

[151746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 vaccine doses have been (a) supplied to and (b) delivered by, each CCG in England.

Nadhim Zahawi:

For security reasons it is not possible to provide detailed information concerning the number of how many COVID-19 vaccine doses have been supplied to clinical commissioning groups (CCGs).

Since 14 January NHS England has published weekly regional data of doses administered. This data now includes the number of vaccinations by CCG of residence and is available at the following link:

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

Lee Anderson:

[151856]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the limitations of vaccine passports for people who have been vaccinated against covid-19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government will review whether COVID-19 status certification could play a role in reopening the economy, reducing restrictions on social contact and improving safety. This will include assessing to what extent certification would be effective in reducing risk and the potential uses to enable access to settings or a relaxation of COVID-19 secure mitigations. The Government will also consider the ethical, equalities, privacy, legal and operational aspects of this approach and what limits, if any, should be placed on organisations using certification. It will draw on external advice to develop recommendations that take into account any social and economic impacts and implications for disproportionately impacted groups and individuals' privacy and security. The review will also include consideration of potential solutions for people to access their COVID-19 vaccination status.

Patrick Grady:

[153284]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on the prioritisation of the covid-19 vaccination for foster carers.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[153381]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of prioritising foster carers in the covid-19 vaccine rollout.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: Foster carers who are eligible for a vaccine because of their age or other clinical factors such as underlying health conditions, will have access to a vaccine in the first phase.

Phase two of the COVID-19 vaccine programme will cover all adults under 50 year old not already included in phase one. Prioritisation for phase two has not yet been decided, but interim advice by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommends an age-based approach, which the Government has accepted in principle.

The JCVI has concluded that targeted vaccination to reduce transmission or give priority to occupational groups at higher risk of exposure would not be as effective or

as fast in reducing mortality, morbidity and hospitalisation as direct protection of those at higher risk of serious disease.

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[158033]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to tackle misinformation on covid-19 vaccines to ensure all communities have access to accurate information.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department is working closely with Public Health England and NHS England and NHS Improvement to provide authoritative information to the public to make an informed choice about getting vaccinated. We are also working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to help social media platforms identify and take action against incorrect claims about the virus in line with their terms and conditions. This includes anti-vaccination narratives that could endanger public health.

Marsha De Cordova:

[165666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to deliver accessible (a) information, (b) appointments and (c) venues for the covid-19 vaccine for blind and partially sighted people; and what steps he is taking to ensure such provision is compliant with the NHS Accessible Information Standard.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England has published braille, and large print versions of COVID-19 vaccination leaflets which are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-what-to-expect-after-vaccination/what-to-expect-after-your-covid-19-vaccination>

Vaccination sites are subject to the same standards as all health care services to support people with accessibility needs, including those with visual impairments. This includes ensuring good lighting and clear signage. Furthermore, marshals and staff help people attending vaccination centres navigate through the centre safely.

Additionally, people can choose the most appropriate vaccination service to suit their needs.

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[168843]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of covid-19 vaccines administered to date were manufactured by Oxford Astra Zeneca; and what information his Department holds on the number of people who have received that vaccine who have since reported serious blood clotting.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 18 March 2021]: As of 14 March, an estimated 13.7 million doses of the Oxford /AstraZeneca vaccine have been administered. As of the same date, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has received 187 reports of blood clots reported in temporal association with the vaccine.

Such reports are not proven side effects of the vaccine. Blood clots can occur naturally and are not uncommon and this number is not greater than would have occurred naturally in the vaccinated population.

Afzal Khan:

[171718]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will publish the gender breakdown of the number of (a) white or white British, (b) other white background, (c) Irish, (d) gypsy, Roma or traveller, (e) Indian, (f) Chinese, (g) Other Asian, (h) Bangladeshi, (i) Pakistani, (j) Caribbean, (k) African, (l) Arab people who have been offered and (i) taken or (ii) refused the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Since 14 January NHS England and NHS Improvement have published data on vaccinations by ethnicity, which is available at the following link:

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

Data on those who refuse the COVID-19 vaccine is not collected.

Sir George Howarth:

[172014]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of people who have received the (a) Oxford AstraZeneca and (b) Pfizer-BioNTech covid-19 and have since experienced adverse reactions.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's Yellow Card scheme is a mechanism by which anybody can voluntarily report any suspected adverse reactions or side effects to the vaccine. It should be noted that a Yellow Card report does not necessarily mean the vaccine caused that reaction or event. Reports to the scheme are known as suspected adverse reactions.

As of 7 March 2021, for the United Kingdom, 35,325 Yellow Cards have been reported for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, 61,304 have been reported for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine and 281 have been reported where the brand of the vaccine was not specified. For both vaccines the overall reporting rate is around three to six Yellow Cards per 1,000 doses administered.

Andrew Gwynne:

[172025]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason people with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS/ME) are being offered the covid-19 vaccine in some areas of the country and not in others.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 24 March 2021]: To date, chronic fatigue syndrome/myalgic encephalomyelitis (CFS/ME) has not been identified as a condition that makes an individual clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 or would place an individual at increased clinical risk. It is likely that some people with CFS/ME are being offered

vaccines because they are eligible through other means such as their age or they have other underlying health issues that would put them at increased clinical risk.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[172911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of offering covid-19 vaccination to patients before planned in-patient hospital surgeries.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Timing of vaccinations for vulnerable patients before planned in-patient hospital surgeries, who are not eligible for a vaccination under phase one prioritisation, is a decision for clinicians responsible for their care. The clinicians would take into account their risk of contracting COVID-19, relative to the potential impact of the vaccine on their treatment.

Emma Hardy:

[\[173151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on whether there is a causal link between the Oxford AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccine and incidences of blood clots.

Nadhim Zahawi:

On 18 March 2021, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the United Kingdom regulator responsible for investigating medicines safety concerns, issued a statement setting out that the available evidence did not suggest that blood clots in veins are caused by the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. This followed a rigorous scientific review of all the available data, including a detailed review of report cases as well as data from hospital admissions and general practitioner records. This has been confirmed by the Government's independent advisory group, the Commission on Human Medicines, whose expert scientists and clinicians have also reviewed the available data.

Emma Hardy:

[\[173158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing to people who do not have internet access at home to book a covid-19 vaccination appointment.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The National Booking Service is primarily sending physical invite letters to registered addresses. These letters give the option of booking online or by the free 119 phone line. Others can make an appointment on behalf of individuals who are not able to do so themselves. Follow up phone calls and letters are made to those who have been sent an initial letter but have not responded.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[173212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to ensure that undocumented migrants will be able to access covid-19 vaccinations without fear of immigration enforcement action.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Vaccination against COVID-19 is offered to every adult living in the United Kingdom free of charge, regardless of immigration status. No immigration checks are needed to receive these services and the National Health Service is not required to report undocumented migrants to the Home Office.

Dr Dan Poulter:**[174079]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of mental health trusts that have become hospital hubs and are able to offer covid-19 vaccines to their patients.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Information concerning all facilities offering COVID-19 vaccinations, including hospital hubs identified as National Health Service mental health trusts sites, is available at the following link:

www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/vaccination-sites/

Jeff Smith:**[174157]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people with a severe mental illness, including those who do not have a diagnosis of psychosis or bipolar disorder but whose illness causes a severe functional impairment, are correctly identified and invited for their covid-19 vaccination as part of JCVI Group 6.

Nadhim Zahawi:

People with severe mental and their carers should receive an invitation from their general practitioner (GP) for their COVID-19 vaccination appointment. If someone is unsure if they have a severe mental illness which falls within the official definition, they are encouraged to contact their GP or mental health team. GP teams are encouraged to prioritise people with mental illness, applying a flexible approach to defining severe mental illness. For example, this could include people who are severely unwell with an eating disorder or a diagnosis of personality disorder.

Preet Kaur Gill:**[174233]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what initiatives he has supported to (a) target public health messages and (b) tackle vaccine misinformation to improve the take-up of the covid-19 vaccine among carers.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department has established an extensive communications programme to target public health messages and tackle vaccine misinformation to improve the take-up of the COVID-19 vaccine among carers. This includes bespoke communications materials shared on the CARE Workforce App; a weekly newsletter and via social media channels; a paid advertising campaign targeting social care workers with digital advertising to build vaccine confidence and encourage booking vaccine appointments; a stakeholder toolkit with resources for distribution by care providers and representative bodies; and positive messaging using influencers, health experts,

faith leaders and social care workers who have already been vaccinated to boost confidence and tackle misinformation. We have also held briefings with faith groups, charities and care providers who have expressed interest in co-creating vaccine content and acting as ambassadors.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[174239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of giving priority status for covid-19 vaccinations to guides and drivers for pupils at special schools due to the proximity of those guides and drivers to children with SEND.

Nadhim Zahawi:

For phase two of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's interim advice set out that the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise people by age, rather than by occupation. Age is assessed to be the strongest factor linked to mortality, morbidity and hospitalisations.

If guides and drivers for pupils at special schools are captured in phase one or two due to age or clinical need, then they will be vaccinated accordingly.

■ **Day Centres: Private Sector**

Alberto Costa:

[\[121288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to include privately run social care day centres within the remit of the CQC.

Helen Whately:

There are no plans to include privately run social care day centres within the remit of the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Social care day centres do not generally provide personal care or any other regulated activity as defined in Schedule 1 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014. All providers of regulated activities must register with the CQC.

Personal care is defined by the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 as regulated activity that involves supporting people in their homes (or where they're living at the time) with things like washing, bathing or cleaning themselves, getting dressed or going to the toilet.

■ **Dementia: Prescription Drugs**

Richard Thomson:

[\[172121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the change in the number of people with dementia who have been prescribed anti-psychotics during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to monitor the monthly data published by NHS Digital on the prescribing of anti-psychotic medication for people diagnosed

with dementia. They continue to have regular conversations with regional clinical network leads and local services to understand the patterns in prescribing and potential reasons for trends being seen.

The data is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/recorded-dementia-diagnoses>

■ Dementia: Social Services

Sir David Amess:

[164328]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that social care needs are met (a) without people losing their family principal private residence when paying for dementia care and (b) when adjusting or supplementing Carer's Allowance; and what steps he is taking to tackle the disparity between the fees charged by (i) private and (ii) local authority owned care homes.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 March 2021]: We are committed to bringing forward a plan for social care this year to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and to find long term solutions for one of the biggest challenges we face as a society.

Carer's Allowance is a weekly benefit and is not means-tested or contribution-based. This allowance provides a measure of financial support to people aged 16 years old or over, caring for a disabled person in receipt of a qualifying benefit for more than 35 hours a week, provided the carer is not in gainful employment.

■ Dental Services

Selaine Saxby:

[173231]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of continuing routine dental care provided on an ongoing basis by dentists on the protection and promotion good oral health.

Selaine Saxby:

[173232]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to promote ongoing, routine preventative dental care to protect people's oral health.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England have published the guidance 'Delivering better oral health - an evidence-based toolkit for prevention', for dental teams to support preventive advice and treatment for their patients. The toolkit includes evidence-based advice and treatment that dentists and their teams can use to support their patients to help prevent tooth decay, gum disease, mouth cancer and tooth wear. This toolkit is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/delivering-better-oral-health-an-evidence-based-toolkit-for-prevention>

The dental contract reform programme has been piloting new contract models to better incentivise preventative and restorative treatments. The Department will publish an evaluation of the programme this summer and based on the learning, NHS England and NHS Improvement will take forward the design of proposals to protect and improve oral health.

■ **Dental Services: Bureaucracy**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[174075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's plans are for reducing bureaucracy in dentistry by giving the General Dental Council more discretion to assess the qualifications of overseas dentists in line with the powers used by the General Medical Council.

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[174076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what changes are being made to the Overseas Registration Exam used to assess the dental qualifications of dentists who are trained outside the EEA.

Jo Churchill:

The Department is working with the General Dental Council on legislative proposals which will allow it greater flexibility to expand and improve on the registration options open to international applicants, which includes the Overseas Registration Exam. We aim to launch a public consultation on these proposals later this year.

■ **Dental Services: Coronavirus**

Sarah Olney:

[\[153332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the finding by Healthwatch England in the update to its report on Dentistry and the impact of covid-19 dated 8 February 2021, that access to dentistry remains difficult for more than seven in 10 people, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of that finding; and what steps his Department is taking to improve access to dentistry.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Chief Dental Officer for England to increase levels of service, as fast as is safely possible. Dental practices have been able to open for face to face care from 8 June, supported by over 600 urgent dental care centres across the country. NHS England and NHS Improvement have set out guidance that dentists should focus on care that is urgent, care to vulnerable groups and then overdue routine appointments. In circumstances where patients are unable to access an urgent dental appointment directly through a National Health Service dental practice, they should contact NHS 111 for assistance.

Nickie Aiken:

[\[164622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of amending the Units of Dental Activity (UDA) allocation of an urgent band of treatment from 1.2 UDAs to 3 UDAs retrospectively from 1 January 2021 until the end of the covid-19 outbreak to (a) reduce contractual pressures on dentists and (b) take into account the time taken to see urgent patients during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 March 2021]: The Department has no current plans to assess the units of dental activity (UDA) allocation for urgent dental treatment.

Contractual arrangements for the first six months of the 2021/22 financial year have been introduced by NHS England and NHS Improvement. The revised UDA threshold set at 60% is based on data that indicates practices may now have capacity to safely achieve more dental activity. Arrangements will be monitored on a monthly basis and are expected to be in place for six months in order to provide increased stability for dental practices. National Health Service commissioners have the discretion to make exceptions, for instance in cases where a dental practice has been impacted by staff being required to self-isolate.

■ Dental Services: Elmet and Rothwell

Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[172978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that residents living in Elmet and Rothwell constituency are able to access a NHS dentist.

Jo Churchill:

The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement, the Chief Dental Officer for England and the British Dental Association to increase levels of service, as fast as is safely possible. In circumstances where patients are unable to access an urgent dental appointment directly through a National Health Service dental practice, they are advised to call NHS 111 who will assist in booking an appointment at one of over 100 designated urgent care centres, which continue to stay open across Yorkshire.

■ Dental Services: Havering

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[164384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that people in Havering are able to access urgent dental treatment using local NHS dentists.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked with a large practice in Havering, which has provided general dental care as well as urgent dental care access throughout the pandemic. This practice also provides an out of hours service and NHS England and NHS Improvement have extended this service until September

2021, when they will review patient access and extend further if necessary. NHS England and NHS Improvement are also working closely with other practices and the Local Dental Committee to review access across London.

Access is not limited to the Borough of Havering and patients can make an appointment with any dentist in London. In circumstances where patients are unable to access an urgent dental appointment directly through a National Health Service dental practice, they should contact NHS 111 for assistance.

■ **Dental Services: Private Sector**

Selaine Saxby:

[\[173234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to support the private dentistry sector to recover from the effect of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Dentists who meet the criteria can access the full range of HM Treasury support for their private earnings. Self-employed dentists who have met the criteria have been eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme which will continue until September, with a fourth and fifth grant. Dentists who receive a salary through a Pay As You Earn scheme may be eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has also been extended until September. In addition, a new United Kingdom-wide Recovery Loan Scheme will help businesses of all sizes through the next stage of recovery.

■ **Dental Services: Registration**

Emma Hardy:

[\[173156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the ability of dental practices to de-register patients as a result of inactivity without giving notice to the patient.

Jo Churchill:

Continuous registration with dental practices is no longer required and patients are only registered with a dental practice during the course of their treatment. This differs from registration with a general practitioner surgery, as dental practices are not bound to a catchment area. In circumstances where patients are unable to access an urgent dental appointment directly through a National Health Service dental practice, they should contact NHS 111 for assistance.

■ **Dental Services: Sheffield**

Louise Haigh:

[\[166485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NHS England plans to maintain the number of NHS dental services in Sheffield.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England plans to maintain the number of dental practices in Sheffield.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Government Chief Scientific Adviser**Greg Clark:** [\[170581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many meetings he had with his Department's Chief Scientific Adviser from (a) 1 March 2020 to 31 May 2020, (b) 1 June 2020 to 31 August 2020, (c) 1 September 2020 to 30 November 2020 and (d) 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021.

Edward Argar:

The Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) for the Department, Professor Chris Whitty, is also the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for England. Due to the centrality of the COVID-19 pandemic to health and social care policy CSA/CMO meets multiple times every week with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Iron and Steel**Lucy Powell:** [\[173047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the level of UK-produced steel procured by his Department and associated departmental public bodies and agencies in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Edward Argar:

The Department does not frequently procure capital assets or other contracts that require the direct procurement of steel. The Department does not hold centrally any data on the procurement of steel in the National Health Service or its arm's length bodies.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**Mr Mark Harper:** [\[R\] \[171545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason it was not possible to respond to Question 167173 tabled by the hon. Member for Forest of Dean by the named day deadline.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 23 March 2021]: We continually evaluate Lateral Flow Device and PCR testing and are working to ensure we have the correct information to respond to Question 167173.

We are working rapidly to provide all hon. Members with accurate answers to their questions, as well as supporting the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. The hon. Member's question will be answered as soon as possible.

■ Disability: Children**Dr Lisa Cameron:** [\[173070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the finding of the report by the Disabled Children's Partnership, entitled The longest lockdown, that

three in 10 of families with disabled children felt their child had depression as a result of delays to routine health appointments during the covid-19 outbreak, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the effect of that outbreak on disabled children's mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Helen Whately:

On 23 November 2020 we published a Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Plan for COVID-19, setting out the steps we have taken to strengthen the support available during the pandemic, including for disabled children. On 5 March 2021, we announced that £79 million, will be used to significantly expand mental health services for children, including disabled children. This additional funding will allow around 22,500 more children and young people to access community health services and enable a faster increase in the coverage of mental health support teams in schools and colleges over the next financial year. Additionally, NHS England and NHS Improvement have been clear that services for disabled children with an Education, Health and Care plan should be fully restored.

■ **DNACPR decisions: Coronavirus**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[173165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to implement the recommendations of the Care Quality Commission's interim report into the use of Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The Department welcomes the publication of Care Quality Commission's report into the use of Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decisions taking during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are committed to the recommendations set out in the report. We will establish a Ministerial Oversight Group to bring together partners across health and social care to implement improvements in DNACPR decisions and ensure everyone receives the compassionate care they deserve.

■ **Eating Disorders: Health Services**

Helen Hayes:

[\[173101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the cost to the public purse per patient of delivering one round of (a) outpatient and (b) inpatient treatment consistent with NICE guidance for (i) anorexia nervosa, (ii) bulimia nervosa and (iii) binge eating disorder.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have made no such estimate.

Helen Hayes:

[\[173102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether a full cost analysis has been undertaken of how much it costs NHS eating disorder services to adhere to NICE guidance on the treatment of eating disorders.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such analysis has been made.

Helen Hayes:

[\[173103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many outpatient referrals for eating disorders the NHS has (a) received and (b) accepted in each year since 2010.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

This information is not held in the format requested. NHS Digital has advised that the data collected does not distinguish between outpatient and inpatient referrals, nor does it differentiate between received and accepted referrals.

Helen Hayes:

[\[173106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to improve the retention rate of (a) psychiatrists, (b) nurses and (c) psychologists in NHS eating disorder services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The NHS People Plan delivery programme is helping National Health Service employers to value and retain their staff, including psychiatrists, nurses and psychologists working in eating disorder services, by making their organisations a better place to work and being a modern and model employer. Priorities include investing in staff health and wellbeing, tackling workplace discrimination and promoting a more compassionate and inclusive workplace culture. This is aligned with work to increase the NHS workforce, reduce vacancies and release the pressure on existing staff. We are on track to recruit 50,000 more nurses and have record numbers of people currently in training to become doctors and nurses.

Sir George Howarth:

[\[174029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has held with (a) clinicians, (b) representatives of charities and (c) campaigners concerned with eating disorders on potential ways to improve the services available to people with those disorders.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Departmental Ministers and officials meet with NHS England and a range of stakeholders on a regular basis, including the Royal College of Psychiatrists, clinicians, charities and campaigners for people with eating disorders.

■ Eating Disorders: Mental Health Services

Helen Hayes:

[\[173104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time for psychological treatment for an eating disorder was in (a) 2010, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We do not collect the data in the format requested.

Helen Hayes:

[\[173107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendation on the introduction of waiting time targets for adult eating disorder services in the report of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Ignoring the Alarms follow-up: Too many avoidable deaths from eating disorders, published in June 2019, HC 855 2017-19, for what reason such waiting time targets have not been introduced.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

A four-week waiting standard for adult community mental health services, including eating disorder services, is being piloted and considered as part of the clinically led review of National Health Service access standards. It is expected that NHS England and NHS Improvement will share further information on the definition of a potential standard in 2021/22.

Helen Hayes:

[\[173108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional funding has been provided from the public purse to NHS eating disorder services in response to the effects of the covid-19 outbreak on eating disorder patients.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

On 5 March 2021, we announced that that £79 million of extra funding will be used to significantly expand children's mental health services. This additional funding will allow 2,000 more children and young people to access eating disorder services. In addition, on 27 March 2021, we announced that £58 million of this funding will be allocated to accelerate the adult community support to bring forward the expansion of integrated primary and secondary care for adults with severe mental illness, including eating disorders.

■ Epilepsy: Pregnancy

Emma Hardy:

[\[173152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to extend the MHRA and NHS Digital Medicines in Pregnancy Valproate Registry to include all anti-epileptic drugs.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Medicines in Pregnancy Valproate Registry will be used as a platform for building a data collection for all girls and women prescribed any anti-epileptic drugs in pregnancy. This has been prioritised within the next phase of development. We will shortly bring forward legislation to support the implementation of medicines registries across the healthcare network and to improve systematic collection of data.

Emma Hardy:

[\[173153\]](#)

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

Edward Argar:

Since 2020, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) has funded three research projects on epilepsy medicines to ensure safer drugs for pregnant women with a combined value of £434,396.

Emma Hardy:[\[173154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the publication of the Commission on Human Medicines' report, Epilepsy Medicines in Pregnancy on 7 January 2021, what plans he has to ensure greater awareness among health professionals of the risk of physical and neurodevelopmental harm associated with the use of many anti-epileptic drugs taken in pregnancy.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The conclusions of the Commission on Human Medicines' safety review were communicated publicly to support decisions around the best treatment options for girls and women. These communications were issued via the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) Drug Safety Update bulletin, an accompanying public assessment report and a patient safety leaflet. A news release and social media accompanied the publication alongside email alerts that targeted relevant healthcare professionals, prescribing publications and professional organisations. The MHRA is working with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Association of British Neurologists to update relevant clinical guidance to reflect the findings of the review. The impact of this review and the uptake of January communications will be monitored and consideration will be given to the need for further communication with healthcare professionals.

Cat Smith:[\[174156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report published by MBRRACE entitled Saving lives, improving mothers' care, what data his Department holds on the number of (a) women that die from Sudden Unexplained Death in Epilepsy and (b) children (i) exposed to and (ii) affected by sodium valproate in pregnancy.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Food and Drinks: Advertising**Craig Whittaker:**[\[171565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken steps to protect (a) businesses and (b) jobs in the food and drink manufacturing industry from the potential effect of restrictions on the advertising, promotion and placement of products that are high in fat, salt and sugar.

Craig Whittaker:

[171566]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on businesses of the policies proposed in the paper Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2021]: We carefully consider all views and potential impacts of our measures to reduce obesity. This includes ongoing engagement and feedback from a wide range of experts and stakeholders, including those from the food and drink manufacturing sector on specific policy proposals and in response to our public consultations. Introducing legislation across the market will ensure that a level playing field is created within the retail sector as well as across the wider food industry.

We have conducted two consultations on introducing further advertising restrictions for products that are high fat, salt or sugar (HFSS). We have considered the impact any restrictions will have on industry in terms of lost revenue and any business sectors that will see greater impacts. This has been balanced against the impact advertising of HFSS food and drink has on children's consumption, preferences and ultimately their weight. We have kept these, along with other factors, in mind whilst we develop our final policy position. More detail on any steps taken to protect industry will be outlined in our consultation response, due to be published later this year.

■ Food: Marketing

Esther McVey:

[168901]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's Tackling Obesity strategy, published in July 2020, what assessment he has made of the potential financial effect of bringing forward legislative proposals on imposing restrictions on the (a) promotion and (b) location of food products in shops on (i) small shops, (ii) medium-sized shops and (iii) shops located on high streets.

Jo Churchill:

We carefully consider all views and potential impacts of our measures to reduce obesity. This includes feedback from a wide range of experts and stakeholders on specific policy proposals and in response to our public consultations.

Micro and small businesses (fewer than 50 employees) are exempt from both the volume price restrictions and the location restrictions. Stores that are smaller than 185.8 square metres (2,000 square feet) (even if they are part of a medium or large business with 50 or more employees) will be exempt from the restrictions on location.

The final impact assessments on the proposals to restrict the promotion of foods high in fat, salt and sugar by location and by volume is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/restricting-promotions-of-food-and-drink-that-is-high-in-fat-sugar-and-salt>

Craig Whittaker:**[171563]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2021 to Question 153180 on Food: Marketing, what assessment has been made of the potential effect of policies in the Government's strategy, entitled Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives, on the ability of food and drink manufacturers to promote reformulated products.

Craig Whittaker:**[171564]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 26 February 2021 to Question 153180 on Food: Marketing, whether he has plans to introduce new incentives for food and drink manufacturers to continue to reformulate products that are high in fat, salt and sugar.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2021]: Incentives already exist for businesses to reformulate their products including reformulating to achieve the Nutrient Profiling Model threshold to become out of scope of the promotion restrictions, meeting Public Health England's reformulation programme guidelines, consumer demand for healthier products and the possibility of making nutrition claims.

As outlined in the 'Restricting location promotions of high fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) products: impact assessment', there would be non-monetised health benefits from manufacturers reformulating their HFSS products providing a reduction in fat, salt and sugar in products. In addition, preventing obesity related ill health will also result in a healthier workforce, which is likely to be more productive. The final impact assessments on the proposals to restrict the promotion of foods high in fat, salt and sugar by location and by volume are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/restricting-promotions-of-food-and-drink-that-is-high-in-fat-sugar-and-salt>

■ Gambling: Internet

Carolyn Harris:**[174159]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on public health of limiting the speed of play on online gambling products.

Jo Churchill:

No such assessment has been made. The Department continues to work collaboratively with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport supporting their comprehensive review of the Gambling Act 2005, ensuring the regulatory framework is fit for purpose and protecting children and vulnerable people from gambling-related harms.

■ General Practitioners: Centene**Emma Hardy:****[173161]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of GP surgeries owned by Centene corporation in England; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Most general practitioner (GP) practices are private partnerships that hold contracts with NHS England and NHS Improvement to provide primary medical services.

Centene Corporation does not own any GP surgeries in England. It is the owner of Operose Health Ltd.'s holding companies. The current total estimated number of GP practice contracts held by Operose Health is 58.

■ General Practitioners: Coronavirus**Andrew Rosindell:****[166340]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that GPs offer face-to-face appointments to patients during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have issued guidance on the importance of continuing to offer face to face appointments, utilising remote triage and making use of online and telephone consultations where appropriate – whilst considering the needs of those unable to access or engage with digital services. On 7 January 2021 NHS England and NHS Improvement set out further details on the actions to release capacity in general practice as well as priorities for the next quarter. This includes maintaining routine appointments, supporting the clinically extremely vulnerable and those with 'long' COVID-19 and continuing to reduce the backlog of appointments.

■ General Practitioners: Hampshire**Stephen Morgan:****[163291]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the closure of Guildhall Walk GP Practice in September 2021, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of access to NHS GP practices in (a) Hampshire and (b) Portsmouth South constituency.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are accountable for ensuring that patients have access to a general practitioner practice. In the event of a practice closure, NHS England and NHS Improvement will assess the need for a replacement provider before transferring patients to alternative practices. There are a number of high-quality practices in the Portsmouth area ready to take on new patients and the University Practice will move to significantly larger, purpose-built premises in Commercial Road at the end of this year.

■ Health Services: Private Sector**Justin Madders:**[\[168956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 17 December 2020 to Question 128690 on health services: private sector, if he will publish the (a) total cost and (b) cost per month of his Department's contracts for private sector capacity in each month since 1 June 2020.

Edward Argar:

Total actual costs relating to the national contracts entered into by NHS England with independent sector providers for private sector capacity are expected to be made available by the autumn, subject to reconciliation by both NHS England and NHS Improvement and the independent sector.

■ Health Services: Students**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[172089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with NHS England on establishing student-facing health services set out in the NHS Long Term Plan.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working closely with Universities UK via the Mental Health in Higher Education programme to build the capability and capacity of universities to improve student welfare services and improve access to mental health services for the student population.

The 'COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing recovery action plan', published on 27 March, includes £13 million of additional funding will be provided to accelerate the improvements to mental health support for 18 to 25 year olds in the NHS Long Term Plan as part of the £500 million announced for mental health recovery. This funding will ensure services meet the specific needs of young adults, including students.

■ Heart Diseases: Children and Young People**Alexander Stafford:**[\[174341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to introduce a national strategy to help prevent young sudden cardiac death.

Jo Churchill:

The United Kingdom National Screening Committee has not recommended the adoption of a national screening approach in 12 to 39 year olds. NHS England and Improvement has published a national service specification for inherited cardiac conditions, covering patients of all ages who often present as young adults with previously undiagnosed cardiac disease or those requiring follow up due to a death in their family from this cause

■ Hepatitis: Prisons

Ms Lyn Brown:

[150735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of funding the provision of hepatitis C diagnostic testing machines to prisons to (a) reduce the time between testing and treatment, (b) reduce the need for liver transplants, (c) make progress towards the elimination of hepatitis C and (d) related factors.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have offered testing machines extensively to trusts who lead the diagnosis and treatment pathways, including those in prisons. Some prisons have taken up the offer, while others already achieve excellent rates of testing with other methods.

Furthermore, the High Intensity Test and Treat (HITT) programme have been implemented in prisons. HITTs involve partner services working together to offer testing to every person in prison on a short period of time. Those who are found to be positive are fast-tracked onto treatment, with a deadline of less than two weeks. The aim of the HITTs is the test at least 95% of the prison population, leaving prisons in a good place to achieve micro-elimination of Hepatitis C. Whilst these projects were disrupted during lockdown periods, several HITTs were able to take place during 2020.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have commissioned prisoner peer support schemes, run by the Hepatitis C Trust. The peers provide information about Hepatitis C to those at risk and work to engage with each individual on their own terms and encouraging and support individuals in testing.

Progress is being made towards the elimination of hepatitis C. Over 57,000 people have benefitted from new drugs which cure hepatitis C being made available on the National Health Service over the last few years. Up to 95% of those with a reported response to the treatment have been cured. Furthermore, death registrations for hepatitis C-related end-stage liver disease and cancer fell by 20% between 2015 and 2018, exceeding the 10% reduction by 2020 World Health Organization target. This is a direct result of the investment in hepatitis C diagnosis and treatment.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Air Pollution

Jim Shannon:

[174127]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Transport and (b) HS2 Ltd on (i) ensuring acceptable air quality levels on that project and (ii) respiratory health support for affected communities and site workers.

Jo Churchill:

While there have been no specific discussions, HS2 Ltd has a rigorous occupational health process setting requirements and promoting innovations, to further reduce

emissions from construction machinery and vehicles and the impact on communities and reducing workforce exposure.

■ **HIV Infection**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[165591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle health inequalities experienced by people with HIV and AIDS.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has committed to developing a Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and HIV Action Plan, which we plan to publish in 2021. We will consider issues related to health inequalities experienced by people living with HIV, tackling stigma and discrimination and other relevant issues as part of the process to develop the Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and HIV Action Plan.

■ **HIV Infection: Drugs and Mental Health Services**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[174217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) availability of mental health services and (b) adherence to HIV medication among people living with HIV.

Jo Churchill:

We would expect treatment services, such as HIV clinics, to take patients' mental health needs into account as part of their overall care. Evidence related to people living with HIV and mental health will be considered as we develop our Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and the HIV Action Plan, which we plan to publish in 2021.

Adherence of HIV medication among people living with HIV is captured and reviewed by the clinical teams supporting patients through their ongoing care. Clinical care is further supported through the capturing of data by the HARS database. This system enables clinical teams to record treatment and prescribing information as well as collecting markers on viral load, which can also be an indicator of a patient's adherence to their HIV medication.

■ **HIV Infection: Mental Health Services**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[174215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of undertaking a review of the provision of mental health support services for people living with HIV as part of the HIV Action Plan.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[174216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure that mental health support is provided in HIV clinics that have no existing psychological or mental health provision.

Jo Churchill:

We would expect treatment services, such as HIV clinics, to take patients' mental health needs into account as part of their overall care. Evidence related to people living with HIV and mental health will be considered as we develop our Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and the HIV Action Plan, which we plan to publish in 2021.

HIV Infection: Screening**Alex Davies-Jones:**[\[170763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges on updating guidance on HIV indicator testing in line with NICE and BHIVA guidelines.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 March 2021]: No specific discussions have been held with the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges. HIV testing in England is currently provided through specialist sexual health services including on-line test kits and in some general practitioner practices and emergency departments. The Government recognises the importance of HIV testing to meet its commitment to end new HIV transmissions by 2030 and will consider issues relating to HIV testing as part of the development of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and the HIV Action Plan, which we plan to publish in 2021.

Alex Davies-Jones:[\[170765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to improve the HIV testing rates in patients presenting with HIV indicator conditions in England.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 March 2021]: HIV testing in England is currently provided through specialist sexual health services including on-line test kits and in some general practitioner practices and emergency departments. The Government recognises the importance of HIV testing to meet its commitment to end new HIV transmissions by 2030 and will consider issues relating to HIV testing as part of the development of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and the HIV Action Plan, which we plan to publish in 2021.

Hospitals: Coronavirus**Alex Sobel:**[\[145134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to introduce covid-19 testing for asymptomatic hospital visitors.

Helen Whately:

There are no plans at present to introduce a blanket policy on COVID-19 testing for asymptomatic hospital visitors. However, we have introduced targeted asymptomatic testing for visitors for maternity scans and in end of life care.

Hospitals: Visits**Preet Kaur Gill:****[174234]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to amend covid-19 guidance to allow both parents to visit children in hospital together.

Edward Argar:

Revised hospital visiting guidance was published on 16 March 2021. This guidance confirms that both parents/guardians are permitted to visit a child in hospital in circumstances where the family bubble can be maintained. However, anyone with a positive test or showing symptoms of COVID-19 should not visit.

The revised guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/C1112-visiting-healthcare-inpatient-settings-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-v2.pdf>

Infant Mortality: Multiple Births**Giles Watling:****[158196]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that maternity units implement the recommendations in the MBRRACE Perinatal Confidential Enquiry into stillbirths and neonatal deaths in twin pregnancies.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Through the Maternity Transformation Programme, a range of interventions are being implemented to support the delivery of maternity and neonatal care according to clinical guidelines, as recommended in the MBRRACE Perinatal Confidential Enquiry into stillbirths and neonatal deaths in twin pregnancies, and to improve perinatal outcomes.

Every National Health Service maternity service is actively implementing elements of the Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle which sets out specific care pathways that can affect twin/multiple pregnancies including prevention of fetal growth restriction and preterm birth. Multidisciplinary fetal medicine clinics are being established across England, which aim to ensure that high risk women have timely access to specialist advice and care at all stages of pregnancy.

Joint Replacements: Surgery**Andrew Rosindell:****[164375]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the capacity among (a) orthopaedic surgeons and (b) anaesthetists to catch up on delayed joint replacement surgeries for people who have had their surgery delayed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

No central assessment has been made. As part of the 2021/22 priorities and operational planning guidance, NHS England has set out the importance of looking after staff and helping them recover.

National Health Service systems have been asked to rapidly draw up delivery plans for elective recovery that maximise available physical and workforce capacity across their system including the independent sector.

■ Learning Disability: Nurses**Neil Coyle:**[\[170662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking under the NHS Long Term Plan to increase the number of learning disability nurses employed in NHS trusts in England.

Helen Whately:

In March 2020 the Chief Nursing Officer for England launched an 'All-England action plan for learning disability nursing'. The plan, delivered in partnership with Health Education England, sets a mandate for increasing and enhancing the number of people choosing a career in learning disability nursing.

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service figures for 2020 show a 20% increase in the number of acceptances to learning disability nursing courses in England compared to 2019. In September 2020, the Government introduced a new training grant of at least £5,000 a year for all eligible new and continuing nursing and midwifery and allied health professions students on pre-registration courses at English universities. There will be up to a further £3,000 to support eligible students including an additional £1,000 to support those studying a shortage specialism which includes new students on learning disability nursing courses.

Andy Slaughter:[\[172026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) effect of the shortage of learning disability nurses on the inappropriate use of Do not resuscitate notices for people with learning disabilities and (b) level of recruitment for learning disability nurses in NHS posts.

Helen Whately:

We have made no such assessment.

■ Medical Records: Research**Chi Onwurah:**[\[173013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the results of Dr Ben Goldacre's review into the use of health data for research and analysis in April 2021.

Edward Argar:

Dr Goldacre will conclude his review in April and it will be published as soon as possible following its completion.

Members: Correspondence**Judith Cummins:**[\[170679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 14 December 2020 to Question 122736, when he plans to respond to the joint letter from the British Dental Association, Mencap, the Faculty of Dental Surgery, the Faculty of General Dental Practice, the British Society for Paediatric Dentistry, the British Society for Disability and Oral Health, the British Society for Gerodontology, the British Association of Oral Surgeons and the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry on waiting times for dental treatment under general anaesthetic which was sent to him in September 2020.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 March 2021]: We replied to the joint letter on 23 March 2021.

Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**Jim Shannon:**[\[162607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on the rollout of a covid-19 mental health recovery strategy for children and young people.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

During November 2020, we published our Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Plan for COVID-19, which set out the support available for individuals, including children and young people. The Government will publish an action plan setting out further measures to respond to and mitigate the impacts on mental health of COVID-19 across the population, including children and young people, in due course.

Yasmin Qureshi:[\[172961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether additional funding has been allocated to children and adolescent mental health services in (a) Bolton and (b) England as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 25 March 2021]: Information on any additional funding allocated to children and young people's mental health services serving Bolton is not held centrally. On 5 March 2021 the Government announced £79 million of additional funding for children and young people's mental health. This will be used to significantly expand children's mental health services in England and will allow around 22,500 more children and young people to access community health services and 2,000 more children and young people to access eating disorder services.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[173033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his announcement of 5 March 2021 at the Downing Street briefing on covid-19 on additional funding to provide mental health support for children and young people, what plans he has to allocate some of that additional funding to help reduce waiting list times for patients on child and adolescent mental health services' referral lists.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 25 March 2021]: The £79 million of additional funding announced on 5 March 2021 will be used to significantly expand children's mental health services and will allow around 22,500 more children and young people to access community health services. This will enable community mental health services to provide more children and young people more timely care.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[174152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to use the recently announced £79 million in funding for mental health support for children and young people to meet the needs of disabled children and their families.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No funding has been specifically allocated to support the mental health needs of disabled children and their families.

■ Mental Health: Charities

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[173194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing to mental health charities in (a) Wakefield constituency and (b) West Yorkshire.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

This information is not held centrally.

■ National Institute for Health Protection

Philip Davies:

[\[174049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made in establishing the National Institute for Health Protection as a replacement for Public Health England.

Philip Davies:

[\[174050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has for the role of National Institute for Health Protection in public health; how that role will differ from the role currently performed by Public Health England; and what the body's Key Performance Indicators will be.

Philip Davies:

[\[174052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what organisational change in public health he has identified as necessary to prepare for future pandemics.

Jo Churchill:

As set out in the Written Ministerial Statement of 24 March ([HCWS884](#)), from 1 April, we will formally establish the new United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA). The UKHSA will be the country's permanent standing capacity to prepare for, prevent and respond to threats to health.

While Public Health England's remit has spanned both health protection and health improvement, the UKHSA will be focused entirely on planning for, preventing and responding to the risk of future infectious disease pandemics and other major health threats. The UKHSA will work with partners around the world, lead the UK's global contribution to global health protection research and hold responsibility for health security scientific capabilities including those at Porton Down and Colindale.

The transition of responsibilities and capabilities from Public Health England and NHS Test and Trace into the new Agency will take place over the coming months, with the UKHSA fully operational from October 2021. Key performance metrics for the UKHSA will be determined as part of this transition.

■ NHS Test and Trace: Consultants**Alyn Smith:**[\[109652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much the Government has spent on external consultants on the NHS Test and Trace programme to date.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: For the 2020/21 financial year, the NHS Test and Trace programme has budgeted £438 million for professional services, which includes external consultants. Actual expenditure on professional services will be published when annual accounts have been audited.

■ NHS Test and Trace: Databases**Justin Madders:**[\[163704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the answer of 23 February 2021 to Question 153230, on NHS Test and Trace: Databases, on (a) how many occasions and (b) what dates he has met with representatives of the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) since 29 January 2021 to finalise the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between his Department and the NPCC; and when his Department plans to publish that MoU.

Helen Whately:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has not met with representatives of the National Police Chiefs Council since 29 January 2021 to finalise the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU was updated to reflect amendments to the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020 and was published on 24 March 2021. We have agreed a review process with all parties, with the next review to take place on 16 April.

The MoU is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/972961/umbrella-memorandum-of-understanding-between-DHSC-and-NPCC-March-2021.pdf

■ **NHS Test and Trace: Serco**

Rachel Reeves: [147834]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total value is of service credits applied to Serco's contract to run call centres under NHS Test and Trace.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: Service credits have not been applied to Serco's contract to run call centres under NHS Test and Trace.

■ **NHS Test and Trace: Sitel**

Rachel Reeves: [147835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total value is of service credits applied to SITEL's contract to run call centres under NHS Test and Trace.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: Service credits have not been applied to SITEL's contract to run call centres under NHS Test and Trace.

■ **NHS: Dental Services**

Yasmin Qureshi: [174073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress has been made on increasing access to NHS dentistry.

Jo Churchill:

The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Chief Dental Officer for England to increase levels of service, as fast as is safely possible. On 29 March we announced that the threshold for full National Health Service contractual payment would be raised to 60% of normal activity, whilst keeping in place income protection for practices where infection control is particularly challenging. We continue to explore what more can be done to increase capacity including piloting pre-appointment testing.

Yasmin Qureshi: [174074]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many dental practices are open to new (a) adult and (b) child NHS patients in (i) Bolton and (ii) England as at 23 March 2021.

Jo Churchill:

Over 6,000 National Health Service dental practices in England have been able to see patients face to face since 8 June 2020.

In Bolton there are currently 30 NHS dental practices, of which six are operating as urgent dental providers, receiving referrals for any patients who require urgent treatment as well as referrals for looked after children.

■ **NHS: Reviews**

Henry Smith: [\[171570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the final report of the NHS Health Checks Review.

Jo Churchill:

The report of the Review will be published in spring/summer 2021.

■ **NHS: Staff**

Nicola Richards: [\[159068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish the next stage of the NHS People Plan.

Helen Whately:

The NHS People Plan is a shared programme of work to grow the workforce, support new ways of working and develop a compassionate and inclusive workplace culture in order to deliver the NHS Long Term Plan.

We are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement, Health Education England and with systems and employers to determine our workforce and people priorities beyond April 2021 to support the recovery of National Health Service staff and services.

■ **Nurses: Housing**

Neil Coyle: [\[174140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which NHS trusts in London provide staff accommodation for registered nurses.

Neil Coyle: [\[174141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total number is of registered nurses that are living in staff accommodation provided by NHS trusts in London.

Neil Coyle: [\[174142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish data on the occupancy rate by (a) registered doctor and (b) registered nurse of NHS staff accommodation in London.

Neil Coyle: [\[174143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what most recent estimate his Department has made of the amount of staff accommodation that is unoccupied in the NHS estate in London.

Edward Argar:

No such estimate has been made. The Department does not collect data on availability of National Health Service staff accommodation or on the number of staff using that accommodation.

Nurses: Pay**Dan Jarvis:**[\[173031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the rate of pay for registered nurses who have come out of retirement to support the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 March 2021]: Remuneration for nurses that have returned to the National Health Service via the Bring Back Staff Programme has been agreed locally between the employing organisation and the employee. The salary will be dependent on the role in which they have been employed.

Nurses: Training**Jim Shannon:**[\[167202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to create more (a) training and (b) employment opportunities for student nurses.

Helen Whately:

In September 2020, we made a new funding package of at least £5,000 available to all eligible pre-registration nursing students at an English University. The next iteration of the NHS People Plan will set out the needs of the National Health Service making sure we put the right measures in place to support and grow the workforce. An additional £15 million has also been made available through Health Education England to increase clinical placements in the NHS to support this growth.

We are also seeking to widen participation by ensuring that there are opportunities available for those who are unable to learn through a full-time degree. The Nursing Associate role and the Nurse Degree Apprenticeship in England provide work-based training routes into the registered nursing profession.

Nutrition**Sir David Amess:**[\[172007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the benefits of introducing portion control to support Public Health England's reduction and reformulation programmes in relation to (a) sugar, (b) salt and (c) calories.

Jo Churchill:

Reducing portion size is one mechanism for industry action that can be employed in reformulation programmes.

Calorie-based portion size guidelines covering food and drink consumed in and out of the home have been included in the sugar and calorie reduction programmes Public Health England oversees for the Government. The salt reduction programme includes maximum salt targets for portions of food served out of the home.

Reductions in portion size should reduce the number of calories, and amount of salt and sugar, consumed. An impact assessment, published in September 2020, showed that if the ambitions of the calorie reduction programme were achieved in full by in home retailers and manufacturers, it would result in a 6.8% reduction in calories sold per portion.

Sir David Amess:

[172008]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with food and drink manufacturers on reducing portion sizes.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) has discussed various approaches that can be taken to reduce portion sizes with industry sectors including retailers, manufacturers and the eating out of home sector. It is for individual businesses to consider and decide how best to apply this.

Reducing portion size is one mechanism for industry action that can be employed in reformulation programmes. Calorie-based portion size guidelines covering food and drink consumed in and out of the home have been set in the sugar and calorie reduction programmes PHE oversees for the Government. The salt reduction programme includes maximum salt targets for portions of food served out of the home. There will be continued engagement with stakeholders on all parts of the programme. Updates on engagement are published regularly at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sugar-reduction-and-wider-reformulation-stakeholder-engagement>

■ Nutrition: Health Education

Sir David Amess:

[172004]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to take to promote awareness on healthy portion sizes for food and drink.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England's (PHE) Better Health programme provides tips on what a healthy balanced diet looks like, including information on portions sizes. For those trying to lose weight, the website and NHS Weight Loss app include suggestions such as trying smaller plates and bowls to help reduce portion sizes at mealtimes, aiming for two or more portions of veg and ensuring wholegrain foods take up no more than a third of a plate.

PHE's OneYou Easy Meals app provides recipes with suggested portions for each recipe in line with nutritional requirements for adults. All recipes carry front of pack information per portion. The OneYou website also directs to the Eatwell Guide to

support people in achieving a balanced diet. The Change4Life website includes information and advice for parents when feeding their children including on 'me size meals' and guidance on calories when choosing packaged snacks.

■ Obesity

Sir David Amess:

[\[172005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the role sensible portion sizes play in helping to tackle obesity.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) has not made a specific assessment.

The Government's reduction and reformulation programme includes reducing portion size as one mechanism that can be used by all sectors of the food industry. Calorie-based portion size guidelines covering food and drink consumed in and out of the home have been included in the sugar and calorie reduction programmes that Public Health England oversees for the Government.

■ Oral Cancer: Diagnosis

Selaine Saxby:

[\[173233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the disruption to routine dentistry as a result of the covid-19 outbreak on the early detection of oral cancers.

Jo Churchill:

No such assessment has been made. Dentists play an ad hoc role in detecting oral cancers as a by-product of dental check-ups. However, oral cancer is primarily detected through the medical system. Patients with concerns about changes in their mouth should seek advice from their general practitioner and not wait for their next dental appointment.

■ Parkinson's Disease: Health Services and Research

Sajid Javid:

[\[166380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve (a) medical research into Parkinson's disease and (b) care for people with Parkinson's disease.

Edward Argar:

The Department funds research into conditions through the National Institute for Health Research, which invested £6.5 million in 2019-20 in research on treatment and care of Parkinson's disease. In addition, UK Research and Innovation allocated £8.8 million towards funding research into this area over the same period, primarily through their research councils.

NHS England and NHS Improvement work closely with the National Neurosciences Advisory Group (NNAG) to develop and coordinate England's national programme of

neurology service improvement. The NNAG worked with NHS RightCare and published a toolkit in 2019 which offers a comprehensive set of recommendations for improving care for progressive neurological conditions, including Parkinson's disease. NHS England and NHS Improvement have made commissioners aware that they are responsible for implementing these toolkits in their local areas. The toolkit is available at the following link:

www.england.nhs.uk/rightcare/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2019/08/progressive-neuro-toolkit.pdf

■ PHE Harlow

Robert Halfon: [165501]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to support the delivery of public health solutions at the new public health science campus at Harlow.

Robert Halfon: [165502]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support the delivery of the new public health science campus at Harlow.

Robert Halfon: [165503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to ensure that the new public health science campus in Harlow will be supported with multi-year 2021 Spending Review approval.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 March 2021]: The Government confirmed in 2015 its intention to proceed with development of the planned Public Health England science campus and headquarters in Harlow. This allowed the purchase of the site and considerable planning, design development and early enabling works to take place. Most recently, the 2020 Spending Review provided funding for the 2020/2021 financial year in excess of £120 million. Major construction could begin within a few months.

Multi-year approval, and commitment to the delivery of the programme in full, will be considered in the light of the design work for the National Institute for Health Protection and the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Prisoners: Coronavirus

Mr Geoffrey Cox: [133746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to administer covid-19 vaccinations to inmates in prisons.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has agreed that it would be difficult to advise additional prioritisation of detainees above the wider

population based on the potential increased risk of exposure in a detained setting alone.

The overarching priority for the vaccination programme continues to be to reduce mortality, morbidity and hospitalisation and the JCVI has that priority should be based on age as the strongest indicator of risk of serious outcomes and clinical risk factors. Therefore, inmates in prisons will be prioritised for vaccination according to their own age and clinical risk along with the rest of the population.

■ Prisons: Coronavirus

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[150877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what type of covid-19 vaccine doses were (a) delivered to and (b) administered in prisons in England and Wales between 1 January and 8 February 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The information is not currently held in the format requested.

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[151883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of (a) prisoners and (b) prison officers have been vaccinated against covid-19 as at 9 February 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 22 February 2021]: The information is not currently held centrally in the format requested.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening

Carla Lockhart:

[\[174340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a screening programme for prostate cancer for people over 50.

Jo Churchill:

The United Kingdom National Screening Committee UK NSC) reviewed the evidence during the consultation of prostate cancer screening in men over the age of 50 years old in 2020 and recommended that a population screening programme should not be introduced.

The prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test is not accurate enough to detect the aggressive prostate cancers that need treatment. It can identify men as having prostate cancer when in fact they do not and miss some aggressive cancers. Many men may then undergo unnecessary tests and treatments and risk long term health problems. It is still not clear whether other tests such as a magnetic resonance imaging scan, with or without the PSA, are accurate enough.

Public Health England

Philip Davies: [\[174051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, (a) how many and (b) on what topics Ministerial Directions have been issued by his Department to Public Health England.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England has not received any ministerial directions since its inception in April 2013.

Public Health: Parks

Lilian Greenwood: [\[172063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many joint parks and public health strategies have been produced by local authorities since 2016; and whether he plans to make the production of such strategies a statutory duty.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 March 2021]: The information requested is not held centrally. We have no plans to make the production of joint parks and public health strategies a statutory duty. It is for local authorities to determine how they can most effectively act to improve the health of their local populations.

Smoking

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[171525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government's target to reduce the number of adults who smoke to less than 12 per cent by 2022 is still in place.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2021]: Current smoking prevalence in adults is at a historic low of 13.9%. The ambition set in the current Tobacco Control Plan to reduce adult smoking prevalence to 12% or less by the end of 2022 remains. A new Tobacco Control plan is due to be published later this year and will set out further ambitions to deliver a smoke free country by 2030.

Social Services: Finance

Zarah Sultana: [\[164649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Government's announcement on 16 January 2021 of additional £120 million of funding for local authorities to boost staffing levels in the care sector during the covid-19 outbreak, whether he plans to take steps to (a) allocate the funding across local authorities, (b) ensure that funding is allocated according to level of need and (c) make that funding available on a permanent footing for local authorities.

Helen Whately:

The £120 million Workforce Capacity Fund for adult social care is available until 31 March and was created to address critical staffing shortages caused by COVID-19. The Government announced local authority allocations on 16 January. These were calculated using the Adult Social Care Relative Needs Formula and are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workforce-capacity-fund-for-adult-social-care>

In 2021-22 we expect to provide local authorities with estimated funding of £3 billion to help manage the impact of COVID-19. Of this, £1.55 billion is being provided as grant funding directly for spending pressures on local authority services, including adult social care. We are actively reviewing the need for further funding for adult social care and decisions will be made in due course.

■ Social Services: Pay**Barbara Keeley:****[172952]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Supreme Court judgement in the case of Royal Mencap Society v Tomlinson-Blake, whether he will take steps to prevent care staff working on sleep in shifts from having their wages reduced.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 March 2021]: The Supreme Court has upheld the Court of Appeal judgment. Workers on 'sleep-in' shifts are entitled to the minimum wage for the time they are awake for the purpose of working. The Government is working closely with local authorities and providers in order to consider whether this judgment might have implications with respect to the provision of social care more generally and to consider what action if any is needed.

Local authorities and providers should continue to ensure that that care workers are supported and remunerated in accordance with both minimum wage law and local authorities' market shaping duties.

■ Social Services: Reform**Helen Hayes:****[173100]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has with Cabinet colleagues on a timetable for publishing proposals for reform of adult social care.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 March 2021]: The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues on adult social care.

Delivering a care system that is fit for the future remains a top priority and following new measures set out in the Health and Care Bill White Paper, we will bring forward proposals for social care reform later in 2021.

■ Sodium Valproate

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[157975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 17 February 2021 to Question 149746 on Sodium Valproate, what the terms of reference are for his Department's assessment of recommendation 4 of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: Recommendation 4 of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety (IMMDS) Review, which relates to redress schemes, gives the Government the parameters for its assessment. In undertaking it, the Government will continue to utilise the wealth of information captured by the review as well as other relevant information. A full response to this and other outstanding recommendations of the IMMDS Review will be set out later in 2021.

■ Spondyloarthritis: Diagnosis

Tom Randall:

[\[155466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of NICE Quality Standard 170 on spondyloarthritis in reducing delays in diagnosis for people with axial spondyloarthritis.

Edward Argar:

We have made no such assessment. Quality standards issued by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence are based on a thorough assessment of the available evidence and represent best practice for the health and care system. National Health Service organisations and healthcare professionals should take them fully into account in ensuring that services meet the needs of patients.

■ Suicide

James Daly:

[\[174328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what financial support is available to local authorities and CCG's to assist families affected by suicide.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Under the NHS Long Term Plan, we have set out our plans to invest £57 million to support local suicide prevention plans and establish suicide bereavement support services in all areas of England by 2023/24. We have committed that all local systems will have suicide bereavement support services providing timely and appropriate support to families and staff by 2023/24 and have provided funding to 40% of local systems in 2020/21 for them to establish and deliver such services.

■ Syringes

John Spellar:

[\[172859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2021 to Question 166312 on Syringes, what proportion of the syringes procured were produced in the UK.

Nadhim Zahawi:

None of the combined needles and syringes associated with COVID-19 vaccine administration procured by Public Health England were produced in the United Kingdom.

■ Test and Trace Support Payment

Stephen Timms:

[\[150655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people declined the Test and Trace support payment; and what assessment he has made of the reasons for the rejection of those applications.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 February 2021]: 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.

Information on the number of people declined for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is not currently available.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[164528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps people who are required to self isolate should take to claim their self isolation payment when they have engaged with NHS Track and Trace but have not been given a Test and Trace identification number.

Helen Whately:

If a person has tested positive for COVID-19 or are told to self-isolate by contact tracers, they would be given an NHS Test and Trace Account ID.

However, if the app has advised self-isolation because there has been close contact with someone who has tested positive, the individual should request a NHS Test and Trace Account ID which can be done by following a link in the app. This must be done during the self-isolation period and cannot be requested after the self-isolation period ends.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[166345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the accessibility of £500 Test and Trace Support Payment.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 March 2021]: The Government keeps all elements of its COVID-19 response under review, including the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. We have listened to feedback from charities and support groups and are now extending the scheme to summer 2021, increasing the amount of money available to local authorities to make discretionary payments to people not on means-tested benefits to £20 million per month and expanding eligibility for the scheme to cover parents and guardians who need to take time off work to care for a child who is self-isolating. We are working with all 314 district and unitary local authorities in England to implement these changes as soon as possible.

Travel: Quarantine**Caroline Lucas:**[\[154949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will update his guidance on booking and staying in a quarantine hotel on arrival in England to include information on arrangements for people in need of wheelchair assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

All hotel partners can accommodate people with mobility issues and will provide appropriate facilities. There are contact details on the booking portal for help and support with booking accessible accommodation.

Sarah Olney:[\[160761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what provisions his Department has made for people travelling to England from a country on the banned travel list who cannot afford to pay for the mandatory covid-19 hotel quarantine package.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 March 2021]: For those facing significant financial hardship as a result of the charge, there is an opportunity to apply for a deferred repayment plan when booking. We have set out how to apply for this on GOV.UK, in particular for individuals who receive income related benefits.

Bill Esterson:[\[162581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the need for UK citizens who have received both doses of the covid-19 vaccination while abroad to take two covid-19 tests during their period of quarantine on return to the UK.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 8 March 2021]: There are currently no plans to exempt people who have received the COVID-19 vaccine from mandatory testing when returning from abroad.

Caroline Lucas:

[164410]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the contracts signed with hotel providers for hotel border quarantine included food standards to meet Department of Health and Social Care's recommendations on (a) daily fruit and vegetable intake, (b) other aspects of healthy daily nutrition; what mechanisms are in place to monitor the (i) quality and (ii) timeliness of the food provided; if he will take steps to ensure that the food provided is good quality, nutritious and provided on time; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 March 2021]: We have contracted with Corporate Travel Management to provide hotels. Hotels are given operating procedures which provide instructions to deliver three meals per day to be chosen from a menu and ordered by guests. Fresh fruit is included in the rooms and guests can request additional vegetables as required. It is also possible for those quarantining to have additional items delivered to them during the quarantine period such as food deliveries or via room service at the guest's own cost. Guest feedback is used to monitor food choice, timeliness and quality.

Caroline Lucas:

[164411]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide a breakdown of the (a) food and (b) other costs covered in the £1,750 hotel quarantine package rate for one adult in one room for 10 days, 11 nights.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 March 2021]: This information is not held in the format requested. The proportion of each element of the quarantine costs will vary by location. The package includes the costs of transport from the port of arrival to the designated hotel, food, accommodation, security, other essential services and testing.

■ Vaccination: Correspondence

Janet Daby:

[174272]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of delays to postal deliveries as a result of sickness in the postal service workforce on people receiving their vaccination letters.

Nadhim Zahawi:

No specific assessment has been made.

Local vaccination services are for the most part using text messages or phone calls as the first approach. Follow up phone calls are also being made to those who have not responded to initial invitations.

■ Vaccination: Recruitment**Justin Madders:**[\[134486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many vaccinators have been recruited for the covid-19 vaccination rollout to date; and how many of those vaccinators are currently distributing vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The National Health Service has so far recruited over 13,000 newly trained vaccinators from NHS Professionals who are either starting their local on-boarding or will shortly be invited to do so and over 19,516 volunteer vaccinators from St John Ambulance. These are in addition to the 71,400 full-time equivalent existing NHS staff supporting the COVID-19 vaccination programme. The number of newly recruited vaccinators increases on a weekly basis.

HOME OFFICE**■ Airguns: Licensing****Kenny MacAskil:**[\[174278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons the consultation on firearms safety, which closed on 16 February 2021 did not consider the registration or licensing of air weapons.

Kit Malthouse:

The consultation on firearms safety proposed further measures on air weapons control following the earlier review of air weapons regulation in England and Wales. The consultation specifically sought views on the outcomes of that review, including strengthening legislation in relation to young persons, and the safe and secure storage of air weapons, with the aim of ensuring their safe and responsible use. The proposals in the consultation focused on improving air weapons safety, particularly in relation to children. The consultation also included further proposals relating to specific firearms safety issues that were raised during the passage of the Offensive Weapons Act 2019.

■ Asylum: Applications**Catherine West:**[\[174211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce applicant waiting times for decisions on asylum applications.

Kevin Foster:

We are fixing a broken asylum system and creating a new one which will be fairer and firmer and compassionate towards those who need our help.

There are several factors which contribute to the length of time to process asylum claims. In this context, we have developed a programme of work designed to transform the system.

We have already made significant progress in prioritising cases with acute vulnerability and those in receipt of the greatest level of support, including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and are working to simplify and speed up decision making.

We are continuing to develop existing and new technology to help build on recent improvements such as digital interviewing and move away from a paper-based system.

■ Asylum: Sri Lanka

Gareth Thomas:

[\[172011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the findings of Freedom from Torture's July 2020 report entitled Response to Country Policy and Information Note Sri Lanka: Tamil Separatism July 2020, of cases of 33 people tortured between 2015 and 2018; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The UK has a proud history of granting asylum to those who need our protection.

All asylum and human rights claims from Sri Lankan nationals are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations.

Each individual assessment is made against the background of the latest available country of origin information and any relevant caselaw.

The key caselaw for Sri Lanka is [GJ & Others \(post –civil war: returnees Sri Lanka CG \[2013\] UKUT 00319 \(IAC\) \(5 July 2013\)](#) (heard on 5-8 and 11-12 February 2013, 15 March 2013 and 19 April 2013), and our CPIN is focused around this. This acknowledges there are factors to be considered when deciding a case.

We do not consider pieces of information in isolation. We review a range of evidence to ensure balance and a complete picture is considered.

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[174025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on ensuring that the use of private planes during the covid-19 pandemic has not been in breach of international travel restrictions.

Kit Malthouse:

We keep all of our measures, including arrivals to the UK by any mode, under constant review and we are ready to strengthen our border policy where appropriate to protect public health.

All persons arriving in the UK (with a few exemptions for certain occupations), wherever they are coming from, are required to show proof of a negative Covid test taken in the last 72 hours, complete a Passenger Locator Form, and to isolate for 10

days on arrival. This applies to those travelling to the UK on private flights (General Aviation) as well as scheduled flights, ferries and trains.

On 24 December 2020, we introduced travel bans on all arrivals from South Africa, later extending the ban to what is currently 35 countries, sometimes called “red-list” countries. No direct flights are allowed from these countries including via General Aviation. Furthermore, we look to refuse entry to non-UK residents who have been in one of these countries in the last 10 days.

Passengers who have been in or through any of the “red-list” countries and cannot be refused entry must quarantine in a managed quarantine hotel further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/transport-measures-to-protect-the-uk-from-variant-strains-of-covid-19>

More information regarding travelling to the UK can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control/before-you-leave-for-the-uk>

■ Clothing: Manufacturing Industries

Anthony Mangnall: [174274]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of using isotope analysis to increase the transparency of textiles supply chains and help prevent modern slavery.

Anthony Mangnall: [174275]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of using blockchain technology to increase the transparency of supply chains and help prevent modern slavery.

Victoria Atkins:

The UK was the first country in the world to require businesses to report on the steps they have taken to tackle modern slavery. The landmark provision in section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires businesses, in all sectors, including the textiles industry, with a turnover of £36m or more to report annually on the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains. To improve the quality and detail of reporting and accelerate action to prevent modern slavery, the Government has committed to strengthen the reporting requirements on businesses and to introduce financial penalties for those that fail to meet their obligations under section 54.

The Government expects businesses to determine the most appropriate methods to assess and tackle modern slavery based on the nature of their operations and supply chains. We encourage businesses to be transparent about the instances or indicators of modern slavery and prioritise action based on risk, and where they can have most impact. Our guidance suggests that they should include the risk assessment and due diligence they undertook to prevent and tackle modern slavery in their modern slavery statements and demonstrate their progress by setting and reporting against clear targets.

The Government regularly engages with businesses, civil society and industry experts in the sector to understand emerging best practice, evidence and innovations which might support businesses in their efforts to tackle modern slavery

■ Criminal Investigation

James Daly:

[\[174319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to take steps to reform the use of Release Under Investigation.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is aware of the issues around the process of Released Under Investigation (RUI) and the impact this can have on both suspects and victims. Following a public consultation on pre-charge bail, ending in May 2020, the Government is now seeking to introduce significant reforms through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

While RUI is not a process set out in legislation, the reforms in the Bill will help limit its usage by creating a pre-charge bail system that works better for the police, victims and suspects. This includes the removal of the perceived presumption against pre-charge bail and the creation of a new duty to seek the views of alleged victims before releasing suspects on pre-charge bail, where it is necessary and proportionate to do so.

Alongside this change, the Government has established a new power for the College of Policing in the Bill to issue national statutory guidance on pre-charge bail which will help address the use of Released Under Investigation. We will also be monitoring forces closely with an enhanced data collection on use pre-charge bail and RUI in the future.

■ Drugs: Organised Crime

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[173141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps her Department has taken to protect vulnerable children from county lines drugs networks in (a) Slough and (b) the South East.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office is currently considering a response to this question and will respond shortly.

■ Extradition: USA

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[173147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 146998, for what reason her Department concluded that the higher population of the US relative to that of the UK naturally results in a lower number

of extraditions of US nationals from the US to the UK in absolute terms in comparison to the number of UK nationals extradited from the UK to the US.

Chris Philp:

The United States has a population about five times the size of the United Kingdom. The numerical imbalance is to be expected given the balance of overall populations and expatriate populations of the US and the UK. The fact that a larger country has a greater number of live investigations means that it will inevitably produce more extradition requests. It is important to note that comparing numbers of extraditions is not a valid way to assess whether the provisions of a treaty are balanced. The way to do that is to compare the tests and safeguards that apply in the laws of the treaty partners.

■ **Greater Manchester Police**

James Daly:

[\[174327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support the improvement of Greater Manchester Police.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office, alongside its policing partners, continues to provide Greater Manchester Police with the support it requires through HMICFRS's Policing Performance Oversight Group. Ministers are committed to supporting the force's improvement and are paying close attention to its progress.

Greater Manchester Police's funding will increase by up to £35.1m in 2021/22.

As at December 2020, the force has also recruited 266 additional officers through our Police Uplift Programme, with a further allocation of 325 officers to be recruited by March 2022. In addition, there is a year 2 uplift allocation of 16 officers to the force to support growth in Regional Organised Crime Units.

■ **Hamas**

Andrew Bowie:

[\[174226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department takes to distinguish between the military and political wings of Hamas; and if she will review her assessment of the functions of Hamas' Political Bureau.

Kevin Foster:

The UK Government does not routinely comment on intelligence matters.

While we work closely with our international partners in the global fight against terrorism, any executive action must be underpinned by intelligence which satisfies the UK's criminal and statutory thresholds.

Andrew Bowie:

[174227]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with her counterparts in (a) the EU, (b) the US, (c) Canada and (d) Israel on their classification of Hamas as a terror group in its entirety.

Kevin Foster:

The UK Government does not routinely comment on intelligence matters.

■ Hate Crime: Educational Institutions

Preet Kaur Gill:

[174229]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many hate crimes have been recorded at education institutions in each of the last 10 years.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[174230]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support is available to young people to help them report a hate crime if they are a victim or witness of such a crime at college or at school.

Victoria Atkins:

There is no place for racism and hatred in our education system. Schools and colleges have an important role in preparing children and young people for life in modern Britain. This involves supporting them to understand the society in which they are growing up and teaching about respect for other people and tolerance.

The Government expects schools to take a strong stand against all forms of bullying and discrimination and tackling it at the earliest opportunity to prevent it from escalating, particularly given the impact it can have on pupils, both emotionally and physically. Schools should develop their own approaches for monitoring bullying and discriminatory incidents and exercise their own judgement as to what will work best for their circumstances. We expect schools to support pupils affected by hate crimes and bullying as necessary.

The Government has continued to take action to support schools in this area. This work has included projects targeting bullying of particular groups, such as those with SEND and those who are victims of hate related bullying, along with a project to report bullying online.

In extreme circumstances, where schools are concerned that an incident of bullying or discrimination may amount to a criminal offence, they should report this to the police.

Victims may wish to seek contact from an organisation to provide them with support suitable to the victim's needs. A list of such organisations can be found at the police-run True Vision website at the following link: https://www.report-it.org.uk/organisations_that_can_help

Information on whether or not hate crime offences recorded by the police in England and Wales took place in educational institutions is not recorded centrally.

■ Home Office: Iron and Steel

Lucy Powell: [173040]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the level of UK-produced steel procured by his Department and associated departmental public bodies and agencies in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Kevin Foster:

No estimate of the level of UK-produced steel procured has been made.

We have discussed the procurement of steel with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which has asked all Government departments to consider guidance on steel procurement and to notify of any upcoming opportunities for industry.

■ Immigration

Preet Kaur Gill: [174236]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons her Department's Migration Statistics do not capture the number of applications (a) received, (b) granted and (c) rejected for visas under the adult dependent relative rule.

Kevin Foster:

Home Office Migration Statistics capture data on a number of Adult Dependent Relative routes, which are grouped together with other routes under Family: Other (for immediate settlement) in our published data. This includes the number of applications received, granted and refused.

However, not all Adult Dependent Relative applications are captured under the Adult Dependent Relative route, to capture accurate data would require a manual trawl of cases and to do so would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Immigration Controls

Sir Robert Neill: [172038]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will provide further immigration guidance on inward mobility including (a) short-term visitor routes, (b) frontier workers, (c) paid permitted engagement and the roles that qualify under this, and (d) longer term engagements.

Kevin Foster:

Extensive guidance is already available on gov.uk for applicants and caseworkers.

There are no plans to publish any further at the current time.

Visitor applicant guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa>

Permitted paid engagement applicant guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/permitted-paid-engagement-visa>

Visitor caseworker guidance, including for permitted paid engagements, is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visit-guidance>

Frontier worker applicant guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/frontier-worker-permit>

Frontier worker caseworker guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/frontier-worker-permit-scheme-caseworker-guidance>

Longer term engagements are covered by our work routes. Further guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/work-visas>

■ Internet: Offences against Children

Carla Lockhart:

[173223]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the cross-platform nature of grooming and abuse for children online; and what steps he will take in the forthcoming Bill on online safety to tackle that risk to children.

Victoria Atkins:

We are working across Government and engaging industry to prevent all forms of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Government is continuing to engage with technology companies around the Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, a framework of principles launched by the Five Country Ministerial partners in March 2020. These are a set of 11 actions tech firms should take to ensure children are not sexually exploited on their platforms. Principle 10 includes how companies should support opportunities to share relevant expertise, helpful practices, data and tools where appropriate and feasible.

The strongest protections from harmful or inappropriate content in the Online Safety Bill are for children and young people. These laws will close the gap between what companies say they do, and what they will actually do. All companies in scope will be required to fulfil the duty of care by ensuring that they take reasonably practicable steps to tackle relevant illegal content, and protect children where they are likely to access their services. This includes bearing down on the threat of livestreaming and taking necessary steps to target grooming and the proliferation of child sexual abuse material.

We have published the interim code of practice on online child sexual exploitation and abuse, the code will help to 'bridge the gap' between Government's response to the Online Harms White Paper, and the establishment of the independent regulator. This will enable companies to take swift action in tackling the most serious of online harms before the regulator is established.

Carla Lockhart:

[173226]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment the Government has made of the extent of online content that does not meet the criminal

threshold, but facilitates abuse and grooming; and what steps she is taking through the Online Safety Bill to tackle that matter.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government is firmly committed to making the UK the safest place to be online and taking action against online material that may not be illegal, but is linked to abuse and grooming.

We are working across Government and engaging industry to prevent all forms of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. The interim code of practice on online CSEA made clear that we expect companies to already start taking voluntary action against such content, including material that doesn't meet a criminal threshold.

The Online Safety Bill will require companies to ensure the safety of children on their services. They will need to seriously consider the risks their services may pose to children using their services and take action to mitigate this. This will include taking measures against all content that facilitates abuse or grooming of children on their services.

The Government is also continuing to engage with technology companies around the Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, a framework of principles launched by the Five Country Ministerial partners in March 2020. These are a set of 11 actions tech firms should take to ensure children are not sexually exploited on their platforms, , including taking steps to stop the livestreaming of abuse and stop grooming and predatory behaviour.

■ **Police: Harlow**

Robert Halfon:

[174094]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to increase the number of police officers in Harlow.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is committed to increasing the number of police officers in England and Wales by 20,000 by the end of March 2023.

Essex Police was allocated 135 additional officers in the first year of the police uplift which covers the period to the end of March 2021. In 2020/21 the force received funding of £320.2m. As at 31 December 2020, Essex Police had recruited 101 additional officers.

As announced in the Police Settlement 2021/22, Essex Police has been allocated 132 additional officers for year two of the Police Uplift Programme. Essex Police will receive funding of up to £339m in 2021/22, an increase of up to £18.8m since 2020/21.

The deployment of these officers is an operational decision for the Chief Constable of Essex Police.

■ Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships: Internet

Carolyn Harris:

[\[172094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of the digitalisation of the death registration process on bereaved people; and whether that process is planned to continue after March 2022.

Kevin Foster:

No formal assessment has been made of the effect of the digitalisation of death registration on bereaved people, as the registration process has not been digitalised.

The current easements for death registration, which facilitate telephone registration if required by the informant and the transmission of documents electronically as part of the death certification process, have been used effectively during the pandemic but will expire in line with the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Separate to this, the General Register Office continues to work with the Department of Health and Social Care on taking forward death certification reforms, which includes consideration of digital services.

■ Social Media: Cryptography

Carla Lockhart:

[\[173224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions he has had with (a) Facebook, (b) Google and (c) other social media companies on the introduction of end-to-end encryption within their platforms; and whether she has made an assessment of the potential effect of that encryption on child abuse online.

Victoria Atkins:

Ministers and officials have regular contact with technology companies, including Facebook and Google, about the safety of their platforms.

The UK supports strong encryption, but we are clear that the implementation of end-to-end encryption which wholly precludes tech companies' access to content will have a disastrous impact on public safety.

As well as preventing law enforcement from securing lawfully authorised access to vital content as part of their investigations, it severely erodes tech companies' ability to tackle the most serious illegal content on their platforms, including online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

All communication service providers must ensure that there will be no reduction to public safety when they implement new technology or other design choices.

Facebook's proposals are of particular concern due to the risk profile of the platform. In 2020 Facebook provided 20.3 million child sexual abuse referrals to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC, the US body which processes industry reports of child sexual abuse). NCMEC's previous assessment is that 70% of Facebook's total referrals relate to Messenger and are therefore likely to be lost once that service is end-to-end encrypted.

The UK is leading work across the world urging all tech companies to collaborate with governments on mutually agreeable solutions that ensure user privacy is protected.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: Employment**

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[174175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans he has to use data collected through the Windrush Compensation Scheme to make an assessment of the revenue lost from taxation as a result of prohibiting undocumented migrants from taking up employment.

Priti Patel:

None. The data collected through the Windrush Compensation Scheme relate to people who have status in the UK with the right to work rather than undocumented migrants without status.

■ **Windrush Generation: Compensation**

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[174173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) minimum and (b) maximum awards to date are for people that have made claims under the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[174174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average timescale is for processing claims to the Windrush Compensation Scheme for people in (a) Lewisham, Deptford constituency, (b) London and (c) the UK.

Priti Patel:

The Home Office does not publish specific data regarding the minimum and maximum awards to date. The information is not readily available in a reportable format and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

However, on the 14th of December the Home Office increased the minimum award under the Impact on Life category to £10,000.

The value of awards for Impact on Life at every level were also increased, with the maximum award increasing from £10,000 to £100,000 (with options for even higher awards in exceptional circumstances).

Data on the number of members of the Windrush generation that reside in Lewisham, Deptford and London is not available. Information relating to individual Windrush migrants is not recorded by constituency.

■ **Windrush Lessons Learned Review**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[174238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2021 to Question 157994 on Windrush Lessons Learned Review, whether her

Department is conducting external consultation on its draft ethical decision-making model; and whether the final version of that model will be published.

Priti Patel:

The draft ethical decision-making model was developed with reference to similar models used in policing, health and social care settings. This included discussion with practitioners and academics in those fields. The final model will be published following testing and introduction into operational settings.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Affordable Housing: Cambridgeshire

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[174145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2021 to Question 167223 on Affordable Housing: Cambridgeshire, if he will publish the specific metrics used to evaluate (a) delivery and (b) value for money.

Christopher Pincher:

To reach a decision on the Cambridgeshire £100 million housing programme, the Department assessed a range of factors including value for money considerations.

■ Building Safety Fund: Leasehold

Sir George Howarth:

[\[174027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the administration cost of collecting contributions towards the Building Safety Fund from leaseholders living in residential buildings 18 metres and over.

Christopher Pincher:

We do not expect any contributions towards the Building Safety Fund from leaseholders. The additional £3.5 billion announced on 10 February provides assurance for leaseholders that all eligible applications to the Building Safety Fund will be able to proceed and that Government will fully fund the cost of replacing unsafe cladding for all leaseholders in residential buildings 18 metres and over in England.

■ Buildings: Insulation

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[172910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring a fire safety test for buildings with unsafe cladding to ensure the other fire safety regulations were correctly adhered to at the time of building.

Christopher Pincher:

Measures being taken through the Fire Safety Bill, which is currently going through Parliament, will clarify the Fire Safety Order to put beyond doubt that structure, external walls and flat entrance doors must be included in fire risk assessments. The Bill will also allow enforcement action to be taken confidently by Fire and Rescue Authorities, where necessary.

■ EU Grants and Loans**Stephen Farry:****[174333]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what mapping exercise his Department has undertaken to understand (a) the existing pattern and (b) types of schemes and programmes that have been supported by EU Structural Funds.

Luke Hall:

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government maintains a list of those benefiting from the Fund at www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-useful-resources . This list includes information on the beneficiary, the type of investment and where the beneficiary is located.

■ Free Zones**Margaret Ferrier:****[174147]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of tariff-free arrangements for materials imported through a freeport on the competitiveness of domestic manufacturing.

Luke Hall:

Government is committed to supporting UK manufacturing and recognises the vital role it plays in the UK economy, by driving innovation, exports, job creation and productivity growth. Freeports give businesses increased choice for their customs facilitation which plays a significant role in attracting investment and jobs. Businesses will benefit from import duty suspension when goods are imported into the Freeport customs site, and when the goods exit the Freeport to enter the UK's market the duty will apply. Within a Freeport customs site, businesses also have the option to bring in domestic goods which can then be processed alongside imported goods.

■ Hate Crime: Sikhs**Preet Kaur Gill:****[172106]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much and what proportion of the £375,000 grant allocated to True Vision in 2017 has been (a) allocated and (b) spent on the Sikh community.

Luke Hall:

MHCLG provided £250,000 to True Vision for the financial years 2016/17 and 2017/18 of which £25,000 was earmarked for supporting Sikh and Hindu communities.

■ Home Ownership: Rother Valley**Alexander Stafford:**[\[174347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to support home ownership in Rother Valley constituency.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to helping people get on the housing ladder across the country

Over 685,000 households have been helped to purchase a home since spring 2010 through Government-backed schemes such as Help to Buy: Equity Loan and Right to Buy. New initiatives including First Homes, improving shared ownership and a new £11.5 billion affordable homes programme will bring more affordable housing to those who need it

In Budget 2021, the Chancellor announced an extension of the Stamp Duty Land Tax holiday for properties up to £500,000, saving buyers many thousands of pounds. We recognise finding a deposit is the biggest hurdle for many prospective buyers. The new mortgage guarantee scheme will increase the number of 95% mortgages available.

■ Homelessness: Females**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[174312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether women recorded as staying in women-only shelters are counted towards the total homelessness figure for England.

Eddie Hughes:

Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in all its forms is a key priority for this Government and we have taken unprecedented steps this year, working with local authorities and their partners to protect vulnerable rough sleepers during the pandemic. The 'Everyone In' campaign has supported over 37,000 people with over 11,000 in emergency accommodation and over 26,000 already moved on into longer-term accommodation.

We do not have a breakdown of the number of women recorded as staying in women-only shelters within the homelessness case level collection (H-CLIC) data in England.

At the Budget the Chancellor announced £4.2 million for MHCLG to trial 'Respite Rooms' across the country. The Respite Rooms programme will provide support to vulnerable homeless women affected by violence and abuse who need specialist

support to enable them to better engage with, and be ready for, domestic abuse safe accommodation including refuge.

■ Housing: Complaints

Catherine West: [\[174199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department has taken to establish the Housing Complaints Resolution Service proposed in January 2019.

Eddie Hughes:

In summer 2019 the Department established the Redress Reform Working Group to help improve redress across the housing market and consider a Housing Complaints Resolution Service. Work was paused to prioritise the response to the pandemic but we continue to work on improving redress and meet with members of the Redress Reform Working Group.

■ Housing: Construction

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[172050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimate he has made of the number of homes needed to be built per year to meet demand.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to building one million homes over the course of the Parliament, and in 2019/20 net additions to the housing stock totalled 243,770 – the highest total for over thirty years. The Government recently published a revised standard method for calculating local housing need which is used by Local Planning Authorities in planning for the housing needs in their area.

■ Housing: Older People

Alexander Stafford: [\[174348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to encourage the building of homes designed for use by the elderly.

Christopher Pincher:

We are working closely with the sector and across Government to look at how we can further support the building of homes designed for use by the elderly.

We are investing over £12 billion in affordable housing over 5 years, the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade. This includes the new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, where 10 per cent of delivery over the course of the programme will be used to increase the supply of much needed specialist or supported housing, including retirement housing. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) are also continuing to subsidise new supply of specialist housing

for older and disabled people through the Care and Support Specialised Housing (CASSH) Fund. £71 million will be provided for CASSH in 2021/22.

Furthermore, as part of our ongoing work on planning reform, we hosted a series of roundtables during the formal consultation period for the White Paper, which included representatives from the retirement development sector. We will continue to engage with a range of stakeholders as we further develop our proposals.

The Government also recently consulted on raising the accessibility standards of new homes, recognising the importance of suitable homes for older and disabled people. We are currently considering responses and will be publishing a Government response.

■ **Housing: Sales**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[174349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure buyers and sellers can access effective guidance on buying and selling homes.

Christopher Pincher:

In September 2019 we published detailed “How to sell” and “How to buy” guides, which are freely available on the Gov.uk website, and lead consumers through the full length of the process. Since March 2020 we published COVID-19 guidance to the housing industry and to those moving home, advising them on how they can work and move home safely.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[174351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to improve the home buying and selling process.

Christopher Pincher:

We identified a number of ways we intended to improve the home buying and selling process in our response to a Call for Evidence on ways to improve the home buying and selling process which was published in April 2018. We are working with industry to take these forward.

■ **Leasehold: Repairs and Maintenance**

Catherine West:

[\[174198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department has taken to improve leaseholders’ access to redress in cases where reported longstanding disrepair has not been adequately addressed.

Eddie Hughes:

Currently leaseholders’ access to redress depends on who manages their property. Leaseholders living in properties being managed by managing agents and those by housing associations or local authorities already have existing routes for redress including complaints procedures and government-recognised redress schemes.

There is a gap in redress for leaseholders where their freeholder does not employ a managing agent and carries out their own property management on their leasehold property. In such circumstances, the freeholder is not required to sign up to a redress scheme. The Government intends to require freeholders of leasehold properties who do not employ a managing agent to join a redress scheme and will bring forward legislation when parliamentary time allows.

In summer 2019 the Department also established the Redress Reform Working Group to help improve redress across the housing market and consider a Housing Complaints Resolution Service. Work was paused to prioritise the response to the pandemic but we continue to work on improving redress and meet with members of the Redress Reform Working Group.

■ Leasehold: Service Charges

Catherine West:

[174200]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what requirements are placed on freeholders to ensure transparency in the calculation of ground rent, service charges and other ancillary fees for leaseholders.

Eddie Hughes:

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 believe very strongly that service charges and fees should be transparent and communicated effectively, and that there should be a clear route to challenge or redress if things go wrong. We established an independent working group, chaired by Lord Best, to raise professionalism and standards across the property agent sector, which also considered how fees such as service charges should be presented to consumers. The working group published its final report to Government (available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulation-of-property-agents-working-group-report>) and we are considering the report's recommendations.

The Government asked the CMA to conduct an investigation into potential mis-selling of homes and unfair terms in the leasehold sector. On 19 March, the CMA announced that it is requiring the removal of ground rent terms which it thinks are unfair from all existing Countryside and Taylor Wimpey contracts to make sure they are no longer in breach of the law. The companies must also agree not to use the terms again in any future leasehold contracts. The Government strongly welcomes the CMA's efforts to bring justice to homeowners affected by unfair practices. Further information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/cma-cases/leasehold>).

The Government has committed to restricting ground rents for newly created leases for both houses and flats to a peppercorn (zero financial value). This will ensure that homeowners in new leasehold properties are not charged a financial sum for which they receive no tangible benefit.

We will bring forward legislation in the upcoming session to set ground rents on newly created leases to zero. This will be the first part of seminal two-part legislation to implement reforms in this Parliament.

■ **Levelling Up Fund**

Bill Esterson:

[172995]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason deprivation is not part of the weighting for bids for the Levelling Up Fund.

Luke Hall:

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will prioritise bids from places in England, Scotland and Wales with the most significant need. This is measured by an index taking into account the following place characteristics: need for economic recovery and growth; need for improved transport connectivity; and need for regeneration. Using this index, places have been placed into category 1, 2, or 3, with category 1 representing places with the highest levels of identified need. These metrics are focussed on identifying places most in need of the type of investment offered through the Levelling Up Fund – including towns centre and high street regeneration, small scale transport projects, and investment in local culture and heritage assets. A methodology note has been published and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-fund-additional-documents/levelling-up-fund-prioritisation-of-places-methodology-note>

■ **Local Government Finance: Bury**

James Daly:

[174323]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much financial support the Government allocated to Bury Council in financial year 2020-21.

Luke Hall:

Bury Council's Core Spending Power rose from £135.6 million in 2019-20 to £145.4 million in 2020-21, a 7.2% increase in cash terms. In addition, the council has received £28.1 million in direct funding to support the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21, of which £15.6 million is unringfenced grant. The council will also have received other grants from government departments for specific purposes.

■ **Local Government: Meetings**

Charlotte Nichols:

[173183]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to make a decision on whether to extend The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 to allow local authorities to meet online beyond the 7 May 2021.

Luke Hall:

On the 25 March 2021, the Government announced the regulations made under Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act which do not apply to meetings after 6 May.

Extending the regulations to meetings after this date would require primary legislation.

We have considered the case for legislation carefully, including the significant impact it would have on the Government's legislative programme which is already under severe pressure in these unprecedented times. We are also mindful of the excellent progress that has been made on our vaccination programme and the announcement of the Government's roadmap for lifting COVID-19 restrictions. Given this context, the Government has concluded that it is not possible to bring forward emergency legislation on this issue at this time.

Local Plans**Mike Amesbury:**[\[173163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the proposed relationship between the current neighbourhood plans and the proposed local plans in the Planning for the Future White Paper.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to simplifying Local Plans and retaining neighbourhood planning as part of the future planning system, and we intend to publish further details.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Iron and Steel**Lucy Powell:**[\[173039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the level of UK-produced steel procured by his Department and associated departmental public bodies and agencies in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is working with the steel industry, the unions and devolved administrations to support the United Kingdom's steel sector to develop a long-term sustainable future. This includes making sure that United Kingdom producers of steel have the best possible chance of competing for and winning contracts across all Government procurement.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) collates and publishes annually information on how much steel is purchased for Government's major infrastructure projects in the previous financial year, including what proportion is United Kingdom-produced.

We expect to publish the 2019/20 data later this year, and will start collating the data on United Kingdom steel procured in 2020/21.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Midlands

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[173175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, where his Department's offices, including arm's length bodies, are currently located in (a) the West Midlands and (b) the East Midlands.

Eddie Hughes:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) currently has one office in the West Midlands, in central Birmingham. Three MHCLG arm's-length-bodies are located in the West Midlands. The Regulator of Social Housing in Birmingham, and Social Care Ombudsman, and Homes England in Coventry. The Department has one office in the East Midlands, in Nottingham.

In February, we confirmed that the Government will create a second headquarters in Wolverhampton with at least 500 MHCLG Group roles set to be based across the West Midlands by 2025 – with further increases planned by 2030.

The new HQ in Wolverhampton will include the presence of ministers – making it the first such ministerial office outside of London with a regular ministerial presence. Senior civil servants will also be based in Wolverhampton, ensuring this becomes a centre for policy development and decision making.

This is a significant increase on the 300 roles currently in the region and is part of plans to have at least 800 roles outside of London by 2030 – including 50% of the most senior positions. This will ensure that more local voices are reflected in the creation of government policy.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Wolverhampton

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[173174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what criteria he used when deciding to establish his Department's new headquarters in Wolverhampton.

Eddie Hughes:

A number of factors were considered when deciding the location of the Department's additional headquarters. The choice of Wolverhampton, which builds on the Department's existing strong presence in the West Midlands region, supports the Government's commitment to levelling up.

■ New Towns: South Cambridgeshire

Anthony Browne:

[\[173184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 2.129 of the Budget 2020 Red Book, what progress has been made on the development of a further new town in South Cambridgeshire.

Christopher Pincher:

The new town being proposed in South West Cambridgeshire is a private initiative being promoted by the developers Thakeham, and is a matter for the local planning authority. The Government has no plans for an additional new town in this location or elsewhere in South Cambridgeshire beyond the commitment we announced in 2020 to explore opportunities at Cambourne and the sustainable and sensitive expansion of Cambridge. Government has not yet made any decision to take forward opportunities at Cambourne or Cambridge as part of this work and any potential future plans would be subject to all necessary and appropriate public consultation.

■ **Park Homes: Regulation****Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[172012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer 12 March 2021 to Question 165438, if he will facilitate the introduction of primary legislation on park homes through a successful hon. Member in the ballot for Private Members' Bills in the 2021-22 Parliamentary Session.

Christopher Pincher:

In our response to the review of park homes legislation, we announced that we would introduce primary legislation to improve protections for park home residents.

We will consider all available options and introduce the required legislation when the parliamentary timetable allows.

■ **Planning: Greater London****Nickie Aiken:**[\[173167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the White Paper, Planning for the Future, whether Metropolitan Open Land will be included in the protected category of land.

Christopher Pincher:

Last year's Planning for the Future White Paper proposed a new format of local plan where all land is put into one of three categories - areas for growth, for renewal or for protection. It proposed that protected areas would be those where recognised constraints exist, such as National Parks and the Green Belt, alongside open countryside.

Since publication, we have continued to engage with stakeholders to develop and refine the proposals as set out in the White Paper. We will publish a Government response setting out our decisions on the way forward.

■ Planning: Urban Areas

Sir John Hayes:

[\[172876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department takes to assess the effect of out of town development on job retention and creation on high streets.

Luke Hall:

The Government recognises that this is a challenging time and COVID-19 is having a significant impact on our communities, businesses and town centres.

The Government has provided a comprehensive package of support of £385 billion, to help businesses that have been affected by COVID-19. This package includes business grants, the coronavirus loan schemes, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, as well as deferral of income tax payments. We keep our package of economic support under constant review. The Government will continue to work closely with local authorities, businesses, and business representative organisations to understand the impact of COVID-19 on businesses.

■ Property Development: Green Belt

James Daly:

[\[174322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to protect the green belt against development.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to continuing to protect and enhance the Green Belt. Under the reforms put forward in the White Paper *Planning for the Future*, local authorities would still be expected to categorise Green Belts as areas for protection.

The policies in our National Planning Policy Framework on the protection of the Green Belt, and the strong encouragement to prioritise re-use of suitable brownfield land, will remain in place.

■ Property Development: Regulation

Catherine West:

[\[174201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the existing regulatory mechanisms for (a) property managers and (b) developers of leasehold properties.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to ensuring that those living in the leasehold sector are protected from abuse and poor service. We believe that service charges and fees should be transparent and communicated effectively, and that there should be a clear route to challenge or redress if things go wrong. We established an independent working group on regulation of property agents, chaired by Lord Best, to raise professionalism and standards across the sector. The working group published its final report to Government (see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulation-of-property-agents-working-group-report>) and we are considering the report's recommendations.

The Government is bringing forward fundamental changes to the building regulatory regime through the Building Safety Bill. This includes establishing a new regulator which will have oversight of the whole built environment; and improve building and fire safety, so that people will be, and will feel, safer in their homes. There will be tougher sanctions for those that fail to meet their obligations. We will place a duty of competence for carrying out design and building work across all buildings and require developers to belong to the New Homes Ombudsman to resolve disputes when things go wrong.

■ **Property Searches**

Alexander Stafford: **[174350]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to improve the process of property searches to speed up home buying and selling.

Christopher Pincher:

As part of our work to improve the home buying and selling process, the Government sets an expectation that all local authorities will turn around searches in 10 working days, and the latest data shows that 87% of local authorities are meeting this target. We are aware that authorities have worked hard to maintain this service during this difficult period

In addition, HM Land Registry is implementing a digital national register of Local Land Charges and provision of property searches will improve as this process covers more local authorities.

■ **Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors: Service Charges**

Catherine West: **[174205]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what his Department's policy is on whether the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors' Service Charge Residential Management Code would be best strengthened by way of statute.

Christopher Pincher:

The law is clear that service charges must be reasonable and, where costs relate to work or services, the work or services must be of a reasonable standard.

Leaseholders may make an application to the First-tier Tribunal to make a determination on the reasonableness of their service charges.

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors' Service Charge Residential Management Code complements this. This is approved by the Secretary of State under powers contained in Section 87 of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 and can be taken into account at court or tribunal proceedings where relevant.

■ Tenants' Rights: Business Premises

Catherine West:

[\[174204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department has taken to strengthen tenants' rights with respect to private commercial landlords' optional participation in alternative dispute resolution schemes.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government has announced the measures in place to protect commercial tenants from eviction and forms of insolvency and debt recovery are extended to 30 June 2021.

This is supported by the Code of Conduct published by the Government last year, setting out best practice for these negotiations.

We will shortly be launching a Call for Evidence on commercial rents to help monitor the overall progress of negotiations between tenants and landlords.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Sir Robert Neill:

[\[172040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress has been made on the process for allocation of funding under the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

The November 2020 Spending Review set out the main strategic elements of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in a Heads of Terms. Further details will be set out in a UK-wide Investment Framework to be published later this year and funding profile for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be set at the next Spending Review. 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.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Northern Ireland

Stephen Farry:

[\[174332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with community and voluntary groups in Northern Ireland on the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers. Officials have held 25 engagement events across the UK, attended by over five hundred representatives from a breadth of sectors including businesses, public bodies, higher education institutions, voluntary and charity sector and rural partnership groups including many in Northern Ireland.

Stephen Farry:

[174334]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect of not having participated in the Community Renewal Fund on the extent to which Northern Ireland may benefit from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

The UK Community Renewal Fund is a UK-wide fund which 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 UK Government is taking a different approach to delivering the UK Community Renewal Fund in Northern Ireland compared to Great Britain, to take account of the different local government landscape in Northern Ireland. Project applicants in Northern Ireland will submit bids directly to the UK Government for assessment and approval. The UK Community Renewal Fund will help inform the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund through funding of one year pilots, but the Funds are distinct in regard to design, eligibility and duration.

Stephen Farry:

[174335]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how section 75 requirements under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 will be taken into account in the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK for places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers. We recognise the importance of not only meeting our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 but also giving due regard to the additional equalities considerations that apply in Northern Ireland.

Stephen Farry:

[174336]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment his Department has made of the importance of the interface between the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the EU's INTERREG and PEACE programme funding in Northern Ireland.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK for places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers. The UK Government intends to work with the devolved administrations and other stakeholders to ensure that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is used to its best effect, including ensuring it works effectively alongside other funding streams, and supports

citizens across the UK. Devolved administrations will be represented on the governance structures for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Stephen Farry:

[\[174337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he plans to take to ensure that the branding of UK Shared Prosperity Fund expenditure in Northern Ireland is sensitive to the particular circumstances of the region.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK for places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers. The UK Government has a responsibility to support the economic health of people, businesses and communities across the whole of our United Kingdom. The UK Government is committed to ensuring the fund is delivered in a way that works for the whole of the UK.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Department for International Trade: Iron and Steel

Lucy Powell:

[\[173044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate she has made of the level of UK-produced steel procured by his Department and associated departmental public bodies and agencies in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Greg Hands:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) does not have any procurements classified as Major Projects to which the steel reporting applies.

The Department does not have any departmental public bodies or agencies.

■ Pâté de Foie Gras: Imports and Sales

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[173071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has plans to ban the (a) importation and (b) sale of foie gras produced from the force-feeding of ducks and geese following the UK's departure from the EU; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

The Government has made clear that force feeding for the production of foie gras from ducks or geese raises serious welfare concerns.

Production is banned in the UK as it is incompatible with domestic legislation, including the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which makes it a criminal offence not to provide for an animal's welfare needs and to allow an animal to suffer unnecessarily.

The Government is committed to upholding our high standards. Now our relationship with the European Union has been established, the Government is considering further steps it could take in relation to foie gras.

■ **Trade Agreements: Excise Duties**

Emily Thornberry: [\[174038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Board of Trade's Global Britain, Local Jobs report, what steps her Department is taking through its trade agreements to reduce the risk of regulatory divergence in relation to data and digital services.

Emily Thornberry: [\[174039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to page 25 of the Board of Trade's Global Britain, Local Jobs report, what current UK regulations she has assessed (a) are not proportionate or (b) place too large an impact on the ease of doing business.

Emily Thornberry: [\[174040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to page 24 of the Board of Trade's Global Britain, Local Jobs report, in which of the Free Trade Agreements covering 66 countries negotiated by her Department have tariff reductions been expanded for key UK industries.

Emily Thornberry: [\[174041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to page 24 of the Board of Trade's Global Britain, Local Jobs report, whether each tariff reduction previously available to key UK industries was maintained in the Free Trade Agreements covering 66 countries negotiated by her Department.

Emily Thornberry: [\[174042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Board of Trade's Global Britain, Local Jobs report, how her Department defines key industries.

Emily Thornberry: [\[174043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Board of Trade's Global Britain, Local Jobs report, what assessment she has made of whether the UK-Japan CEPA helped to level up the UK; and how her Department made that assessment.

Emily Thornberry: [\[174044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, for what reason the Board of Trade's Global Britain, Local Jobs report did not include the role that freeports will play in contributing to her Department's strategy; and if she will publish an addendum on this subject in light of the announcements in the Chancellor's Budget statement on 3 March 2021.

Emily Thornberry:

[174045]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to her Department's Analysis Paper: Local Jobs, Trade and Investment, what assessment she has made of the extent to which the figures on the number of employees employed in nationally export intensive sectors enable an accurate assessment of (a) how export intensive jobs are at the constituency level and (b) how many jobs are supported by exports at the constituency level.

Emily Thornberry:

[174046]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to her Department's Analysis Paper: Local Jobs, Trade and Investment, whether the figures on the number of employees employed in nationally export intensive sectors are planned to be used to inform the offensive interests of UK trade policy.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government is grateful to the Board of Trade for its thought leadership on trade policy. The Rt Hon. Lady will know from reading the *Global Britain, Local Jobs* report that there are benefits for the British people – in every corner of the country – from an ambitious trade agenda.

We are proud to have secured trade deals with 66 countries, plus the EU. These agreements provide a strong foundation for our trading relationships, covering trade worth £890 billion in 2019, but do not represent the limit of our ambition. We will seek to improve upon these to maximise trading opportunities.

HM Government will make sure digital markets are opened by reducing barriers to the flow of data, whilst maintaining high standards of protection. We will reduce regulatory divergence by securing commitments through Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations, the WTO E-Commerce Joint Initiative negotiations, and the United Kingdom's G7 Presidency. It is important that all regulations are proportionate and not trade-distorting. We will bring down non-tariff barriers through trade negotiations so that safe goods and services from the United Kingdom can be sold into new markets freely.

The Board of Trade report defines "key industries" as those parts of the economy with the greatest chances to increase their exports, thanks to trade policy and trade promotion interventions. HM Government agrees with the Board of Trade that trade agreements can deliver opportunities nationwide, and is considering how to add the data from this cutting-edge research into our policy.

The Rt Hon. Lady will know that the Department for International Trade (DIT) has already published an impact assessment for the FTA with Japan, setting out the potential impacts on every part of the United Kingdom.[1] The Board of Trade's report focuses on the next international steps our nation can take. Domestic policy, including 'freeports', is not explored in the report. Neither the Board of Trade nor HM Government intend to publish an addendum to this report.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-japan-cepa-final-impact-assessment>.

■ Trade Agreements: Pakistan

James Daly:

[174326]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what progress her Department has made on negotiating a free trade agreement with Pakistan.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government continues to work with Pakistan to improve the terms of our trading relationship.

Pakistan is already granted trade preferences under the Enhanced Framework of our Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) and we are currently reviewing GSP to make it simpler and more generous for both our partners and businesses to use.

A public consultation on GSP will be launched in the coming months.

JUSTICE

■ Criminal Proceedings

Sir John Hayes:

[172865]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to improve its (a) estimate of and (b) support for people with neurodiversity in the criminal justice system.

Alex Chalk:

We are committed to ensuring the Criminal Justice System (CJS) treats all those who encounter it fairly – including neurodivergent individuals. That is why my department has commissioned an independent Call for Evidence (CfE) to obtain a clearer picture of neurodiversity throughout the CJS, including police, with the final report due to be published in early Summer 2021.

The CfE will help us to both estimate and examine the national provision and identify areas of good practice for neurodivergence within the CJS. This will enable us to understand what happens to neurodivergent people now and how we can better support them to realise better outcomes.

The MoJ is currently working across government as part of the Cabinet Office-led National Strategy for Disabled People. This represents a real opportunity to feed in policy developed from the findings from the CfE and develop a cross-government wide approach to support people with disabilities including neurodivergent individuals.

My department is also contributing to the Department of Health and Social Care's refresh of the cross-government Autism Strategy. Our contribution to the strategy will include work to improve data capture on autism, and to increase – through training

and awareness – the ability of prison and probation staff to better understand and support these individuals.

■ Criminal Proceedings: Legal Aid Scheme

James Daly:

[174320]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the criminal legal aid spend of his Department was in financial years (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21.

Alex Chalk:

Statistics on legal aid volumes and expenditure are published at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/legal-aid-statistics>, and are updated on a quarterly basis. The most recent period for which data is available covers up to and including December 2020.

Figures have therefore been provided for the three most complete financial years as well as the three most recent calendar years for which data is presently available.

Data on the first three quarters only of the 2020/21 Financial Year is also available at gov.uk; figures for the complete financial year will be published on 24 June 2021.

Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [Copy of 174320.xlsx]

■ Funerals

Sir John Hayes:

[174009]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which Government Department has responsibility for the funeral and death care sector.

Alex Chalk:

Through a cross-departmental Death Management Programme, the Government continues to provide strategic and operational support to those looking after the deceased and supporting the bereaved. This programme is currently led by the Cabinet Office working closely with the funeral and death management sector, local responders and government departments to ensure the deceased are treated with dignity and respect.

The Government is considering, as part of its response to the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) 'Funeral Markets Investigation' into the operation of the funeral sector, the requirement for such structures once the immediate pressures from the pandemic have eased. The Government response to the CMA is being led by the Ministry of Justice.

■ Gender Based Violence

Caroline Lucas:

[172054]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure all funding and commissioning processes that relate to Violence Against Women and Girls recognise and value specialist support provision as required under the Istanbul Convention.

Kit Malthouse:

Addressing gender-based violence and abuse, and improving support and outcomes for victims and survivors, is a top priority for the Government. These crimes have a terrible, profound and lasting effect on society.

The Government published our progress towards ratification of the Istanbul Convention in October 2020. We recognise the important role support services play in ensuring that all survivors of these crimes can access the support they need to help them cope and recover from their experiences.

As part of this commitment, the Ministry of Justice (who is only one of many funding sources for specialist support provision) provides funding to 91 rape support services across England and Wales to provide free, 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.

In 2021-22, we will provide just under £151m for victim and witness support services. This includes an extra £51m to increase support for rape and domestic abuse victims, building on the emergency funding from this financial year to help domestic abuse and sexual violence services meet Covid-driven demand. This compares to a total budget of £48.5m in 2010-2011.

- £27 million will go to creating more than 700 new posts for Independent Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse Advisers. Research shows if a victim is supported, they are around 50% more likely to stay engaged in the criminal justice system.
- £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.
- £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.

Police and Crime Commissioners will receive £68m from this fund this year to commission support services based on local need, including support for victims of VAWG based crimes.

In recognition of increased demand, the Rape and Sexual Abuse Fund has been extended for a further year, extending the funding provided to these services to four years (2019-2023) to provide the sector with the stability they need and we will continue to work closely with them to monitor demand.

■ **HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Fees and Charges**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[171782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing and exemption for police forces from HM Courts & Tribunals Service fees for all civil order applications issued in support of operational policing to reduce crime and protect the vulnerable.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice does not consider it appropriate to introduce a blanket exemption for police forces from HM Courts & Tribunals Service fees for all civil order applications. However, we will continue to work closely with all government departments, including the Home Office, to ensure these fees are set at the appropriate levels. In 2019/2020, there was a net fee income of £724m against the £2bn running costs of HMCTS. It is only right that we seek to recover a contribution towards the costs of providing these services from court and tribunal users – including public authorities – where they can afford to do so. These contributions are used to fund a more effective and efficient courts service and support wider access to justice.

■ **Mental Health Act 2007**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[172864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to reform the Mental Health Act 2007.

Alex Chalk:

Reforming the Mental Health Act (MHA) remains a priority for this Government. In January, the Department of Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Justice published a consultative White Paper setting out proposals for landmark reform of the MHA. The White Paper responds to the recommendations made by the Independent Review of the MHA, chaired by Sir Simon Wessely.

Among other reforms, this includes commitments to ensure that those with serious mental health problems in the criminal justice system are able to access the care and treatment they need in the right setting, and as quickly as possible.

The Government is currently consulting widely on the proposals, including with service users, carers and professionals. The consultation ends 21 April 2021. This will inform the development of a Mental Health Bill.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Iron and Steel**

Lucy Powell:

[\[173049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the level of UK-produced steel procured by his Department and associated departmental public bodies and agencies in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Chris Philp:

Our procurement activities continue to follow Government guidance to ensure we take full account of the value provided by UK steel producers. We did not directly procure any steel.

■ Powers of Attorney**Gareth Thomas:**[\[172854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many spot check investigations his Department has carried out to check Lasting Powers of Attorney are in line with the wishes of those in whose names an application is made, in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Chalk:

The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) is the registering authority for Lasting Powers of Attorney (LPAs) and has a statutory duty to maintain a register of Powers of Attorney and Deputyship orders. OPG has authority under Section 58 of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) to investigate concerns that are raised about the circumstances surrounding the execution of an LPA, either before or after registration.

While OPG does not conduct spot checks, the creation of an LPA requires witnessing and in addition a Certificate Provider must attest that the person making the LPA understands and consents to its contents.

■ Prisons: Coronavirus**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[172030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on covid-19 recovery in prisons in England and Wales of the proportion of staff who are new entrants to the service and have little or no experience of pre-covid regimes.

Alex Chalk:

All newly recruited Prison Officers receive Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT) which is an eight-week course designed to prepare new officers by giving them the knowledge and skills they need to carry out their role in pre-COVID regimes.

The safety of our staff and prisoners remains a top priority. Our measures have included restricting regimes, minimising inter-prison transfers and compartmentalising our prisons into different units to isolate the sick, shield the vulnerable and quarantine new arrivals. A comprehensive testing regime of staff weekly and prisoners on reception and transfer is in place and is key in helping to prevent the spread of the virus.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[172031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to evaluate the potential merits of proposals to limit association within prison regimes to small groups (a) during and (b) after covid-19 recovery.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[172032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the implications for (a) normal daily time out of cell for prisoners, (b) on-wing staffing needs, (c) access to healthcare, (d) access to offending behaviour programmes, and (e) access to education of different possible limits on the size of groups of prisoners unlocked simultaneously for association.

Alex Chalk:

The functioning of prison regimes is pivotal to enabling prisoners to access offending behaviour programmes and education and for ensuring their essential needs, such as physical exercise and healthcare, are met.

During the pandemic, we have had to place restrictions on prison regimes to save lives and protect the NHS, guided by public health advice. As it becomes safe to do so, we will ease these restrictions, and we continue to review how regimes should operate currently and in the future.

In doing so, the Government is looking closely at the evidence, to build upon the lessons learned during the pandemic and review elements of the daily routine that can be adapted at a local level. Given the variation between different prisons, both in terms of their categorisation and their physical layout, regimes will continue to be tailored to take account of the particular circumstances of each prison.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[172033]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the speed of vaccinations of (a) staff and (b) prisoners in prison on the rate of covid-19 recovery in prison regimes.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[172034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Covid-19 roadmap out of lockdown, published on 22 February 2021, what steps he is taking to establish a timeline for covid-19 recovery in prisons in England and Wales during 2021.

Alex Chalk:

In line with changes to the stay at home guidance and travel restrictions in the community, over the coming weeks and months we will support establishments to ease some of the regime restrictions currently in place. This will be done when it is safe to do so and guided by public health advice. The vaccination programme, led by NHS, is making good progress and has recently expanded to start vaccinating those prisoners in priority groups 7 - 9, in line with the wider community timelines.

The safety of our staff and prisoners remains a top priority. Our measures have included restricting regimes, minimising inter-prison transfers and compartmentalising our prisons into different units to isolate the sick, shield the vulnerable and quarantine new arrivals. A comprehensive regime of testing staff weekly and prisoners on reception and transfer is in place and is key in helping to prevent the spread of the virus.

■ Probation: Coronavirus**Sir John Hayes:****[172863]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department has taken to help ensure delivery of probation services during covid-19 lockdowns.

Alex Chalk:

Throughout the pandemic the Probation Service has prioritised public protection and risk management, as well as delivery of advice to courts in all regions, whilst ensuring staff, people on probation and victims remain safe.

A Gold, Silver and Bronze structure was quickly put into place to enable fast-paced decisions to be taken in response to the emerging situation, providing an agile approach. Exceptional Delivery Models, which set out how we operate key aspects of our work during the pandemic and ensured services could be continued, were developed and implemented across England and Wales. Exceptional Delivery Models allow Regional Probation Directors to take decisions locally regarding what their teams deliver, based on the individual circumstances of their regions.

Guided by public health advice, we took immediate, decisive action to implement a suite of measures to respond to the pandemic, moving to a mixture of face to face and remote methods. In-person socially distanced offender reporting has continued to be the default for people on probation who pose a higher risk, for example Terrorism Act offenders.

After our initial response to Covid, we reintroduced services as and when appropriate. We continued to rebuild throughout the year, however in response to the most recent national restrictions introduced in January we again reduced our face to face service delivery. We are now once again increasing the delivery of face to face services as appropriate.

Compared with the first set of national restrictions imposed last spring, Probation is now in a much stronger position to supervise offenders effectively during the pandemic. Developments like asymptomatic Covid testing of staff and people on probation, regular risk assessments of staff with vulnerabilities, Covid-secure offices, social distancing, and use of personal protective equipment are allowing us to continue to deliver probation services even within heightened restrictions, while ensuring staff and service users remain safe.

The development of new approaches such as blended supervision (a mixture of face to face and remote contact), Alternative Delivery Models for Accredited Programmes, and innovative ways of delivering unpaid work in Covid safe ways have also significantly increased our ability to deliver during the pandemic.

HM Inspectorate of Probation published a thematic review of Exceptional Delivery Model arrangements in November 2020 and of Probation Recovery in February 2021. Both reports praised our response to the pandemic.

■ Probation: Staff

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[172931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's report, Caseloads, workloads and staffing levels in probation Services, published in March 2021, what assessment he has made of the effect of reintegration of community rehabilitation companies into the national probation service on the (a) mean caseloads and (b) distribution of caseloads for (i) probation services officers and (ii) probation officers.

Alex Chalk:

Our future model for the probation system is based on enabling our staff to deliver all elements of their role to protect the public and to help people live law abiding lives, rather than an average caseload per probation staff member. Consolidating probation services into one organisation will enable staff to work with a more diverse range of people on probation with different needs and develop a broader range of skills, which in turn will increase the flexibility of our workforce. All staff will deal with work and caseloads that have a range of complexity, matched to their level of training and expertise.

We are also increasing our recruitment of trainee probation officers to unprecedented levels in order to meet increased demand on the system. We have committed to recruiting 1,000 trainee Probation Officers in 2020/21, with 443 already started in July 2020 and further intakes planned throughout 2021. This increase will help to ensure that probation officers have the capacity to effectively manage their caseload.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[172932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's report, Caseloads, workloads and staffing levels in probation Services, published in March 2021, what steps he is taking to reduce the numbers of probation staff with caseloads in excess of (a) 50 cases and (b) 60 cases.

Alex Chalk:

A probation worker's tasks are not based solely on the number of cases they are managing, but the level of supervision each case requires. Capacity of probation officers is regularly monitored by Senior Probation Officers and line managers. We have policies and guidance in place to support managers and staff who are deemed to have an excessive workload.

However, we know that workloads for many probation officers are too high, which is why we are ambitious in our recruitment of additional staff. We are committed to recruiting 1,000 trainee Probation Officers in 2020/21, with 443 already having started in July 2020 and further intakes planned for 2021.

Our planned reforms for the probation system will enable our staff to deliver all elements of their role, protect the public and help people live law abiding lives. All staff will deal with work and caseloads that have a range of complexity, matched to their level of training and expertise.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[172933]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's report, Caseloads, workloads and staffing levels in probation Services, published in March 2021, what steps he is taking to enable accurate and relevant measurement of probation staff workloads after the reintegration of community rehabilitation companies into the national probation service.

Alex Chalk:

Our future model for the probation system is based on enabling our staff to deliver all elements of their role to protect the public and to help people live law abiding lives.

We have developed a revised Workload Measurement Tool (WMT) to support Senior Probation Officers to monitor the capacity of their teams. From the point of unification in June the WMT will include CRC caseloads and staff.

All staff will deal with work and caseloads that have a range of complexity, matched to their level of training and expertise.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[172934]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's report, Caseloads, workloads and staffing levels in probation Services, published in March 2021, how many probation staff have experienced a Workload Measurement Tool capacity of over 120 percent for more than four consecutive weeks in a year for each of the last five years.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice publishes statistics showing the total caseload of the 20 Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) as well as the National Probation Service (NPS). The latest published figures cover the period from June to September 2020. Figures for the following quarter will be published in due course. Figures for total probation caseload are published quarterly in the Offender Management Statistics Bulletin, England and Wales: <https://data.justice.gov.uk/probation/offender-management/caseload-total>

Senior Probation Officers monitor the capacity of individuals in their teams regularly. The Workload Measurement Tool is a tool designed to assist a Senior Probation Officer in allocating cases to Probation Practitioners by balancing the workload out amongst their teams. Anyone over 110% for a period of 4 consecutive weeks is deemed to have an excessive workload and we have policies and guidance in place to support managers and staff who meet this threshold.

Figures detailing how many probation staff have experienced a Workload Measurement Tool capacity of over 120 percent for more than 4 consecutive weeks in a year for each of the last five years could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[172935]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's report, Caseloads, workloads and staffing levels in probation Services, published in March 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of ensuring that probation staff manage a mix of higher and lower risk cases after the reintegration of community rehabilitation companies into the national probation service.

Alex Chalk:

Following our reforms to the probation service, cases will be allocated based on both risk of harm and complexity of need, with an increased focus on ensuring continuity. The new Tiering Framework will inform the allocation of cases to the right Probation Practitioner, meaning staff will handle cases matched to their level of training and expertise. Enabling Probation Practitioners to work with a more diverse range of offenders with different risks and needs will mean staff are able to develop a broader range of skills, which in turn will increase the flexibility of our workforce.

Where possible, individuals will remain with the same Probation Practitioner throughout their supervision. This will allow for continuity of contact and support the building of a constructive relationship between practitioners and people on probation, helping them to achieve better outcomes and ultimately avoid reoffending.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[172936]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's report, Caseloads, workloads and staffing levels in probation Services, published in March 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits for reducing (a) reoffending and (b) the costs to the public purse of reoffending of reduced caseloads for probation staff.

Alex Chalk:

The work of probation staff is a vital part of protecting the public and cutting the annual £18 billion cost of reoffending. It is important that our probation system offers the support individuals need to rehabilitate and turn their backs on crime for good.

Our reforms, including ambitious recruitment of new probation officers and improvements to caseload management, will enable effective supervision and rehabilitation of people in the system. Probation officer numbers are approaching a four-year high and are at their second-highest level since 2014. We are committed to recruiting 1,000 trainee Probation Officers in 2020/21, with 443 already started in July 2020 and further intakes planned throughout 2021.

Wider reforms to the probation system will also support our aim of reducing reoffending and the associated cost to the public. A greater range of resettlement and rehabilitative services will be commissioned regionally and locally from specialist organisations. This will enable the delivery of services that can be tailored to respond to the diverse backgrounds and needs of individuals to effect positive outcomes as well as maximise opportunities for collaboration with local partners, including

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations, local authorities and Police and Crime Commissioners.

■ **Smoking: Fines**

Shabana Mahmood: [172046]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many businesses were fined in each of the last three calendar years for allowing the use of shisha/water pipe within substantially or fully enclosed public spaces.

Chris Philp:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Shabana Mahmood: [172047]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the total value of fines was issued to businesses providing shisha/water pipes for allowing smoking within substantially or fully enclosed public spaces in each of the last three calendar years.

Chris Philp:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ **Tobacco: Children**

Shabana Mahmood: [172048]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many businesses selling shisha were prosecuted for selling shisha tobacco to under-18s in each of the past three calendar years.

Chris Philp:

It is not possible to separately identify prosecutions for the specific offence of selling shisha tobacco to under-18s in the Ministry of Justice court proceedings database.

Details on prosecutions and outcomes relating to the broader offence of “144 Selling Tobacco to Juvenile” can be found by selecting the offence in the ‘Offence’ filter of the following tool:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938568/outcomes-by-offence-tool-2019.xlsx

These offences fall under the legislation of Children and Young Persons (Sale of Tobacco etc.) Order 2007, amending the previous Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991.

TRANSPORT

■ Bicycles: Repairs and Maintenance

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[172023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Government has plans to release further vouchers under the Fix Your Bike Voucher Scheme.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department plans to release a further batch of vouchers before Easter, providing lockdown restrictions still allow.

■ Biofuels

Sir John Hayes:

[\[174006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of classifying biodiesel that is 100 per cent derived from waste biomass separately from biodiesel made from non-waste biomass.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department recognises the benefits that fuels produced from waste can have in reducing carbon emissions. It is anticipated the merits of any new classification for biodiesel proposed would relate to better informing the public or incentivising the uptake of waste derived biodiesel.

The industry standard for diesel and UK regulations make no requirement in respect of the labelling by feedstock type of biodiesel blended into diesel and placed on sale in UK forecourts. There is little merit in introducing such a requirement and given the complexity of fuel supply chains it is likely this information will not always be known at the point of sale.

The Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) was changed in 2011 so that waste derived biodiesel is eligible for twice the number of tradeable certificates than would be rewarded for biodiesel produced from non-wastes. One benefit of the change in approach is that the RTFO scheme also sets mandatory sustainability criteria which must be met in order for renewable fuels to benefit from any support. Thereby ensuing we reward fuels that deliver reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The RTFO has been highly successful in supporting a market for waste derived biofuels. In 2019 over two-thirds (69%) of renewable fuels reported under the RTFO were made from wastes and around four fifths (79%) of biodiesel reported was made from used cooking oil, a waste.

■ Clean Air Zones

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[172882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking with the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government to allocate funding to local

authorities in order to (a) facilitate the implementation of Clean Air Zones and (b) promote better public health across local communities.

Rachel Maclean:

As a result of the 2017 NO₂ Plan, a number of local authorities have been required to assess what action is needed to address NO₂ exceedances in their area. This is supported by £880 million to develop and implement required measures such as Clean Air Zones (CAZs). We engage with MHCLG where needed.

The Clean Air Strategy set out a clear agenda for action to reduce people's exposure to harmful pollutants and our priority is to implement the commitments we made. We will apply our understanding of the longer-term implications from these unprecedented changes in living and working patterns to delivering our environmental commitments, including our Clean Air Strategy and the air quality measures in the Environment Bill.

■ **Department for Transport: Iron and Steel**

Lucy Powell:

[\[173045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the level of UK-produced steel procured by his Department and associated departmental public bodies and agencies in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The DfT and associated departmental public bodies and agencies have provided data on the level of UK-produced steel procured for 2019-20 to BEIS. BEIS collates and publishes annually information on how much steel is purchased for Government's major infrastructure projects in the previous financial year, including what proportion is UK-produced. BEIS have collated the 2019-20 data from across Government and expect to publish later this year. The data on UK steel procured in 2020-21 will be collated in due course.

The Government is working with the steel industry, the unions and devolved administrations to support the UK steel sector to develop a long-term sustainable future. This includes making sure that UK producers of steel have the best possible chance of competing for and winning contracts across all Government procurement.

■ **Driving Licences: Foreign Nationals**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[172122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will extend the validity of driving licences for foreign nationals who are eligible to drive in the UK for 12 months before requiring a theory test, in the context of disruption caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

There are no plans to extend the 12-month period for which holders of foreign driving licences can drive in Great Britain using that licence. To continue driving after the 12-month period the driver must either exchange their licence, if it was issued by a

country which has been [designated for licence exchange purposes](#), or apply for a provisional driving licence and pass both a theory and practical driving test.

Where the UK has reached an agreement with an EU Member State on Recognition and Exchange, the UK will continue to recognise extended EU driving licences from 1 January 2021.

■ **Driving: Qualifications**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[172940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the proportion of people holding driving qualifications who are (a) women and (b) from each Census 2021 ethnicity group.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency does not hold this data.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[174019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department has made on launching a design competition for electric car charging points.

Rachel Maclean:

Government is currently consulting on measures to improve the consumer experience of public charging. This includes design factors such as accessibility, weatherproofing and lighting. We want to make charging as easy as refuelling a petrol or diesel car.

■ **Eurostar: Government Assistance**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[173146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason the Government has not provided financial support to Eurostar.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is fully aware of the serious financial challenges Eurostar is facing. Like other parts of the international travel sector it has been hit hard by the crisis.

Providing financial assistance to any travel operator can only be implemented after all other options have been exhausted by the company. Any support would also be subject to appropriate conditions and structured to protect taxpayers' interests.

■ **High Speed 2 Railway Line: Air Pollution**

Jim Shannon:

[\[173023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions (a) he and (b) HS2 Ltd has had with HS2 Ltd's contractors on their awareness of HS2 Ltd's environmental obligations on site air quality and pollution.

Andrew Stephenson:

HS2 environmental requirements, including with respect to air quality, are embedded into HS2 contractors through their contractual requirements and the project's Environmental Minimum Requirements. Integrated project teams for delivering Phase One of the railway ensure close working between client and contractor. HS2 contractors are required to be highly aware of, and compliant with, their air quality requirements and have in many cases bettered the project's rigorous standards through their own environmental leadership.

Jim Shannon:**[173024]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps (a) he and (b) HS2 Ltd is taking to ensure that measurements are taken of the air particulate matter and emissions footprint of HS2 Ltd's contractors along the route of the Phase One part of that project.

Andrew Stephenson:

HS2 air quality requirements form part of the HS2 project's overall Environmental Minimum Requirements. HS2 Ltd monitor and assure their contractors' performance with respect to air quality impacts, and provide monthly compliance dashboards to relevant local authorities. High level management information, including any breaches, is also supplied to the Department on a monthly basis. HS2 Ltd also publishes an annual air quality report, which is available at:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitoring-the-environmental-effects-of-hs2.

Jim Shannon:**[173025]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) obligations and (b) targets relating to air particulate matter and emissions (i) HS2 Ltd and (ii) HS2 Ltd's contractors have under the Government's Clean Air Strategy.

Andrew Stephenson:

Air quality requirements for HS2 are set during the parliamentary stages of the Bills for each phase of the railway. These reflect any relevant legal requirements or wider strategic governmental goals, and build on the air quality impact assessments and conclusions reported in the relevant Environmental Statements.

Measures to mitigate air quality effects on Phase One of HS2 are set out in Chapter 7 of the Code of Construction Practice, and in Information Paper E31 (air quality).

These measures include emission standards and targets for all Heavy Goods Vehicles and Light Duty Vehicles used in construction, plus best practice measures to control construction site dust. HS2 Ltd's Air Quality Strategy, monthly monitoring reports and annual air quality reports can be found online at

www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitoring-the-environmental-effects-of-hs2.

HS2 Ltd is also leading on a wide range of innovations to trial and roll out a range of low and zero emission plant and machinery on sites. Further information can be found in the published case studies online at www.hs2.org.uk/building-hs2/hs2-environment-facts/hs2-and-air-quality/.

Jim Shannon:

[\[173026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what environmental impact assessment his Department has made of the (a) fuel choices of HS2 Ltd for its construction sites and (b) use by HS2 Ltd of fossil-based diesel for its heavy plant and transport.

Andrew Stephenson:

The HS2 Environmental Statements contain reasonable worst-case assessments of the air quality and carbon impacts of the scheme, using assumptions about emissions that reflect the standards adopted by the project. Controls are in place to ensure that any significant effects reported in the Environmental Statements are not exceeded. Within that framework, actual decisions on fuel purchases for construction sites and vehicles, are taken by contractors rather than HS2 Ltd. HS2 Ltd is, however, running an innovation project to test a range of biofuels. The findings of this project will help establish the benefits provided by such fuels, and in due course be used to inform contractors' decisions.

Jim Shannon:

[\[174124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made representations to HS2 Ltd to support measures to encourage HS2 Ltd's contractors to use 100 per cent renewable diesel to improve air quality on and near those construction sites.

Andrew Stephenson:

Air quality requirements for HS2 are set during the parliamentary stages of the Bills for each phase of the railway. These reflect any relevant legal requirements or wider strategic governmental goals, and build on the air quality impact assessments and conclusions reported in the relevant Environmental Statements.

Measures to mitigate air quality effects on Phase One of HS2 are set out in Chapter 7 of the Code of Construction Practice, and in Information Paper E31 (air quality). These measures include emission standards and targets for all Heavy Goods Vehicles and Light Duty Vehicles used in construction, plus best practice measures to control construction site dust.

Within that framework, actual decisions on fuel purchases for construction sites and vehicles, are taken by contractors rather than HS2 Ltd. HS2 Ltd is, however, running an innovation project to test a range of biofuels. The findings of this project will help establish the benefits provided by such fuels, and in due course be used to inform contractors' decisions.

Jim Shannon:

[\[174125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an estimate of the number of (a) respiratory problems and (b) deaths that may be caused by the air pollution created by the use of fossil diesel in the construction of HS2.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Environmental Statements produced for each phase of HS2 include an assessment of any significant air quality effects associated with building the railway.

No health problems are anticipated as a result of emissions from the use of fossil diesel in the construction of HS2. As stated at para 4.7 of *HS2 Phase One Information Paper E31 (air quality)* :

"Where an effect on air quality [in the relevant Environmental Statement] is described as significant at a particular location, this is with respect to the air quality legislation, and does not denote a significant effect on human health. Much larger changes in air quality than are predicted as a consequence of the scheme would be needed to cause significant impacts on health at the level of an individual person."

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/672406/E31 - Air Quality v1.5.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/672406/E31_-_Air_Quality_v1.5.pdf)

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Carbon Emissions

Jim Shannon:

[174123]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the total CO2 emissions from HS2 Phase One construction in the event that fossil-based diesel is not replaced with an advanced renewable diesel for all heavy plant and related transport.

Andrew Stephenson:

The overall construction carbon impact of HS2 Phase One is reported in the relevant Environmental Statement*. This assessment presents a reasonable worst-case scenario and assumes fossil-based diesel is used for heavy plant and related transport. The statement was produced to accompany the then High Speed Rail (London - West Midlands) Bill. In the four years since publication, technological improvements and adoption of best working practices will have superseded many of the findings therein, including HS2 Ltd's adoption of a target to cut construction carbon emissions by 50% against industry baselines. Contributors to achieving this target include the adoption of plant and facilities that do not use fossil-based diesel.

* <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-phase-one-environmental-statement-documents>

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Green Belt

Sir John Hayes:

[174010]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to protect Green Belt land during the development of the High Speed Two rail network.

Andrew Stephenson:

In designing the HS2 project, we have sought to protect green belt land as much as practicable, and changes to the design have already been made to mitigate this.

A range of protection measures are also contained within the HS2 Environmental Minimum Requirements and these have been produced for each phase of the project.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Sir John Hayes:

[174008]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimation his Department has made of the greenhouse gas emissions from the use of fossil diesel in the construction of HS2 Phase One.

Andrew Stephenson:

Carbon dioxide equivalent emissions, which accounts for the climate impact of all greenhouse gases, is referred to as 'Carbon' in our assessments. The construction carbon impact of HS2 Phase One is reported in the relevant Environmental Statement*. This assessment presents a reasonable worst-case scenario assuming fossil-based diesel for heavy plant and related transport. It does not reflect HS2 Ltd's target to cut construction carbon emissions by 50% against industry baselines. The Environmental Statement was produced to accompany the then High Speed Rail (London - West Midlands) Bill, and in the 4 years since publication, technological improvements and adoption of best working practices, including the adoption of plant and facilities that do not use fossil-based diesel, will have superseded many of the findings therein.

* <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-phase-one-environmental-statement-documents>

■ High Speed Two: Air Pollution

Jim Shannon:

[174126]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Government's Clean Air Strategy applies to HS2 Ltd; and what recent representations he has made to HS2 Ltd on its air quality responsibilities.

Andrew Stephenson:

Air quality requirements for HS2 are set during the parliamentary stages of the Bills for each phase of the railway. These reflect any relevant legal requirements or wider strategic governmental goals - such as the Clean Air Strategy - and build on the air quality impact assessments and conclusions reported in the relevant Environmental Statements.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers

Ms Lyn Brown:

[172943]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the number of people newly qualifying as LGV drivers.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[172944]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many people have newly qualified as LGV drivers in each of the last five years.

Rachel Maclean:

Prior to the pandemic more than 40,000 drivers passed their LGV test each year over the last four years. The restrictions put in place to fight the pandemic has affected the ability for new drivers to take their LGV driving test.

LGV driver training and testing is due re-start on 12 April as the current restrictions are lifted. When tests resume DVSA plan to conduct 2,800 to 3,000 tests per week.

■ **Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Apprentices****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[172938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of trends in (a) the number of applications for Driving Goods Vehicles apprenticeships, (b) the number of starts for Driving Goods Vehicles apprenticeships and (c) the number of successful completions of Driving Goods Vehicles apprenticeships.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[172939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many people have (a) applied for a Driving Goods Vehicles apprenticeship, (b) started a Driving Goods Vehicles apprenticeship and (c) successfully completed a Driving Goods Vehicles apprenticeship in each of the last five years.

Rachel Maclean:

There have been 4,889 starts for the Large Goods Vehicle Driver apprenticeship standard in the five years to October 2020.

We are working with the industry to develop a suite of apprenticeships which will enable the logistics sector to make the most of the Apprenticeship Levy funding available.

■ **Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Tests****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[172946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many people have newly passed an LGV driver practical test in each of the last five years.

Rachel Maclean:

The number of LGV driver practical test passes in each of the last five years are:

2015/16	39,000
2016/17	44,346
2017/18	40,808
2018/19	43,065
2019/20	41,434

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency publishes the statistics for all driving tests on Gov.uk

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[174056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the number of people newly passing an LGV driver practical test.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[174057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of trends level of the pass rate for LGV driver practical tests.

Rachel Maclean:

Prior to the pandemic more than 40,000 drivers passed their LGV test each year over the last four years. The restrictions put in place to fight the pandemic has affected the ability for new drivers to take their LGV driving test.

LGV driver training and testing is due to re-start on 12 April as the current restrictions are lifted. When tests resume DVSA plan to conduct 2,800 to 3,000 LGV tests per week.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: EU Nationals

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[174058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the number and proportion of EU nationals newly qualifying as LGV drivers.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[174059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the number and proportion of EU nationals who are qualified LGV drivers.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency does not collect data on the nationality of those taking an LGV driving test.

Logistics UK estimate that there were around 25,000 EU nationals working as LGV drivers in the UK in 2020.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Jobseeker's Allowance

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[172945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the number of qualified LGV drivers claiming jobseeker's allowance.

Rachel Maclean:

The number of LGV drivers claiming Jobseeker's Allowance in February 2021 was 80, down 11 per cent from a year ago. The number of qualified LGV drivers claiming Jobseeker's Allowance has historically been low, reflecting the ongoing LGV driver shortages in the logistics industry.

Departmental officials are working with colleagues at the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus to ensure that qualified LGV drivers are able to move back into work as soon as possible.

■ **Logistics: Vacancies**

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[172941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the extent of skills shortages in the logistics sector in the occupations of (a) transport management, (b) mechanics, (c) technicians, (d) LGV drivers, (e) storage management, (f) elementary storage occupations, (g) importers and exporters.

Rachel Maclean:

The labour shortages in the sector are longstanding. There has been no recent systematic assessment by the department of the extent of the skills shortage. Assessments have been made by Logistics UK.

We are working with the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus to ensure that jobseekers can find employment or training in the industry as quickly as possible.

We are also working with the Department for Education in supporting the logistics sector make the most of the opportunities provided through the apprenticeship levy.

■ **Materials Handling Equipment**

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[172937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many people have newly qualified as forklift operators in each of the last five years.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government does not record the numbers of newly qualified forklift operators.

The training for materials handling equipment, including forklift trucks, is an option within the Supply Chain Warehouse Operative apprenticeship but is not required to complete the apprenticeship. There have been 5,093 Supply Chain Warehouse Operative apprenticeship starts in the last five years.

■ **Materials Handling Equipment: Motor Vehicles**

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[174061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the number of newly qualified forklift operators.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government does not record the numbers of newly qualified forklift operators.

The training for materials handling equipment, including forklift trucks, is an option within the Supply Chain Warehouse Operative apprenticeship but is not required to

complete the apprenticeship. There have been 5,093 Supply Chain Warehouse Operative apprenticeship starts in the last five years.

■ Merchant Shipping: Crew

Sir John Hayes: [174017]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of merchant seamen who are UK passport holders.

Robert Courts:

The UK does not record additional information, such as occupation, on its passports and it would not be possible to estimate how many seafarers hold a UK passport.

Sir John Hayes: [174018]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many merchant seamen from the UK have been (a) trained and (b) employed as merchant seamen in each of the last five years.

Robert Courts:

The Department for Transport openly publishes statistics on seafarers in the UK shipping industry annually which are available on the [maritime and shipping statistics](#) pages of the .gov website. The Department does not collect data on maritime apprenticeships.

■ Railways

Sir John Hayes: [174011]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress his Department has made on (a) opening new train stations and (b) restoring previously closed railway lines.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Under the New Stations Fund, my Department has opened 8 new stations and a further 5 new stations will be open by 2024.

A third round of the Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund closed on 5 March, which will develop more early-stage ideas for reopening rail lines and stations. This will add to the 25 ideas funded in previous rounds and funding for a feasibility study to reinstate the Fleetwood-Poulton line.

£34 million has been pledged to rapidly progress plans to reopen the Northumberland line, which closed to passengers in 1964 as part of the Beeching cuts and on 19 March, my Department announced the reopening of the Dartmoor line between Exeter and Okehampton, with services planned to begin this year.

Sir John Hayes: [174015]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) graffiti and (b) fly tipping are adequately tackled on railway (i) mainlines and (ii) branch lines.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Graffiti and fly-tipping on the railway are serious issues. The department is working with Network Rail and the British Transport Police to ensure that they are adequately tackled across the railway, on both main lines and branch lines.

Both Network Rail and the British Transport Police are tackling graffiti on the railway and working to ensure the railway is as safe, clean and welcoming as it can be. There are a number of national working groups which meet regularly, including with Train Operating Companies, to share best practice on tackling graffiti. Focus areas for both organisations include the prevention, reduction, removal and policing of graffiti. New potentially beneficial technologies are being used and considered to help tackle graffiti.

Nationally Network Rail has a number of standards and processes in place setting out guidance for Train Operating Companies and Network Rail regions on dealing with waste fly-tipped on Network Rail land. This includes guidance on ensuring all waste is removed as quickly and safely as possible, and on how to deal with areas of frequent incidents, such as installing automatic lighting and CCTV, and increasing fence heights.

Railways: Bridges**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[174293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has for largescale (a) fill in and (b) removal of bridges for the Historical Railways Estate.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As part of Highways England's 5-year plan for its management of over 3,000 Historical Railways Estate structures it has developed a programme of works to maintain safety. These works include repair, strengthening and refurbishment of structures, which can also include infilling or demolition where necessary.

This programme is under internal review and works are only taking place on structures that are unsafe.

Railways: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[173135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure the safe return to normal service on the rail network in line with the easing of restrictions set out in the covid-19 roadmap.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department is working closely with train operators and Network Rail to step up capacity as we move through the roadmap. The Department will continue to work with operators to ensure crowd management plans are in place for anticipated busy periods as well as the ability to draw on additional staff if needed to manage higher passenger numbers.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[174247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he will take to ensure the safety of (a) rail conductors and drivers, (b) station staff and (c) passengers is prioritised on the rail network during roadmap out of the covid-19 outbreak restrictions.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The safety of rail conductors, drivers, station staff and passengers continues to be our priority as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted. We have issued comprehensive guidance to train operators on the steps they need to take to protect staff in line with Public Health England advice, as well as safer travel guidance for passengers, both of which are regularly reviewed and updated.

Operators are planning to increase service levels in line with the roadmap and the levels of demand observed on the network, alongside taking active steps to encourage social distancing and manage passenger flows with crowd management plans and ability to draw on additional staff if needed.

■ **Railways: Death**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[173142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to prevent fatalities on the rail network.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

My Department remains firmly committed to reducing passenger, workforce and public fatalities on the railways, whether it be on mainline or non-mainline parts of the network.

The UK has a strong safety record and we continue to work closely with Network Rail, as the infrastructure manager of Britain's railways, and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), as the safety regulator, to ensure that duty holders discharge their statutory safety duties correctly and enhance their safety arrangements, wherever possible.

This includes managing risks associated with civil engineering assets, extreme weather events, track and lineside, level crossings, depots, occupational health, trespassing and suicides, among other areas, as identified in the ORR's annual safety report for 2019-2020. We are also working with industry to ensure that recommendations produced by the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) are effectively implemented in a timely manner, including those directed at the Department.

■ **Railways: Disability**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[173145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to raise awareness of the hidden disabilities sunflower lanyard and badge scheme for use on the rail network.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is committed to encouraging more disabled people to use the railway as their first choice of transport, and supports the Sunflower Lanyard and Card scheme to enable people with non-visible disabilities to discreetly make staff aware they may need extra help or time on their journey and to travel with confidence. Every operator across England, Scotland and Wales has signed up to the Sunflower scheme.

As travel restrictions begin to be eased, the rail industry will continue to deliver passenger assistance where needed and use products, like the Sunflower Card/Lanyard, to give confidence to those customers who wish to use them.

Railways: Fares

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[174245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made on the economic effect on (a) retail and (b) other businesses in towns and cities of the recent increase in rail fares.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In terms of the economic effect on (a) and (b), the fares increase on 1 March was the lowest for four years. A small rise was necessary to ensure crucial investment in our railways. By delaying the change in fares, those who needed to renew season tickets were able to get a better deal until 28 February.

Passenger demand has fallen dramatically over the last year and its recovery is uncertain. The Department will continue to work closely with industry on initiatives to support demand and revenue recovery when the time is right, including actively working with train operators to develop a solution that offers better value and convenience for those who commute flexibly.

Railways: Females

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[173136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2021 to Question 165645, what assessment he has made of the reasons for the low number of female train drivers.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[173137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2021 to Question 165645 on Railways: Females, for what reason his Department has not undertaken an estimate of the number of female train drivers.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[173138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to collect information on the representation of women in (a) train driver, (b) train conductor, (c) senior roles and (d) the rail sector.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As outlined in my answer to question 165645 we have included requirements for train operating companies within the Emergency Recovery Measure Agreements to provide the Department with diversity data across a range of characteristics, including gender comparisons.

The Department is committed to ensuring that the transport workforce better reflects our diverse society.

The government intends to publish a White Paper with details of its plans for rail reform, including its consideration of diversity within the rail workforce, when the course of the pandemic becomes clearer.

Railways: North of England**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[172109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 2 March 2021 to Question 158166, what steps he will take to ensure that bids for the third round of the Ideas Fund will be assessed and chosen independently and objectively.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Recommendations for funding will be made by an Expert Panel following assessment by my Department, its technical advisers and Network Rail. This is the same approach as was taken in the previous two rounds.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[174062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the environmental impact of the Transpennine Rail upgrade.

Andrew Stephenson:

As with all rail upgrades, our evaluation of the options made through the business case process will consider the long-term benefit of the scheme in terms of its contribution to the Government's commitment to decarbonize the economy by 2050. Environmental Impact Assessments for the construction itself will be undertaken in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[174063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the value for money of the Transpennine Rail upgrade.

Andrew Stephenson:

We are currently evaluating a range of different options for the TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU) which will be selected later this year, informed by the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands. The value for money of each option varies and it is therefore not possible to be specific at this stage.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[174064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the completion date of the Transpennine Rail upgrade.

Andrew Stephenson:

We are currently evaluating a range of different options for the TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU) which will be selected later this year, informed by the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands. These options range in their delivery date dependent on the option which is eventually chosen.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[174065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to make a new assessment of the value for money of the Transpennine Rail upgrade in response to potential estimated revisions to the take-up of public transport as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Andrew Stephenson:

We are undertaking analysis in support of the next business case for the TransPennine Route Upgrade which we expect to complete later this year. This will consider different post-COVID-19 demand scenarios.

Railways: Social Distancing**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:**[\[173132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2021 to Question 164599, what steps he has taken since schools reopened on 8 March 2021 to ensure social distancing on the rail network.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:[\[173133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 March 2021 to Question 164599, what assessment he has made of the effect of schools reopening on 8 March 2021 on the rail network.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department has worked closely with the Department for Education, Network Rail, the train operating companies and Sir Peter Hendy to assess transport operators' preparedness ahead of schools re-opening on 8 March; no significant concerns were identified. No significant issues have been seen on the rail network since schools returned although operators continue to monitor passenger flows.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:[\[173134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps he has taken to ensure passengers and rail staff are able to social distance on the rail network.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The safety of both staff and passengers remains of the utmost importance. During the coronavirus pandemic, we have issued comprehensive guidance to train operators on the steps they need to take to protect staff in line with Public Health England advice.

In stations across the country, the industry has taken active steps to encourage passengers to socially distance (e.g. via train/station announcements and floor stickers), to manage passenger flows and to increase cleaning regimes. We have been working closely with operators to ensure that there are appropriate procedures

in place and clearly communicated to passengers. For instance, passengers are urged to use the whole length of the train to board to avoid overcrowding in one carriage.

Operators are planning to increase service levels in line with the roadmap and the levels of demand observed on the network.

■ Railways: Tickets

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[174246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the rail network moving to cashless on people without the ability to go cashless.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We want to modernise the way passengers buy and pay for their rail travel to improve accessibility and enable a smoother purchasing and journey experience. As we do this people will naturally migrate to using smart ticketing, contactless cards and buying online at their own convenience. During the COVID-19 crisis these methods of buying and paying for travel have been important in supporting the health and safety of passengers and station staff.

Before there is any move to remove paper ticketing or cash payments we would need to ensure passengers who are dependent on cash payments or do not have access to the internet or a smartphone can continue to purchase train tickets as readily as they can do today.

■ Roads: Design

Sir John Hayes:

[\[174016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken to assess the effect of Highway England's report, The road to good design: Highways England's design vision and principles, published on 11 January 2018 on the design of (a) roads, (b) architecture related to roads and (c) roadside aesthetics.

Rachel Maclean:

Following the publication of The Road to Good Design: Highways England's design vision and principles, Highways England continues to meet quarterly with stakeholders through its Strategic Design Panel, which supports it in ensuring the Strategic Road Network (SRN) displays design quality that is both safe and sensitive to the environment. An update is due for publication in April 2021, which will set out progress.

■ Transport for London: Finance

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[172979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how long he plans to provide emergency funding to Transport for London.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government and Mayor of London have agreed to extend the current Transport for London funding deal, which was due to run out on 31st March 2021. The extended deal will continue to support the capital and the transport network until 18 May 2021, when a new funding deal will be put in place.

The Government is committed to supporting London and the transport network on which it depends, and will commence discussions for a further funding deal as soon as the Mayoral Elections are concluded.

■ **Transport: East Midlands****Sir John Hayes:****[174013]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make a comparative assessment of the Government's per capita transport spending in (a) the East Midlands and (b) Lincolnshire in relation to other UK regions and counties in the most recent period for which that information is available.

Rachel Maclean:

When comparing expenditure across regions several factors should be considered. The benefits from spend on transport interventions will often accrue to passengers far beyond the residents of the immediate local area or region. This is particularly the case for spending on the railways which connect cities and regions across the country and deliver broader benefits beyond the region concerned.

During 2019-20 there was £289 of public expenditure on transport per head in the East Midlands, this compares to an average of £497 per head for the UK.

As we look to level up our country, we are committed to further investment across the country. That is why this Government recently announced the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund to provide the opportunity for local areas to bid for their priority investment projects.

A further breakdown of spend in 2019-20 is given in this table, which shows identifiable public expenditure (in £s) on all modes of transport per head of population, by region.

REGION	2019-20
North East	315
North West	438
Yorkshire & the Humber	309
East Midlands	289
West Midlands	492
East of England	470

REGION	2019-20
London	882
South East	521
South West	329
UK	497

We do not make comparative assessments between UK counties but some recent examples of Government transport investment in Lincolnshire include:

- £54m in 2020/21 for routine road maintenance and small transport projects.
- £50m of Large Local Major funding towards the recently-opened Lincoln Eastern Bypass.
- A further £110m from the Large Local Major fund towards the North Hykeham Relief Road, which is currently in the detailed design and planning phase, prior to construction starting in the coming years.
- £13m of Local Growth Fund for the Lincoln Transport Hub – a new bus station and multi-storey car park opened in 2018.
- £3.6m from the Local Highways Maintenance Challenge Fund towards the current reconstruction of the A52 Roman Bank in Skegness.
- £900,000 from the Active Travel Fund in 2020/21 to improve cycling and walking facilities.

■ Transport: Infrastructure

Sir John Hayes:

[174012]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what transport infrastructure projects his Department is planning in the (a) north of England and (b) Midlands to help deliver the Government's levelling up agenda.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is delivering major investment in transport infrastructure in the North and Midlands to help unite and level up the UK.

Last year's Spending Review and National Infrastructure Strategy underlined the government's ambition to deliver on key transport infrastructure projects and programmes in the North and Midlands. We are committed to increasing the share of investment in the North and Midlands, and enhancing critical rail and road networks in those regions. Investments we have set out have included:

Boosting towns and cities in these regions – building on the Transforming Cities Fund which has committed over £500 million investment in public and sustainable transport in some of the Midlands' largest city regions, with additional funding for five-

year intra-city transport settlements for eight English city regions, of which six are in the North. We have also announced a £4 billion Levelling Up fund which will invest in local infrastructure including transport – e.g. bypasses and other local road schemes, bus lanes, and railway station upgrades.

The National Bus Strategy, published this month, also sets out a bold vision for bus services in England outside London. Backed by £3 billion, the strategy will deliver better bus services for passengers, strengthening communities and sustaining town centres across the country.

Delivering on major rail and road projects – this spring the Government intends to publish the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) for the North and Midlands, setting out how we will deliver HS2 Phase 2b, Northern Powerhouse Rail, Midlands Rail Hub and other major rail programmes in the North and Midlands. We are also working on restoring lines and stations closed during the Beeching cuts.

Alongside this, a number of strategic roads projects in the North and Midlands will benefit from the £27 billion Roads Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2) funding package, while significant investment will contribute to local roads improvements.

■ **Transport: Skilled Workers**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[174060]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the UK having left the EU on (a) freedom of movement and (b) interoperability of transport skills qualifications in the transport sector.

Rachel Maclean:

Free movement between the UK and the European Union ended on 31 December 2020 and on 1 January 2021, and the UK implemented a points-based immigration system that prioritises skills and talent over where a person comes from.

The UK and the EU have agreed a framework for the recognition of professional qualifications between the Parties which is based on the EU's recent free trade agreements. It makes improvements on those agreements, which are designed to make the system more flexible and easier for regulatory authorities to use. EU driving licence holders residing in the UK will be able to exchange their licence without the need for a re-test. They can use their EU licence as long as it is valid, subject to UK licence renewal requirements. Certificates of professional competence for drivers and transport managers issued by EU Member States remain valid for use in the UK.

■ **Transport: Vacancies**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[172942]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent representations he has received from (a) members of the Strategic Transport Apprenticeship Taskforce and (b) other

sector stakeholders on the effect of the UK leaving the EU on transport sector skills shortages.

Rachel Maclean:

In 2016, the Government set ambitions through the Transport Infrastructure Skills Strategy (TISS) to increase apprenticeships in road and rail client bodies to help address skills shortages in the transport sector, ensuring that the transport sector has the capacity and capability to deliver planned investment and to increase diversity.

Over the past four years, the Strategic Transport Apprenticeship Taskforce (STAT) has worked to identify skills shortages across the transport sector. To understand the likely impact of changes to migration policy post-Brexit, STAT responded to the Migration Advisory Committee's Call for Evidence on Salary Thresholds (2019) and the Shortage Occupation List (2017 and (2020). This included employer led evidence of the potential impacts of Brexit on the transport industry.

The Department has received representations from sector stakeholders including Logistics UK which publishes an annual Skills and Employment Report and a monthly Logistics Performance Tracker. The Road Haulage Association also continue to make representations to government.

■ **Transport: Yorkshire and the Humber**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[172123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve transport infrastructure between Wakefield and Hull.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed, as part of its Levelling Up agenda, to improving transport connectivity between the towns and cities of the North. Since 2009/10, £17.8 billion has been invested on railways, and £9.2 billion on national roads, in the north of England, including schemes on the M1 Junctions 39-42, M62 Junctions 25-30 and A63 Castle Street to benefit journeys on the strategic road network between Wakefield and Hull. The Government's Integrated Rail Plan will set out how best to deliver and sequence Northern Powerhouse Rail, and other major rail projects such as HS2, so that the benefits of these investments are delivered to passengers and communities more quickly. The Government intends to publish the IRP this Spring.

We are also providing local authorities across the North of England access to the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund, launched at the Budget 2021, which will enable places to bid for transport project funding that will enable them to continue to develop and progress their transport and connectivity ambitions.

■ **Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[174023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that private plane owners comply with international travel restrictions.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[174024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plan to review the use of private planes during the covid-19 pandemic; and whether users of such aircraft have operated within international travel restrictions when compared to compliance across commercial airlines.

Robert Courts:

The international travel regulations apply to all individuals and operators, including those that use private planes. As such, they are subject to the same requirements and enforcement, including by the Border Force and Civil Aviation Authority.

In addition, my Department has issued guidance for the General Aviation (GA) sector during the Covid-19 pandemic. The guidance makes clear that international GA flying should follow the wider rules regarding international travel. This includes the requirement for anyone who has been in a travel ban red list country in the previous 10 days to arrive in England via an approved entry point. The enforcement of the entry ban on non-resident nationals from red list countries is managed by Border Force.

My Department is working across government to continuously review the effectiveness of international travel regulations to best protect public health and ensure they are working effectively. This includes considering health evidence and information on compliance from the Border Force and Civil Aviation Authority.

■ **Vaccination: Certification**

Martyn Day:

[\[173092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how the Government will ensure the interoperability of any vaccine certificate system with other similar national and international systems.

Robert Courts:

The Government recognises the importance of ensuring that any future vaccine certification system is interoperable and flexible enough to meet international standards. We are actively engaged both bilaterally with other states and multilaterally through organisations including the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) to support this work.

TREASURY

■ **Banks: Urban Areas**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[172869\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring banks to retain a physical banking presence in town and city centres.

John Glen:

Decisions on opening and closing branches are a commercial issue for banks and building societies. The Government does not intervene in these decisions or make direct assessments of the merits of a physical banking presence.

However, the Government does believe that the impact on communities of bank closures should be understood, considered and mitigated where possible. That is why the Government continues to be supportive of the Access to Banking Standard, which commits firms to ensure customers are well informed about branch closures, the bank's reasons for closure and options for continued access to banking services. This includes the Post Office, which allows 95% of business and 99% of personal banking customers to carry out their everyday banking at 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK.

In September 2020, the FCA published guidance setting out its expectation of firms when they are deciding to reduce their physical branches or the number of free-to-use ATMs. Firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of a planned closure on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs, and other relevant branch services and consider possible alternative access arrangements. This will ensure the implementation of closure decisions is undertaken in a way that treats customers fairly.

■ Biofuels: Excise Duties**Sir John Hayes:****[174007]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a lower excise duty bracket for biodiesel that is 100 per cent derived from waste biomass.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government supports renewable fuels under the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO), rather than through duty relief. One benefit of this is that the RTFO scheme sets mandatory sustainability criteria which must be met in order for renewable fuels to benefit from the receipt of Renewable Transport Fuel Certificates (RTFCs). In this way we can ensure that renewable fuels supplied and rewarded in the UK deliver genuine reductions in greenhouse gas emissions compared to fossil fuels.

Where a renewable fuel is produced from waste it is eligible to receive twice the reward in certificates under the RTFO scheme than biofuels produced from non-wastes.

The RTFO has been highly successful in supporting a market for renewable fuel since its introduction in 2008. In 2019, the use of renewable fuels supplied under the RTFO scheme, as a replacement for fossil fuels such as regular petrol or diesel, saved almost 5.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions. This is the equivalent of taking 2.5 million combustion engine-powered cars off the road. Renewable fuel supplied under the RTFO currently contributes around a third of the savings required

for the UK's transport carbon budget and around two thirds of biofuels reported under the RTFO are made from wastes.

■ Cash Dispensing: Fees and Charges

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[173062\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to support the introduction of free-to-use deposit-taking ATMs across the UK.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[173066\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that free-to-use cash points are available in the places that they are needed.

John Glen:

The Government created the Joint Authorities Cash Strategy Group in 2019, which has provided a forum for the public bodies to formally co-ordinate respective approaches to access to cash. This is chaired by HM Treasury and attended by the Bank of England, Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) and Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The Group published an update on the actions of the Group's members in July 2020. This included work led by the PSR and FCA to develop a comprehensive picture of cash access infrastructure across the UK.

With regards to ATMs, LINK (the scheme that runs the UK's largest ATM network) has existing arrangements in place to protect free-to-use ATMs that do not have another free-to-use ATM or Post Office within one kilometre. LINK's members have also made £5 million available to fund ATMs at the request of communities with poor access to cash. The PSR has powers to regulate LINK and is holding it to account over its commitment to protect the broad geographic spread of free-to-use ATMs.

The Government also continues to be fully supportive of the Post Office Banking Framework Agreement. The agreement allows 95% of business and 99% of personal banking customers to carry out their everyday banking at 11,500 Post Office branches in the UK until December 2022. The terms of future Banking Framework Agreements are commercial decisions between industry and the Post Office. The Government will continue to engage with industry and the Post Office to ensure that that all customers, wherever they live, continue to have access to over the counter banking services.

Industry-led initiatives to support financial inclusion and access to cash are also underway. This includes the Community Access to Cash Pilots initiative which is taking place in nine locations across the UK. This initiative is trialling additional cash access facilities – including new ATMs, automated cash deposit facilities and cashback without a purchase – within selected pilot areas. These pilots are to test solutions for ensuring that communities can conveniently withdraw and deposit cash and to identify ways that basic banking services can be better delivered, that could be adopted in other locations. The Government looks forward to the outcomes of these pilots.

The Government has committed to legislate to protect access to cash and ensure that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable for the long term. To progress this work, the Government published a Call for Evidence on Access to Cash in October 2020. The Call for Evidence sought views on the key considerations associated with cash access, including deposit and withdrawal facilities, cash acceptance, and regulatory oversight of the cash system. The Government is considering responses to the Call for Evidence and will set out next steps in due course.

■ Conditions of Employment

Sir George Howarth:

[\[174028\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what tax incentives are available to (a) employer share ownerships plans, (b) value workers' cooperatives and (c) other forms of mutual employment and membership.

Jesse Norman:

The Government offers four tax-advantaged employee share schemes: Share Incentive Plans (SIPs), the Save As You Earn (SAYE) scheme, Enterprise Management Incentives (EMI), and the Company Share Option Plan (CSOP). These schemes offer a range of Income Tax and Capital Gains Tax reliefs on qualifying shares. Employee Ownership Trusts (EOTs) promote indirect employee share ownership through offering similar tax reliefs to employees, with EOTs holding shares on their behalf. EOTs also offer an Income Tax exemption on bonus payments to employees.

While there are no statutory Income Tax or Corporation Tax incentives specifically for mutual organisations, the Government recognises their value in delivering the services their members and communities need.

■ Credit

Darren Jones:

[\[172108\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) pensioner and (b) other people who apply for credit without a comprehensive credit rating have fair access to finance.

John Glen:

The Government believes that a consumer without a comprehensive credit rating should have fair access to credit.

To support those struggling to access credit, in 2018, the Government announced the winners of its £2 million Rent Recognition Challenge. The winners offer apps for renters to record and share their rent payment data, helping boost their credit score. Further, since 2019, the Government has provided £96 million to Fair4All Finance to increase the financial resilience and wellbeing of people in vulnerable circumstances through improving availability of fair and accessible financial products and services.

For consumers struggling to access credit, Credit Reference Agencies can advise consumers to add a Notice of Correction (of up to 200 words) to their credit report

explaining any special circumstances, and to explain how their situation has now changed or improved. The content of the Notice should be taken into account alongside the information on the consumer's report.

To support pensioners, those in receipt of Pension Credit may be able to apply for Budgeting Loans available through DWP's Social Fund. These are interest-free loans, which are repayable from benefit awards and are designed to help with intermittent expenses that are considered difficult to budget. Those in receipt of Universal Credit can access new claim advances at the beginning of their claim should they have upfront costs. There are also budgeting or change of circumstances advances, available throughout a Universal Credit claim, should someone encounter unexpected one-off expenses.

■ Customs Intermediaries: Training

Jack Dromey: [\[172958\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what training has been provided by his Department to customs agents to help them to understand the provisions of the EU–UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement in the last three months.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not directly provide training for customs agents, but have made over £80 million available through the Customs Grants Schemes to support IT, training and recruitment. These funds have been fully applied for and applicants are now finalising their claims by submitting evidence of training undertaken.

■ Customs: ICT

Jack Dromey: [\[172955\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the average response time to customs queries to HMRC through the CHIEF system in the most recent period for which figures are available; and what steps he is taking to improve the response time for businesses seeking customs advice from the CHIEF system.

Jesse Norman:

The CHIEF system has been scaled to 360 million declarations per year as part of HMRC's preparations for the end of the Transition Period and it continues to perform well. This equates to 111 declarations per second and a message response time of 5 seconds, which is within the service-level agreement for all transactions. HMRC continue to test the performance of the CHIEF system.

Jack Dromey: [\[172956\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2021 to Question 145127 on customs: ICT, how many individuals were employed in each team in the month of (a) December 2020 and (b) March 2021.

Jesse Norman:

In December HMRC had 165 FTE employed on the Customs and International Trade helpline, webchat and accompanying activity, and HMRC now have 145 FTE employed on the Customs and International Trade helpline, webchat and accompanying activity.

■ Developing Countries: Debts**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[173063\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to require private creditors to cancel debt owed by developing countries during the covid-19 pandemic.

John Glen:

The UK recognises the debt burden faced by developing countries during the Covid-19 pandemic. Support for developing countries is a key priority for the UK's G7 presidency this year, and this includes delivering effective debt treatments that free up fiscal space to respond to the pandemic.

We regularly work with our international partners in the G7, G20 and Paris Club on debt issues, including private sector participation in debt restructurings. As such, we are supportive of the full and swift implementation of the Common Framework. The Common Framework is a G20 agreement that brings together, for the first time, G20 creditors to participate in coordinated debt restructurings.

Under the Common Framework, private sector creditors will be required to implement debt restructurings on at least as favourable terms as official creditors. This agreement should pave the way for more efficient, equitable, and effective case-by-case debt restructurings, which will allow low income countries to benefit from a more transparent and responsive approach to seeking debt treatment.

■ Financial Services: Gambling**Carolyn Harris:**[\[174161\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions (a) he and (b) officials of his Department have had with (i) the banking sector and (ii) financial regulators on bank-based gambling blocks.

John Glen:

Government ministers and officials regularly engage with the financial services regulators and financial services industry on a number of issues.

The Government recognises the value in voluntary gambling blocks to allow gamblers to self-exclude themselves from making payments to gambling operators. In February 2019, the then DCMS Secretary of State held a roundtable with UK banks, during which the Government set out the merits of gambling blocks.

Since then, there has been considerable progress in this area. Since April 2020, licensed gambling operators in the UK have been prohibited from accepting credit

card payments and such payments have been blocked by the largest UK banks. For debit cards, almost all of the largest UK banks, as well as the larger digital banks, now have voluntary gambling block features on their debit cards. This means that consumers have considerable market choice in this area and can choose a current account that has the right features for them.

■ Infrastructure: Finance

Sir John Hayes:

[\[172871\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to invest in UK infrastructure.

Kemi Badenoch:

The UK has historically underinvested in infrastructure and this government is committed to addressing that. Spending Review 2020 committed £100 billion of capital investment in 2021-22, a £30 billion cash increase compared to 2019-20. It also set out long-term settlements for key infrastructure programmes, with record levels of investment in strategic roads, broadband and flood defences.

At Budget, the government announced further details of the UK Infrastructure Bank. The Bank, which will partner with the private sector and local authorities to increase infrastructure investment, will begin operating later in the spring. It will have an initial £12 billion of debt and equity capital and be able to deploy £10bn of government guarantees. We expect it to use this to crowd in private investment to support more than £40bn of infrastructure investment overall.

Further details of the government's infrastructure investment plans can be found under the infrastructure chapter of the Plan for Growth and in the National Infrastructure Strategy.

■ Mortgages: Coronavirus

Munira Wilson:

[\[172117\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether it is the Government's policy that people who are unemployed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak will be entitled to a further mortgage holiday.

John Glen:

Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) guidance released on 17 November outlines that the application deadline for mortgage holidays ends on 31 March. Up until this date, borrowers who have not yet taken a payment holiday will still be able to apply for one and borrowers who have taken an initial payment holiday will be able to top this up to six months. This will not be reflected on the consumer's credit file. However, the FCA guidance also notes that all payment holidays will need to end by 31 July (with all credit file reporting returning to normal from that date).

After 31 March, the FCA's guidance sets out that firms should continue to provide support through tailored forbearance options for those borrowers that are facing ongoing financial difficulties. This could include granting new mortgage payment

holidays. As part of this guidance any forbearance granted beyond six months of payment holidays will be reflected on the consumer's credit file in the usual manner. As borrowers still requiring assistance after that point could be in serious financial distress the FCA believe it is right that lenders are able to understand their financial position in order to lend responsibly.

■ **National Skills Academies: Shipbuilding**

Martin Vickers:

[\[172973\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of stakeholder groups on the approval of the Shared Outcome Fund bid for the creation of a National Skills Academy for Maritime (Shipbuilding).

Steve Barclay:

HMT Officials are in regular contact with stakeholders. But it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, who are leading the National Skills Academy for Maritime bid, to engage with relevant stakeholders prior to submission of the bid.

This Government is committed to supporting people to develop the skills needed to get good jobs and improve national productivity. The Department for Education recently published the 'Skills for Jobs' White Paper which sets out how the government will put employers at the heart of the skills system to ensure skills provision meets local labour market needs.

The Shared Outcomes Fund encourage Departments to work together to overcome some of the most difficult social, environmental and economic challenges that sit across the areas of responsibility of multiple public sector organisations.

The second round of the Shared Outcomes Fund, announced at Spending Review 2020, will provide a further £200 million for projects to improve the join up across government.

The assessment process to award the funding is ongoing.

■ **Pension Funds: Government Securities**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[173162\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the amount accruing to the Exchequer from the adoption of Consumer Prices Index Including Owner Occupiers' Housing Costs in relation to index-linked gilts from 2030; and whether he has plans to compensate pensioners in the event that their pension pots are reduced as a result of that matter.

John Glen:

Owing to shortcomings in its calculation, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) intends to bring the methods and data sources of the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) into the Retail Prices Index (RPI). On 25 November

2020, the Government and UKSA published their response to the consultation on the reform to RPI.

The Government will not offer compensation to the holders of index-linked gilts. The contractual terms of all index-linked gilts state that the RPI should be used to determine the index ratio which is used to calculate interest and redemption payments. There will be no change to this flowing from the implementation of UKSA's reform.

For further information please see the consultation response at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-the-reform-to-retail-prices-index-rpi-methodology>.

■ Public Expenditure

Sir George Howarth:

[174030]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to reduce the deficit projected in Budget 2021 (a) through taxation, (b) from issuing extra currency, (c) from the proposed recovery bond and (d) via other forms of government-issued bonds.

John Glen:

Borrowing in 2021-22 is the second highest peacetime level on record, coming only after 2020-21 – it is clearly not sustainable to continue borrowing at record levels indefinitely.

The OBR forecast shows that the medium-term outlook for the public finances has returned to a more sustainable path, supported by the fiscal repair measures set out in the Budget.

For example, the income tax Personal Allowance and higher rate threshold will be uprated in line with CPI as planned in April 2021, then maintained at that level until April 2026. In 2023, the main rate of corporation tax, paid on company profits, will increase to 25%.

Regarding issuing extra currency, the actual demand for banknotes and coins issued into circulation is determined by demand from UK banks and the Post Office – i.e. currency is issued to meet market demand and not to have any effect on the public finances.

Government bonds (called 'gilts' in the UK) are issued to finance the difference between Exchequer incomings and outgoings rather than being a tool utilised to reduce government deficits.

■ Retail Trade: Non-domestic Rates

Julian Sturdy:

[174110]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing business rates relief to vacant retail units that are being used to facilitate temporary routine covid-19 testing for employees of nearby businesses.

Jesse Norman:

The Budget announced a three-month extension to the business rates holiday for eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors that was provided at Budget 2020. This means over 350,000 properties will pay no business rates for three months.

From 1 July 2021, 66% relief will be available subject to a cash cap that depends on whether businesses have been required to close or were able to open. This additional relief takes the total value of support in 2021-22 to £6 billion and means that the vast majority of businesses will receive an average 75% relief across the year.

Local authorities are responsible for awarding this discount, having regard to the guidance provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme**Carla Lockhart:**[\[174338\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on what date the fourth self-employed income support grant is planned to open for applications.

Jesse Norman:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given on 23 March 2021 to UIN 171650.

■ Small Businesses: Taxation**Ben Lake:**[\[173128\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what impact assessment his Department conducted of Making Tax Digital on small businesses.

Ben Lake:[\[173129\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support his Department plans to provide to small businesses to meet the new requirements of Making Tax Digital.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC have engaged extensively with representative bodies within business and with the accountancy and audit professions, as well as with software developers, to shape the design and implementation of MTD and to understand the potential impacts on businesses of all sizes.

HMRC will continue to work with stakeholders including businesses and their representatives in order to minimise costs and ensure effective support is in place during the transition.

HMRC are also committed to ensuring the availability of software products to meet the needs of those using MTD. HMRC have confidence that the software industry will provide free software products for VAT and ITSA, as well as products that incorporate business management tools.

Support for small businesses will be available directly from HMRC, for example through guidance, videos, webinars and software choices information, as well as through agents and software providers.

The Government published a Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) for the smaller VAT businesses being brought into MTD from April 2022 at Budget. The Government will publish further details on the impacts of MTD for Income Tax from April 2023 later this year.

■ Tax Avoidance: Mental Health

Chi Onwurah:

[173021]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on the mental health of people who are the subject of IR35 investigations; and what guidance his Department has issued to HMRC staff and officials on taking steps to avoid the harassment and intimidation of people subject to those investigations.

Jesse Norman:

The current off-payroll working rules, often known as IR35, have been in place for many years and apply to individuals working through an intermediary, such as a limited company, for clients outside the public sector. Under these rules it is the individual's intermediary that is responsible for determining their employment status for tax, and paying the appropriate tax and NICs to HMRC. HMRC may conduct compliance checks on these determinations and amounts paid.

All HMRC staff receive training required to perform their duties. This includes training for staff working with customers who require extra support, including supporting those with mental health conditions.

From 6 April 2021, the changes to the off-payroll working rules shift responsibility for determining an individual's status from the individual's limited company to the client organisation engaging them. Any liabilities arising from the application of the reformed rules rest with client organisations or agencies in the labour supply chain.

If the rules apply, it is these parties that are responsible for deducting income tax and employee National Insurance contributions before paying the individual's intermediary for the individual's services, as would be the case for actual employees or agency workers.

HMRC have outlined how they will support taxpayers in complying with the changes to the off-payroll working rules: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-issue-briefing-supporting-organisations-to-comply-with-changes-to-the-off-payroll-working-rules-ir35>.

Where individuals are engaged by small client organisations outside the public sector, their intermediary will still be required to determine their status following the changes to the rules. HMRC's compliance checks on these determinations will continue to be carried out by staff who have been trained to perform their duties, including where customers require extra support.

■ Taxation: Self-assessment

Bridget Phillipson:

[172073]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many self-assessment forms in respect of the tax year 2019-2020 have been submitted late as at 19 March 2021; and how that compares with the volume of late returns (a) in total, and (b) 19 March in each of the last ten years.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not have complete figures readily available for the number of self-assessment forms submitted late.

Taxpayers who are sent a notice to file after 31 October will have a filing deadline after 31 January.

It would take additional processing to establish precisely which returns are late, and additional analysis to separate paper returns from some other types of Income Tax Self-Assessment contact in HMRC's administrative data.

■ Treasury: Written Questions

Mr Richard Holden:

[174294]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to Questions 169067, 169068 and 169069, on Excise Duties, tabled by the hon. Member for North West Durham, if he will provide the figures requested.

Kemi Badenoch:

HMRC do not hold the information required to answer these questions and acquiring this information would be beyond the cost limit of answering each PQ. Statistics showing the impact of illustrative tax changes are set out in the Ready Reckoner. The HMRC publication "Direct effects of illustrative tax changes" shows the impact of a one per cent change on beer and cider duties. This publication can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/direct-effects-of-illustrative-tax-changes>

■ UK Trade with EU: Customs

Jack Dromey:

[172957]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what training on customs requirements is being provided by his Department to help companies to adhere to the provisions of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not directly provide training for companies but provide financial support through the £20 million SME Brexit Support Fund which opened on 15 March 2021. This fund gives traders access to practical support, including training for new customs, rules of origin and VAT processes. Smaller businesses can apply for grants of up to £2,000 to help them adapt to new customs and tax rules when trading with the EU.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Children: Maintenance**

Karin Smyth: [\[173080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the outcome of the High Court case (R [Blundell & Ors] v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions) whether her Department permits the placing of deductions for Child Maintenance payments ahead of all other deductions.

Will Quince:

Child Maintenance can be recovered from Universal Credit where claimants who should contribute towards their non-resident children have no earnings.

Schedule 6 of the Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance (Claims and Payments) Regulations 2013 sets out the priority order in which Departmental staff must consider all deductions from Universal Credit, including Child Maintenance.

■ Disability: Public Consultation

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[174167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to implement the recommendations of the independent Social Security Advisory Committee in its Occasional Paper 25: how DWP involves disabled people when designing or evaluating programmes that affect them; and if she will make a statement.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[174168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Social Security Advisory Committee's Occasional Paper 25: how DWP involves disabled people when designing or evaluating programmes that affect them, if she will publish a plan to engage directly with disabled people on the forthcoming Green Paper on health and disability.

Justin Tomlinson:

It is vital that the voices of disabled people are at the centre of health and disability policy development. Over the past 18 months I have personally led a series of events in which I have heard directly from disabled people about their lived experiences with the benefits system. We will continue this direct engagement with disabled people up to and following the publication of the Health and Disability Green Paper.

I am grateful to the Committee for their report and pleased to see that our sustained efforts to engage with disabled people have been recognised.

■ Health Services and Social Services: Young People

Catherine West: [\[174210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to offer employment opportunities in the health and social care sectors to young

people affected by reductions in employment opportunities as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and how many and what proportion of employment opportunities made available through the Kickstart programme are jobs in the health and social care sectors.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions' are actively promoting roles within the Health and Social Care sector via Work Coach conversations, resources on the DWP's JobHelp website and a range of provision. As part of A Plan for Jobs, DWP's Sector-Based Work Academy Programmes were expanded to include an additional £17m to support 32,000 more vocational training placements in 2020/21. Employers are also offering many Kickstart jobs in the Health and Social Care sector.

I refer the honourable member to PQ [167248](#) for a breakdown of Kickstart jobs per sector.

■ **Kickstart Scheme**

Justin Madders:

[167248]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March to Question 158103 on the Kickstart Scheme, to publish a breakdown by (a) location and (a) sector of the 30,000 jobs linked to the scheme.

Mims Davies:

Figures for 11th March show that over 50,000 jobs had been made available for young people to apply to, including the almost 6,000 Kickstart jobs that young people had started at that time. Below are tables showing this information split by region. Sector data is based on information provided by the employer. An employer could provide jobs across multiple sectors.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency.

REGION	NUMBER OF JOBS MADE AVAILABLE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO APPLY TO
East Midlands	3600
East of England	4000
London	9300
North East	2300
North West	6300

REGION	NUMBER OF JOBS MADE AVAILABLE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO APPLY TO
South East	5900
South West	4000
West Midlands	4900
Yorkshire and The Humber	4000
Scotland	3500
Wales	2900

These numbers are rounded to the nearest 100. Jobs made available for young people to apply to includes 1,000 non-grant funded jobs.

SECTOR	NUMBER OF JOBS MADE AVAILABLE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO APPLY TO
Administration	12,900
Animal Care	200
Beauty and Wellbeing	300
Business and Finance	2100
Computing, Technology and Finance	4000
Construction and Trades	1900
Creative and Media	3800
Delivery and Storage	1800
Emergency and Uniform Services	less than 100
Engineering and Maintenance	1500
Environment and Land	900
Government Services	100
Healthcare	2400
Home Services	400
Hospitality and Food	2600

SECTOR	NUMBER OF JOBS MADE AVAILABLE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO APPLY TO
Law and Legal	100
Managerial	400
Manufacturing	1400
Retail and Sales	8000
Science and Research	300
Social Care	1600
Sports and Leisure	800
Teaching and Education	2600
Transport	200
Travel and Tourism	100

These numbers are rounded to the nearest 100. Jobs made available for young people to apply to includes 1,000 non-grant funded jobs.

Seema Malhotra:

[174134]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2021 to Question 169973, on Kickstart Scheme, if she will provide a breakdown of the 6,000 Kickstart placement starts by sector.

Mims Davies:

We are currently unable to publish a breakdown of job starts by sector for the Kickstart Scheme.

However, we have published a list of available Kickstart vacancies by sector. I refer the hon. Member to PQ [167248](#).

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft:

[174176]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 16 March 2021 to Question 166490 on Social Security Benefits: Disability, what additional support her Department offers to people to ensure that their access needs are met.

Justin Tomlinson:

It is recognised that there are occasions when reasonable adjustments need to be offered and put into place to support customers.

In addition to services being available online, the facility for customers to make new claims by phone is available, face to face support in Jobcentres which can include the use of hearing loops and private rooms dependent upon the specific access needs of the customer.

For face to face interviews, staff will work with the customer to find the right environment to meet with the customer, and where required translation services such as British Sign Language that will be arranged.

Appointees can be nominated for customers who are unable to manage their claims independently, and can be either personal or corporate appointees. We will offer a home visit if the customer's access need cannot be met after all other reasonable adjustments have been explored and deemed unsuitable.

If the adjustment required relates to the provision of information, in practical terms this means putting contact arrangements in place via alternative channels e.g. email or providing forms and letters in accessible formats.

■ Unemployment: West Midlands

Preet Kaur Gill:

[174240]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people aged 16 to 35 have become unemployed between March 2020 and March 2021 in (a) Birmingham, Edgbaston constituency, (b) Birmingham and (c) the West Midlands.

Mims Davies:

The most up-to-date relevant information is provided by the Claimant Count. This is available for 16-34 year olds for Feb 2021 at:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/default.asp>

Guidance for users can be found at:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/home/newuser.asp>

Preet Kaur Gill:

[174241]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what (a) recent assessment she has made of trends in the level of unemployment amongst 16 to 35 year olds and (b) steps her Department is taking to reduce unemployment among that age group in (i) Birmingham, Edgbaston constituency, (ii) Birmingham and (iii) the West Midlands region.

Mims Davies:

(a) The Department regularly publishes statistics on the Alternative Claimant Count, and these are available by age and local authority, region and constituency here:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

The ACC provides a measure of local levels of claimant unemployment over time and across areas back to 2013

(b) The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is committed to supporting everyone who has been affected by the unprecedented impact of Covid19 on the economy and the labour market.

In July 2020 the Chancellor confirmed a Plan for Jobs, which placed DWP at the heart of providing significantly expanded employment support to people becoming newly unemployed and those falling in to long-term unemployment, investing £30bn nationally in a mix of measures to create, support and protect jobs. This included £2bn for the Kickstart scheme, £2.9bn for the Restart programme, funding to increase the number of JCP Work Coaches by 13,500 and a range of other measures focussed on boosting worksearch and skills.

■ Universal Credit

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[174169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claims were closed in 2019 as a result of claimants not accepting their claimant commitment before first being offered the opportunity to accept those commitments over the telephone.

Mims Davies:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

All Universal Credit claimants are required to accept a Claimant Commitment as a condition of entitlement. Claimants' obligations are recorded in one place, clarifying both what they are expected to do in return for benefits and support, and exactly what happens if they fail to comply.

Claimant commitments will be reasonable for this unprecedented time, reflecting the reality of a person's local jobs market, the local/national public health guidelines and personal circumstances to help prepare them for getting back into work. Those who have declared a health condition that restricts their ability to work, including those who are shielding and clinically extremely vulnerable, will not be required to be available for work. These claimants will have their conditionality tailored to ensure it is reasonable. This may include switching off conditionality altogether where appropriate.

■ Universal Credit: Languages

David Linden:

[\[173150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support is available to universal credit applicants whose first language is not English.

Will Quince:

Universal Credit is designed to be a 'digital-first' service, ensuring we make best use of technology to deliver a modern and effective working-age welfare system, allowing our staff to concentrate on those people who require additional support. Although the Department offers comprehensive support for claimants to use our digital service,

there will be occasions when people are unable to make their claim online, so telephone applications are accepted.

Foreign Language interpreting help is available, in writing and by telephone, to assist claimants who may require additional support. Claimants can also access free telephony and web support through the Citizen's Advice Help to Claim service.

■ **Universal Credit: Work Capability Assessment**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[174170]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the number of people in 2019 who were sanctioned while challenging a negative universal credit work capability assessment decision due to being unable to meet their claimant commitments.

Mims Davies:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.